An Analysis of Dallas Willard's Theology of Emotion in Light of Contemporary Neuropsychology

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College and the Pastoral Department of the Toronto School of Theology
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

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2016

Abstract

This thesis considers Dr. Dallas Willard’s theological and practical response to late twentieth century expressions of evangelicalism in America as the through-line of his pastoral writing. It details the cultural and theological evolution of specific issues against which Willard took a stance and explicates how his writings sought to counter them. It then narrows to consider specifically his theological anthropology, focusing on his psychology of emotion and its role in the Christian spiritual life. This latter piece is considered in depth, analyzing how he understood emotion’s proper role, the manner in which it is distorted by sin and misunderstanding, and the means by which one may gradually restore it to God’s intention for the human person. Dr. Willard’s understanding of emotion is then examined in light of the research of contemporary neuropsychologists Antonio Damasio, Joseph LeDoux, and Jaak Panksepp. The scientific research is used as a means of providing some correction, but also additional specificity and clarity to Willard’s work, which in turn provides a theological character and teleological orientation to the neuropsychologists’ work. The result is a revision of Willard’s spirituality that coincides more closely to contemporary neuropsychological perspectives on emotion, thought, and volition.
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Introduction

When neo-evangelicalism blossomed in America in the 1950’s, it began to broaden the range through which American evangelicals could express and expand their spirituality. One of the more significant expressions of this changing spirituality has loosely coalesced into what is called the spiritual formation movement, and one of the key figures in this movement was Dallas Willard (1935 – 2013), a philosopher and pastor whose writings formed the intellectual foundation for many evangelicals to understand the dynamics of their spirituality. While his pastoral works are directed primarily at the popular level, the growing influence of the spiritual formation movement combined with Willard's intellect and academic credentials has expanded their presence to more professional and academic levels. Numerous seminaries such as Biola University and training programs such as those of Renovare use them in courses on spirituality and faith development.¹

Willard believed that American evangelicalism has misunderstood the nature and character of the gospel and sought to correct a number of weaknesses that he believed had become characteristic of the culture of churches within his tradition. A wrong understanding, he argued, was hampering the church and robbing Christians of what God intended for them. “Those who operate on wrong information,” he argued, “are likely never to know the reality of God's presence ... and will miss the constant divine companionship for which their souls

were made,” and “A lack of understanding does weaken faith and misdirect life – sometimes disastrously.” Much of his work, then, was dedicated to the explication of the gospel as an invitation to transformation, describing the process that the Christian experiences and undertakes in order to fulfill God's intention for the individual person.

Because Willard was quite practical and concrete in his theology, such a description was grounded in and focused at various points on the actual workings of the human person. He saw the evangelical church as “without a psychology of the spiritual life” and part of his role as developing or at least describing, “a psychologically sound theology of the spiritual life…” His theology, as Gary Black notes, was based in his theological anthropology, and this anthropological and psychological focus necessarily described the function and role of emotion as well as the process of emotional transformation. Ultimately, his ideal Christian was characterized primarily by love while he understood anger to be a major root of disorder in the soul and of spiritual ruination.

However, his discussions of emotion and its relationship to other faculties and the spiritual life are not always clear and could, at times, contradict one another. Additionally, his views of emotion seemed to be at times grounded in more popular psychology than in more scholarly research and study, which, while not necessarily incorrect or unhelpful, offers an

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3 Ibid, 77.


opportunity for analysis, clarification, and adjustment.

In summary, Dallas Willard provided in his writing a robust structure for contemporary American evangelical spirituality, prescribing a number of correctives to weaknesses in the milieu. However, his theological anthropology did not incorporate a great deal of current neurological and psychological research that would have bolstered his thought on emotion and the spiritual life. This thesis will explore Willard’s interpretation of evangelical spirituality via comparison with a particular segment of neuropsychological research so as to produce a psychology of emotion that fits with current knowledge of human functioning and thereby offers a more accurate basis for Willard’s framework of spirituality for evangelicals.

1 Methodology
In considering Willard's theology and psychology, of greatest significance will be his own writings in spirituality. This thesis will principally consider his first four theological books as they provide the broadest and most comprehensive platform to consider his theology and, in particular, his understanding of emotion. Four additional texts were available at the time of this writing: The Great Omission,\(^7\) Knowing Christ Today\(^8\), and two post-humorously published books, Living in Christ's Presence with John Ortberg\(^9\) and The Divine Conspiracy Continued with Gary Black.\(^10\) While these will be considered as part of his full corpus, The

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\(^{10}\) Dallas Willard and Gary Black, Jr., The Divine Conspiracy Continued: Fulfilling God's Kingdom on
Great Omission and two final books published after his death are either anthologies of shorter essays or collaborative works aimed at clarification of his practical theology and do not significantly add to his thought beyond the previous books. The other book, Knowing Christ Today is primarily an apologetic and therefore contributes to his spirituality only in a minor fashion.

His first book, Hearing God, formerly titled, In Search of Guidance, describes his philosophy of personal engagement and communication with God, which he eventually connects to the development of a holy lifestyle. This sets the stage for The Spirit of the Disciplines, which is essentially a depiction of Christian virtue ethics and the responsibility of the individual to actively engage his or her body and mind in active movement toward a lifestyle in which personal engagement with God is possible. In The Divine Conspiracy\textsuperscript{11}, Willard attempts to correct what he understands to be the church's faulty conceptualization of the gospel, which he replaces with an analysis of the Sermon on the Mount. Finally, Renovation of the Heart\textsuperscript{12} is largely his theological anthropology aimed at describing the process by which the individual components of the human person may be changed and the final goal of each transformation.

This research will assay each of these books, and to a lesser extent Willard's other writings, on two levels. First, it will analyze them in a broad fashion for the purpose of determining Willard's overall corrective to evangelical theology and spirituality, largely dominated by his


focus on spiritual development, resulting in categories of critique and recommendation to Christians and the evangelical church in particular. Second, it will examine each in detail, extracting references to emotion and the nature of the will and desire, which he connects intimately to human emotion. In this, it will highlight potential internal conflicts in his understanding of emotion with some attempt to reconcile them, though some conflicts must remain unresolved. This second, more detailed analysis will be performed in light of the first, Willard's larger project of amending evangelical spirituality, so as to understand his perspective on emotion in spirituality and development, especially insofar as emotions are themselves to be developed or act as catalysts for development.

A second set of primary sources will be necessary for the neuropsychological analysis of emotion in light of which the project will evaluate Willard's thought. First, Antonio Damasio's first and most recent books, *Descartes' Error*\(^{13}\) and *Self Comes to Mind*\(^{14}\) depict a distinction between instinctive and conscious emotion (emotion vs. feeling) and a description of the manner in which emotion is connected to social dynamics. The data here will be used to assess Willard's understanding of will and desire and the process of intentionality toward transformation. Second, Jaak Panksepp's books, *Affective Neuroscience*\(^{15}\) and *Archaeology of Mind*\(^{16}\), as well as various journal articles, provide neurological bases for specific emotional


systems and, to a lesser extent, describe levels of emotional processing, which give greater
dsharpness to Willard's definitions of emotion and the manner in which he sees God having
designed emotion at a fundamental level. The thesis will also incorporate Joseph LeDoux's
book, *The Emotional Brain*\(^{17}\), as a foundation for and overall depiction of the neurobiology
of emotion and its basis in psychological function. LeDoux's writing provides a broad
understanding of the brain's role in emotion on which the other authors' analyses rest, though
the focus is primarily on Panksepp and Damasio's theories as the framework through which
to assess Willard's thought.

2 Procedure

Given that much of Willard's work was intended as a corrective for American evangelical
spirituality, it is appropriate to begin with an overview of the history and character that led to
the elements of that spiritual culture that needed correction. This employs analysis of
secondary sources\(^{18}\) so as to provide the context out of which Willard arose. Split into two
sections, the first examines the overall progression of evangelical history, though it must be
understood that a complete history is not possible in this short space, while the second
specifically considers the development of those elements that Willard sought to amend. One
element is a strong, perhaps over-emphasis on conversion as integral to the Christian life,
eventually leading to an emphasis on conversion as the only necessary catalyst for personal
change. A second is the development of premillennial dispensationalism as a dominant


\(^{18}\) Including but not limited to works by Randall Balmer, David Bebbington, Christopher Catherwood, Stanley Grenz, Barry Hankins, Evan Howard, Mark Noll, and Ian Randall.
theology in American evangelicalism, leading to a de-emphasis on God's activity in the world and human person and overemphasis on the role of the written Bible as revelation and rule for the Christian life. Dispensationalism, along with Keswick spirituality, hyper-conversionism, and fundamentalism, led also to a third element, an alteration in the view of the will for the spiritual life and the character of free-will in general. A fourth element is the continually conflicting emphases of love versus morality as the goal of spiritual development. This includes evangelicalism's general focus on morality, sanctification, and holiness throughout its spirituality. Willard understood one perspective as aligning more carefully with God's nature and intent for humanity and strove to depict that throughout his writing. A last element to be considered will be evangelicalism's turn to supernaturalism in spiritual matters, which is closely tied to conversionism and the evangelical view of free-will.

Each element, as already implied, is connected to historical eras and events, where relevant, including the origins of evangelicalism in early 18th century revivalism, the Second Great Awakening and holiness movement, the Civil War and changing cultural and ethnic landscape in the late 19th century and rise of premillennial dispensationalism, the birth of Keswick spirituality, and the emergence of fundamentalism in the early 20th century. These themes and their expression in late 20th century evangelicalism provide the background out of which, and against which, Willard emerged and wrote.

Having established Willard's context and rationale for writing, chapter two demonstrates that Willard's writings were largely correctives to this spiritual culture and detail the specific manners in which he argues against it. Before picking up where the previous chapter ended, it begins with a brief introduction to Willard and his influence in the contemporary American evangelical church, detailing various movements and organizations that have adopted his
thought and use his body of work, as mentioned above. A description of influences on his theology and spirituality follow, including his Platonic and phenomenological philosophical stance and Wesleyan/Arminian perspective. The chapter then moves to the specific issues in evangelical spirituality with which he disagreed as developed previously and identify his prescribed correctives. Most significant is his disavowal of the efficacy of conversion alone for the complete spiritual transformation of the person, for which he prescribes a process of ethical development over time. Additionally, there is the dispensational idea of God's lack of involvement with the individual, against which he posits a theology of God speaking in every age via means beyond the written Bible. He presents the evangelical understanding of free-will as having near-ultimate efficacy or utility, arguing a number of counterpoints: that all aspects of the human person are involved in any choice; that most actions are not mediated by the will at all; and that the will, even when empowered by the Holy Spirit in typical fashion, is limited in its capacity, all of which requires the progressive sanctification of additional aspects of the human person. In the tension between love and moral law as the basis for spirituality and goal of sanctification, Willard clearly argues that evangelical culture has largely opted for the latter, but that God's nature and the dynamics of human nature both demand the former. Finally, he critiques an over-reliance on supernatural matters for the spiritual life, suggesting that much of evangelicalism has distanced itself from God-devised natural processes, which are critical for any kind of development, including spiritual. Additionally, he posits that this has partitioned off much of Christianity from practical, daily life, making one's faith only about eschatological or liturgical matters.

Chapter three then narrows the focus, both providing a description of Willard's understanding of emotion in the spiritual life but also demonstrating that this understanding has certain
tensions and unresolved conflicts. This begins with an overview of his anthropology, which provides the framework in which his affective psychology fits. This delineates his view of the spirit/will, mind, body, social environment, and soul as integral to the person. After this foundation rests a deeper consideration of the emotions, demonstrating the manner in which Willard saw them interacting with other facets of the person, particularly the will. Attention is given to the conflict between his presentation of emotion being located in the body versus in the mind in alternate writings as well as his implied acceptance of the James-Lange theory of emotion and the difficulty of integrating it with his view of emotion in the mind. This chapter also examines the dichotomy he creates between “good” emotions and “bad” emotions and the fine line he attempts to maintain between, first, declaring that one's character ought not to be defined by negative emotions and the need for their gradual elimination, and second, still acknowledging that they are not inherently sinful. Once his understanding of emotion is established, the chapter elaborates the role of emotion in spiritual development, a primary theme in Willard's writings. This includes the gradual elimination of negative emotions as well as the development of holy emotions as the primary tenor of one's character. The chapter finishes with a general summation of Willard's perspective on emotion, which has a certain unresolved character in that, when discussing emotions directly, he often does so negatively, often as obstacles to one's spiritual life and development, but he also acknowledges the appropriateness of certain emotions, especially love.

Before embarking on an analysis of Willard's anthropology in light of neuropsychological research, a means of introducing the reader to the scientific research would be valuable. Thus, chapter four will begin by broadly and briefly presenting the goals and methodology of
affective neuropsychology employed by the relevant scholars in a general fashion. It goes on to describe briefly the specific researchers' work to be considered in the analysis. This includes Jaak Panksepp's theorizing, showing his breakdown of the most fundamental emotions and emotional drives into neurological systems and the distinction between basic and social emotions, which emphasizes the social nature of humanity. Also of significant note is the premise that Panksepp begins with, that emotions form the principal, and perhaps only, motivational systems of the human person. Additionally, it presents Panksepp's neurological stratification of primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-process emotions. The chapter then turns to Antonio Damasio's extrapolation of the role of emotion in decision-making and potential connection to the body, arguing that in most circumstances, the will is inseparable from emotion. Additionally, the chapter points to Damasio's helpful differentiation between emotion and feeling and a comparison of this dichotomy with Panksepp's framework of primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-process emotion. Having provided an overview of Panksepp and Damasio, their potentially competing perspectives on the role of the body in emotion are contrasted, particularly as it is related to the James-Lange theory of emotion, the only theory to which Willard directly refers.

The fifth chapter acts as the analysis of Willard's philosophy of emotion discussed in chapter three from the standpoint of the neuropsychological material introduced in chapter four. This demonstrates that Panksepp and Damasio's neurological insights are able to clarify and amend aspects of Willard's affective psychology in meaningful ways that result in a more scientifically rigorous spirituality for American evangelicals. Panksepp's tri-fold stratification of emotional processes in conjunction and Damasio's distinction between emotion and feeling are contrasted with Willard's more singular conceptualization of emotion, which lacks
a means of nuancing affective experience and processing. These dichotomies also provide language and concepts that can explain how Willard's tightrope of negative emotions that are not sin is feasible. The chapter also contrasts the prevalence of social emotions in Panksepp's analysis with Willard's acknowledgement but shortage of discussion on the receiving of social connectivity and feeling. It then uses Damasio's work and Panksepp's presupposition of the primacy of affect in motivation to show how Willard's idea of the will and its disconnection from desire and other faculties is untenable, ways the interrelation of faculties may potentially be strengthened and modified to remedy this, and why such modifications must emphasize the role of emotion in an evangelical spirituality overall. A further exploration examines the manner in which his system of discipline and prescribed practices affect the emotions and therefore why they may be effective and how they perhaps can be beneficially altered or expanded in order to better accomplish Willard's intended goals.

With the previous chapter having considered Willard's spirituality of emotion in detail, a concluding sixth chapter presents a brief, modified version of Willard's spirituality, utilizing the previous analysis. Primarily, however, the chapter is given to consideration of the implications of such modifications for evangelicals working with Willard's material and the shape of American evangelical spirituality in general. Most notably, given the emphasis that evangelicals place on choice and the will, they would need to become more attentive to the affective elements of their experience so as to understand the options and limitations for the will and the underlying issues that lead to their behaviour, while simultaneously discarding the tendency to control their emotions, as Willard already stated. A discussion of the implications for theology and spirituality in evangelical circles beyond Willard is also considered here, particularly the role of emotions and need to integrate them into underlying
3 Contributions to the Field

Various authors have acknowledged Willard's influence on late 20th and 21st century evangelicalism. Richard Flory and Donald Miller situate him as having influence equivalent to that of N. T. Wright, Stanley Grenz, and Lesslie Newbigin, while Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger cite similar influence, adding Stanley Hauerwas as well. His thought sparked the creation of the Dallas Willard Center for Christian Spiritual Formation at Westmont College in California and grounds much of the thought of the evangelical organization, Renovaré.

Despite this influence, Willard's theology remains largely removed from scholarly circles, though there has been some increase in recent years in analyzing his writing and thought. Gary Black's dissertation and book are the only large-form comprehensive analysis of Willard's theological thought, though Steve Porter and others have provided summaries of various aspects of it. Other academic theses have made use of aspects of his thought, but

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beyond these mentioned, few academic studies are available that provide in-depth analysis of
Willard's theology and praxis either overall or in any particular aspect.

Therefore, this thesis adds to the knowledge of the field by offering a perspective on
Willard's theology and motivation especially as it is related to late 20th century evangelical
culture. In this, it offers a counterpoint to Black's work, with which there are numerous points
of agreement, but also very different perspectives. In this, it also provides an analysis and
critique of an aspect of Willard's theological anthropology, that of his affective psychology,
that has been heretofore unexamined despite its importance to his overall theology of the
gospel and of Christian formation.

Additionally, the thesis opens new ground in the integration of theology and neuroscience,
often called neurotheology. Many scholars have worked to integrate these two fields in a
number of ways, though the majority of them could be perceived as limited to three particular
categories. Neuroscientist Andrew Newberg24 is perhaps, at current, the principal figure in
the study of both how the brain processes religious experience and, conversely, how religious
experiences affect and can alter neurological function both in the long- and short-term. This
category is largely concerned with experiential phenomena. Psychologists Malcolm Jeeves25
and Warren Brown26 are some of the major figures in the consideration of the integration of

24 Co-author or author of various books, most notably Eugene G. D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg
_The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience_ (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999);
Andrew B. Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, _How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a
Leading Neuroscientist_ (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009); and Andrew B. Newberg, _Principles of

25 See Malcolm A. Jeeves, _From Cells to Souls, and Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature_

26 See Warren S. Brown, Nancey C. Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, _Whatever Happened to the
Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature_ (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) and Nancey
metaphysical aspects of theology, analyzing the viability of monistic versus dualistic perspectives of the human person and determinism versus free-will in light of neurodynamics. This category is largely concerned with cognitive processes and existential issues. Finally, some figures such as theologian David Hogue\textsuperscript{27} have attempted to utilize others' research in order to construct and recommend paradigms for Christian practice. This final category examines Christian praxis. While this thesis could fall into this third category, it bears a particular difference in that the aforementioned researchers have primarily been concerned with cognitive as opposed to affective neurological processing. The effect of emotions within the brain and neurological system have been largely ignored apart from supernatural experience such as mystical consciousness and glossolalia. This thesis aims to elucidate aspects of emotion in the brain within ordinary functioning as it affects moral and Christian practice and formation. This examination of affective neurological processing potentially opens a new dimension in the integration of neuroscience and theology.

4 Preliminary Definitions

Prior to embarking on an analysis of Willard’s work and context, however, some definitions of particular terms may be of help to delineate the intentions and boundaries of the thesis.

4.1 Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is notoriously difficult to define. The de facto standard foundation on which to build a definition or discussion of evangelical history has become David Bebbington's

\textsuperscript{27} Author of \textit{Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past: Story, Ritual, and the Human Brain} (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2003).

quadrilateral of factors that evangelicals adhere to: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism.  

Conversionism denotes the tendency among evangelicals to focus on conversion, justification, and the saving of souls. It can lead, in many churches, to a spirituality characterized by a focus on and fervour for evangelism as well as an understanding of spiritual development that defines conversion almost exclusively as a particular moment in time. That moment can become a sort of metaphorical altar to return to and focus on for individual believers.

Activism describes the tendency for evangelicalism to stress doing something in response to and potentially out of obligation to the faith. This can manifests in two principal ways: first as evangelism and missions work, again, that is specifically aimed at the spread of the gospel, and second as being actively engaged in works of mercy, healing, and social justice. The emphasis on each path has waxed and waned throughout evangelicalism's history, depending on the social and theological environment, but in either case, the emphasis has typically been on practical action in the world, stemming perhaps from an impatience with philosophical considerations.

The evangelical mark of biblicism expresses itself in a Bible-centred spirituality. Evangelical education places a high value on knowing the content of scripture and proper means of interpretation. There is often talk of “devotions” or “quiet time”, a daily reading of the Bible as a means of connecting to God. Evangelical preaching can often be exposition from the

scripture either in analysis of particular passages or in themes taken from different passages. Additionally, there is also a drive to ground activity and philosophy in biblical principles and references. While additional sources of truth may be respected, all other books, traditions, and organizations are seen as having authority underneath that of the Bible. Such a high view of scripture eventually resulted in the creation of doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility that particular strains of evangelicalism developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and used as tests for orthodoxy of other individuals and groups.

Lastly, crucicentrism, an awkward term, denotes evangelicals' focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. As conversionism lends itself to recalling one's moment of conversion in personal life, crucicentrism lends itself to recalling the cross in corporate life and in theological discussion. More, however, this becomes a tendency to give particular attention to the doctrine of atonement. Evangelicals devote effort to delineating and justifying their understanding of the atonement and can even turn a particular view into a shibboleth, as was also the case for inerrancy above, for the saved versus the unsaved. All scripture, and indeed all history, is seen as hinging on Jesus' death, often even more than Jesus' life, though there is no dearth of attention to Jesus' life and ministry.

While Bebbington's quadrilateral is generally well accepted and does a fair job of describing evangelicalism, it is more descriptive than definitive as it contains at least one significant flaw. Timothy Larsen amusingly points out this flaw, showing that the quadrilateral could fit

30 So fervent is this element in some evangelical circles that many doctrinal statements and creeds devised by evangelical churches and organizations begin not with the existence of God, but rather with the authority of scripture as a basis for truth. The Bible can almost seem worshipped before God is, an accusation posited against evangelicals for centuries (e.g., Bebbington, 12).
many obviously non-evangelicals such as Francis of Assisi.\textsuperscript{31} There is a lack of context, which is important to delineate its boundaries. Larsen attempts to create this context by linking evangelicals to theological and social networks that originated out of 18\textsuperscript{th} century revivalism. These social networks allow for the inclusion of traditions and groups who have been grafted into evangelicalism despite not originally stemming from Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, and others as well as excluding those who do stem from such figures but have taken on unorthodox or modern theological ideas that differ from other evangelicals such as non-Trinitarian concepts of God or theologies that are incompatible with the historical creeds.\textsuperscript{32}

The issue at hand, however, is not merely an overarching definition of evangelicals, but the evangelicals specifically to whom Willard addressed his writing and about whom he made his observations. Willard never specifically identified this audience, though there is textual and circumstantial evidence that helps to clarify his intention. He did refer to himself as evangelical,\textsuperscript{33} though his own background was in the Southern Baptist Convention, which gave a foundation in a highly conservative, Protestant theology and spirituality. When discussing the church, he occasionally did specifically discuss those having a liberal theology\textsuperscript{34}, which may imply that he did not intend to restrict his writing only to those of conservative outlook, though his critiques were more often aimed at typically conservative


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 1-5.


\textsuperscript{34} E.g., Willard, Conspiracy, 41.
perspectives. More evidence of his audience may be ascertained when considering the publishing companies, journals, and magazines that produced many of his books and articles including *NavPress, Christianity Today, Leadership Journal, The Journal of Psychology and Theology,* and *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care.* Each of these journals and organizations have roots in fundamentalism or the neo-evangelical movement that began in the mid-1940's.\(^{35}\) Additionally, Willard at one point discusses evangelical political involvement as having “a high level of visibility and influence”.\(^{36}\) This description likely refers to the Moral Majority and later Christian Right, which also have roots in neo-evangelicalism. These latter points in particular suggest that Willard saw his evangelical audience primarily as being made up of those with roots in fundamentalism, including and especially passing through neo-evangelicalism or having, like the Southern Baptist Convention, a history and ideology that followed a similar trajectory.\(^{37}\)

In sum, evangelicals and evangelicalism hereafter refer to those American Protestants whose

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\(^{35}\) *NavPress* is a division of The Navigators, an organization born in the 1930's of fundamentalist origin. See “About Us”, NavPress, accessed April 2, 2014, http://www.navpress.com/info/About_Us. The creation of *Christianity Today* in 1956 is considered by historians including George Marsden and Randall Balmer to be one of the marks of the beginning of neo-evangelicalism. See George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 164, and Randall Herbert Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics, and Beyond* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 52. *Leadership Journal* is an offshoot of *Christianity Today*. The two journals are both maintained by Biola University, which was established in 1908 by Lyman Stewart, who also funded *The Fundamentals*, which became the foundation of the fundamentalist movement.


\(^{37}\) Dockery and White suggest that while Southern Baptists do not always equate themselves with evangelicals, arguing that they did not participate in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy that resulted in fundamentalism in the north, Southern Baptist culture has largely paralleled American evangelical culture, just displaced by 60 years and even encountering its own internal fundamentalist-modernist controversy in more recent years. See David S. Dockery and James Emery White, “Introduction,” in *Southern Baptists & American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 25.
character can be described as bearing Bebbington's biblicist, activist, conversionist, and crucicentrist marks and whose historical roots can at least partially be traced back to early 20th century fundamentalism and mid 20th century neo-evangelicalism or a similar theological and spiritual path. While this description does not incorporate the whole of what is at times considered evangelicalism, it does define the audience for which Willard intended his pastoral writing, which he referred to as evangelicals.

4.2 Spirituality

Much like evangelicalism, spirituality is an elusive term. It broadly encompasses a number of different ideas, some of which different traditions stress, deemphasize, or potentially disregard entirely. One idea is that of relationship with God, an element which Ian Randall argues forms the dominant theme of evangelical spirituality, as can be seen in songs such as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”.38 James Houston goes so far as to ground all of the term in this one idea, “the state of deep relationship to God.”39 This is a specific aspect of a broader element to spirituality, the believer's experience of God and supernatural realities. Any spirituality will contain certain expectations of how the supernatural will interact with natural and how persons will feel those interactions as well as what they may mean.

A second aspect of spirituality is comprised of the behaviour and practices that a believer engages in, both in everyday life and in extraordinary circumstances, largely in order to engage with one's faith, but also in order to live in such a way as to conform to the standards


of one's faith. Robert Webber notes that spirituality is first, “a life brought into conformity with Christ,” containing elements of worship, evangelization, and communion with the body of believers.\textsuperscript{40} Philip Sheldrake, series editor for the Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series, likewise notes that it “concerns the whole of human life”.\textsuperscript{41} How one does and ought to go about life both individually and as a community is incorporated in a Christian spirituality. Clearly, this element has overlap with the previous insofar as the manner in which a believer goes about her life will at times mean interacting with God in relationship. However, not every activity undertaken is consciously done with relationship with God in mind, but may still have connotations for one's faith.

In recent years, a third aspect of spirituality has taken on an increasing role, that of attention to the inner life. Webber left evangelicalism because its spirituality “had little to do with my personal struggle to live a Christian life.”\textsuperscript{42} Robert Krapohl and Charles Lippy suggest that some go so far as to argue that contemporary evangelicalism lacks a spirituality entirely due to its negligence of the human heart.\textsuperscript{43} While spirituality in Christianity is largely related to the activity of the Holy Spirit, it also is related to the movements of the spirit of the believer, the interior of the individual wherein the Spirit of God dwells. The interior of the heart affects and is affected by one's daily life and practices as well as one's relationship with God,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.


but so prominent has this aspect of spirituality become that it deserves its own, separate mention.

Lastly, evangelical spirituality has typically carried with it a drive toward sanctification. Webber includes in his definition the aspect of journey toward heaven and being formed through fellowship and worship, and Grenz begins his own by noting that it is a quest for holiness. When Ian Randall examines strains of evangelical spirituality, he devoted attention to holiness, particularly in the Wesleyan tradition and Calvinism, the former he describes as being perfected in love and the latter as a never-ending struggle against sin, a theme toward which Keswick spirituality also devotes much of its thought. Evangelical spirituality is particularly concerned with how to avoid and overcome sin, whether emphasizing the move into holiness or the ceaselessness of the struggle against it.

Willard's perspective on spirituality makes use of each of these elements. When defining spirituality, though only indirectly, he emphasizes the first, relationship with God, stating, “companionship with Jesus is the form that Christian spirituality ... takes.” However, Renovation of the Heart goes beyond this, discussing Christian spirituality as leading to formation and development and describing other spiritualities as ways of going about one's life, suggesting that he conceived of it in terms that was grounded in lifestyle and

44 Grenz, 42.
45 Ibid.
46 Randall, 118.
48 Willard, Hearing God, 222.
49 Willard, Renovation, 19.
behaviour, notably spiritual disciplines, that, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, bring about sanctification and the overcoming of sin. Further, one's behaviour is grounded not only in external activities, but also in emotions, unconscious dynamics, and the internal activity of the mind and spirit. For Willard, spirituality begins with relationship with the divine, but encompasses all four elements above. Therefore, spirituality will be defined here as a way of living in relationship with God that involves understanding and practices affecting both the internal and external aspects of the person with an emphasis, in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit, on the transformation of the person into increasing holiness.

### 4.3 Neuropsychology

Perhaps the least complex term to define, neuropsychology is, at its simplest, psychology as informed by neuroscientific research. It is a both clinical and experimental field in which the anatomy and dynamics of the nervous system, particularly the brain, are related to behaviours and psychological processes including thought and emotion. Much neuropsychological research has arisen from studies of brain lesions and tissue damage and correlated psychological and behavioural changes and phenomena such as that which informed much of Antonio Damasio's theories, to be discussed later. Technology has provided additional means of study through the use of electroencephalography (EEG) to correlate electrical signals in the brain to phenomena as well as other, more advanced techniques such as positron emission tomography (PET), single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), and (functional) magnetic resonance imagining (MRI and fMRI), most of which correlate circulatory flow with cerebral activity.

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Neither of the two theorists to be considered here are typically identified as neuropsychologists, however. Damasio identifies himself as a neurologist and neuroscientist, and Jaak Panksepp does similarly, though he specifically does identify his work as psychobiological and informed by neuroscience. This thesis follows Panksepp's approach. The scientific material under discussion could potentially be identified as neuroscientific or neurobiological, but it will be used here in a psychological fashion, applying knowledge of neural anatomy and dynamics to mental, emotional, volitional, and behavioural dynamics and processes.

5 Summary

For clarification, this thesis aims at, first, positioning Willard's theology as a critique of evangelicalism in the mid to late 20th century and, second, analyzing the affective aspects of his theological anthropology in light of corresponding research in neuroscience. These aims and the limitations of space preclude an analysis or critique of his theology overall as well as precluding an evaluation of the critique he provided. Instead, the intent is to position Willard's theology as a foundation for a deeper analysis in the later chapters. Similarly, only a minor engagement with prior neurotheological material is possible, relying instead on primary neurological research and making use of integrative work only when it corresponds closely to the concepts under discussion.

The author hopes that this thesis will encourage additional analysis of Dr. Willard's theology and recommendations for the church as well as the manner in which it is being adapted for

51 Damasio, *Self*, 169

52 Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, viii.
use in evangelicalism and its descendents. If researchers such as Flory, Miller, and Black are correct, evangelicalism in America is undergoing a change in character and practice, spurred in part by Willard's thought. Even if such predictions prove incorrect, his ideas are still being referenced by a number of contemporary voices as crucial or at least influential. How such ideas become effective or fail to do so may be significant for understanding the contemporary evangelical era.

Likewise, there is the hope that this will encourage additional integration of affective neuroscience or psychology in theological discussion. The research included suggests that while reason is crucial to theology and formation, it is only one aspect of the person that must be considered. How one reasons, believes, speaks, and acts all may be grounded in affective elements that cannot be wisely discounted. Continual consideration of those elements may prove meaningful for Christian theology and practice in the 21st century.
Chapter 1
Historical Development of Elements
Critiqued By Willard

As much as Dallas Willard sought to bring about change in the evangelical cultural
landscape, he was just the same as every philosopher and theologian, a product of his time.
His correctives were therefore aimed at what he perceived as weaknesses in the culture
specific to his era. Like any aspect of a culture, such issues did not emerge spontaneously, but
rather developed over time and in response to historical events and trends, in this case, events
and trends transpiring over evangelicalism's history.

In order to provide a backdrop against which to understand Willard's perspective and
argument, this thesis begins with an examination of five specific cultural aspects of
evangelicalism in the mid to late twentieth century, considering their character and some of
the historical matters that potentially resulted in that aspect becoming a characteristic of the
movement. While Willard voiced opinion and argument on many topics, the bulk of his
pastoral writing can be understood as commentary and criticism on these particular issues.
They begin with an examination of the change in the way Bebbington's evangelical trait of
conversionism was expressed and the elevation of its significance to evangelicals, as these
changes presented some of the foremost spiritual dangers in Willard's mind. Closely related
to this is the second aspect, the practical outworking of free-will. While the theological
question may be of significance, this issue will be examined more from how evangelical
spirituality expressed free-will rather than a philosophical consideration of it. The third issue
to be examined involves the manner in which morality or holiness was understood and
encouraged among evangelicals. One subset of evangelicalism, largely but not entirely
correlated with the Calvinist stream, understands morality as a set of boundaries or a code of
law to which one must adhere. Another subset, largely correlated with the Wesleyan tradition,
perceives morality as a manifestation of love; that which is loving is what is truly holy.
Unlike other aspects to be considered, there is not a particular, dogmatic understanding of the
issues, and neither perspective is understood as exclusive of the other. Rather, the two options
have existed simultaneously, each being emphasized more strongly by particular traditions
within evangelicalism and ebbing and flowing in influence as the corresponding tradition lost
or gained prominence within evangelicalism and American culture. Fourth, early twentieth
century changes in conversionism were dependent in part on J. N. Darby's\(^{53}\) theology of pre-
millennial dispensationalism as well as a hard objectivist stance. This section will consider
the character of dispensational theology and historical reasons why much of evangelicalism
adopted it as a foundational theology as well as reasons for the rise of objectivism and some
results of the combination of these two perspectives. Finally, a number of factors, including
changes in conversionism, resulted in an increased concentration on the supernatural among
evangelicals. Some of those factors will be noted along with how they manifested in the
movement's general spirituality.

Obviously, given that only five elements of evangelicalism's history are being examined here,
this cannot be understood as an overview of the historical development and progress of the

\(^{53}\) John Nelson Darby was a nineteenth century Bible teacher who helped form the Plymouth Brethren.
He is most known for his theology of dispensationalism, which separated history into seven distinct eras to be
detailed in the final section of this chapter.
movement. Many additional aspects of the history could be considered, and various others have already undertaken chronological overviews of evangelicalism and American Christianity in general that are more thorough than space reasonably allows here. These other aspects and perspectives on history are unexamined here only because they are not especially relevant to Willard’s theological and philosophical perspective, his particular view of evangelicalism, or, of greatest import to the thesis, the weaknesses regarding which he wrote and spoke.

1 Conversionism

As one of Bebbington’s four characteristics of evangelicalism, a drive toward conversion is part of the movement’s identity. It has become generally accepted that the movement was born in revivals of the early eighteenth century, which in America became known collectively as the First Great Awakening. Revivals have always been a call for a conversion of some sort, either one from a way or life where Christianity was merely a societal custom to one of dedication to the gospel and Jesus' way of life or a conversion from unbelief to trusting Jesus for salvation. That evangelicalism arose out of revivalism links it to both of

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56 Larsen, 1.
these conversions, though each has been more dominant in particular eras.

The First Great Awakening revivals of the eighteenth century were sparked largely by a few major figures including John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, though in America, it may be Whitefield who had the greatest influence on revivalism, as Wesley, while not ignoring the Americas, was focused more in Britain, and Edwards did not travel as extensively as the other two. These and other figures initially spoke in churches, seeking to evoke a response from those who already believed in God to commit themselves to a Christian life and practice.

Whitefield’s background was not in theology, but rather in drama, which gave him a theatrical style that appealed to the people in ways that the local clergy were often unable to duplicate and gave him the ability to inspire people to commit to this new life. Other travelling preachers soon sought to duplicate his dramatic style. Fearing loss of order and

57 John Wesley is best known for being the source of Methodism and consequently the Methodist church, which branched from Anglicanism. The term, methodist, was originally a nickname given to Wesley and others at Oxford to denote their methodical approach to their faith and manner of life, but it was quickly adopted by its adherents. He is also known for championing Arminian theology among Protestants, a theological position that stresses the human person’s capacity to choose whether or not to respond to God’s invitation to salvation and reconciliation in contrast to Calvinism, which stresses God’s sovereignty and the perseverance of the saints. As noted, Wesley was one of the most prominent preachers in British revivalism in the early eighteenth century. For Wesley, see John Wesley and Albert Cook Outler, John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). For Arminianism and Calvinism, see Alan P. F. Sell, The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983).

George Whitefield, as will be discussed in slight detail, is remembered primarily for his role as revivalist preacher in the First Great Awakening. He and Wesley knew each another and, while disagreeing on theological points, approved of each other’s revivalist efforts. See Harry S. Stout, The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991).

Jonathan Edwards is perhaps best known for his uncharacteristic sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”, though among scholars he is often counted the most intellectual and perhaps influential theologian of North American history. While he was not of the same era as the original Puritans, he was a spiritual descendent of them, and many scholars consider him to be one, if the last, who could be considered of that spirituality and theology. See George M. Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

58 One author referred to Whitefield as “America’s first media superstar,” due to his popularity and appeal to the common people. Hankins, 7. See also Balmer, 13.
authority over their parishes, many clergy denied these popular preachers entry into their churches. This, however, only required that the preachers take their sermons outdoors, which provided space for larger audiences and magnified their reach and popularity, fuelling the revival movement.\textsuperscript{59} These preachers swayed thousands to place their trust in God’s sovereignty, being convinced of their need to turn their lives over to the Lord.\textsuperscript{60} Like John the Baptist’s call to repent and be baptized, the First Great Awakening inspired many to be converted to a new way of life.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the revivals of the First Great Awakening lost momentum, but a resurgence in America occurred in the early nineteenth century. Revivals began occurring with frequency again, and historians have dubbed this phenomenon the Second Great Awakening.\textsuperscript{61} These revivals were in many respects similar to the first, though there were also particular differences to them. Like revivals of the eighteenth century, these were organized by travelling preachers and popular speakers who gathered crowds out of doors. Similarly, the movement had its key figures, most notably Charles Finney,\textsuperscript{62} though while Whitefield’s Calvinist theology focused on God’s sovereignty, Finney believed that revivals could not truly work under such a theological perspective, as it contained the idea that people were unable to resist God should God choose to call them to salvation, but in the

\textsuperscript{59} Balmer, 13.

\textsuperscript{60} Noll, \textit{History}, 170.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 166.

\textsuperscript{62} Charles Grandison Finney was a nineteenth century Presbyterian minister, known for his influence on the programmatic style of revival meetings during the Second Great Awakening, Arminian perspective, and promotion of social reform. He was also faculty and eventually president of Oberlin College in Ohio. See Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism} (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996).
event that God did not elect them, they were likewise unable to choose salvation. For Finney, Calvinism eliminated the human person's ability to choose, which for him prevented revivals from having any real effect. For perhaps purely pragmatic reasons, then, he held instead to an Arminian theology, believing that it was the responsibility of Christians in general, but preachers in particular, to present the gospel and God's call to them to respond to it and that people were free to choose for themselves whether or not to respond to that call.

Additionally, if people could choose or reject it of their own will, then Finney sought to make the call as powerful as possible. He crafted revival meetings carefully in order to generate the most powerful effect possible. Spanning several days, the first few were given to stirring up just how desperate people were without the gospel but offering no relief from that desperation. Only at the end did he present the invitation to God's salvation as a solution to their need, and by this time, their need felt extreme. Finney's revivals were fashioned with precision, leading people down an exact psychological path to attach to Jesus in order to gain relief from the emotions that the preacher himself stirred up. His goal was for each individual person not simply to feel they could choose the gospel, but must choose it to save themselves.

Finney's style of revival built up to a moment of decision. The revivals of the First Great Awakening were geared toward sparking a change of lifestyle that, while having a definite starting point in time, would continue on toward increasing sanctification and holiness. Those of the Second Great Awakening, on the other hand, while hardly dismissive of continued

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64 Balmer, 21-2.

65 Ibid.
Christian growth, were designed as a program with a definitive ending point where people devoted themselves to Jesus. It was surely expected that they would continue on living a righteous life after the ending of the revival, but the relief from the buildup of need and anxiety emphasized a particular moment in time in a way that the previous revivals had not. Conversion was not a single event, but the perspective was being moved in that direction.

In the latter nineteenth century, the Holiness movement continued the revivals of the Second Great Awakening after American culture shifted in response to the atrocities of the Civil War, urbanization, and new immigration trends bringing in non-Protestants, all of which demoralized evangelicals and manifested in a decline in holy living. These new revivals strongly incorporated a modification of John Wesley's idea of Christian perfection or entire sanctification. Wesley had taught that the Holy Spirit may, after years of practice and dedication by the believer, make the Christian completely holy such that all his or her motivations originated in love. Mistakes could still be made, and therefore error was still possible, but one's intentions would always be loving and holy. In the late nineteenth century, however, many began to understand God to grant perfection as a second blessing in an instant. Rather than sanctification being a gradual progress that eventually culminated in perfection, the holiness movement stressed a moment of crisis that could happen suddenly, a

66 See page 53-4 for a fuller treatment of these trends.


supernatural act that should be sought by believers. Preachers and writers proclaimed that people could be holy if they committed themselves to a righteous life and sought the Holy Spirit's blessing.

John Woodbridge reasons that this emphasis on a moment of spiritual crisis affected how the evangelicals of the era prioritized their practical theologies. They simultaneously emphasized a theology of conversion and a theology of Christian spirituality and behaviour post-conversion, but this emphasis on crisis also seeded the idea of a supernatural event causing a definitive transformation, which would come in time to cause evangelicals to conflate conversion and sanctification. Figures such as Phoebe Palmer and Hannah Whitall Smith moved away from the idea that the crisis moment was an experience, instead turning it into an act of faith that could be made in a moment. Rather than being something that one needed to experience, it became understood as a moment of willed belief and trust in what God had already done for the believer.

The Holiness movement was part of only one branch of American evangelicalism, made up mostly of those of a Wesleyan tradition, but another phenomenon emerged, partially out of

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70 Ibid., 37.

71 Phoebe Palmer was a Methodist who experienced entire sanctification sometime in the late 1830's and began holding weekly prayer meetings with her sister, Sarah Lankford, and other Methodist women. The popularity of these meetings grew such that she and her husband were increasingly asked to speak at churches, conferences, and camp meetings, spreading the message of entire sanctification. See Phoebe Palmer, The Devotional Writings of Phoebe Palmer (New York: Garland Pub., 1985).


72 Smith, 21-2.
Smith's work, that appealed to a larger portion of Protestants. The Keswick conventions began in Britain in the 1870's as a focal point for the Higher Life movement, an offshoot of the English Holiness movement that sought to inspire Christians to seek a second work of the Spirit in one’s life post-conversion. The Keswick conventions were also an attempt to craft a middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism as the convention speakers and leaders understood them. As Calvinism stressed the sovereignty of God, many perceived it as stressing humanity's need to be constantly vigilant against offending God and working, aided by the Holy Spirit, to become righteous. At the same time, many saw Arminianism as offering the possibility of perfection and complete freedom from sin. The Keswick conventions prescribed what the speakers and leaders saw as an alternative between this staunch effort to resist sin and the belief that sin was no longer an issue for the Christian. It prescribed that the Christian at every moment surrender him or herself to God, who, by the Spirit, would empower the person to resist temptation. Adherents believed that Calvinism, through its emphasis on vigilance, put all the responsibility for resisting sin in the hands of the person while Wesleyan Arminianism absolved the Christian of any responsibility at all by declaring oneself perfected. Keswick spirituality saw the responsibility of the person as surrendering and the responsibility of God as enabling one to resist temptation and sin, granting responsibility on both human and divine persons for the Christian's struggle against sin.

Mark Noll argues, however, that the idea of surrender became oversimplified, as

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75 Packer, 147.
demonstrated in the catchphrase, “Give up, let go and let God.” This, he suggests, began to absolve the Christian of responsibility for both their spiritual life and the social good. Christians didn’t need to take right action, but rather to cease from wrong action. Additionally, Evan Howard argues that Keswick surrender and this focus on resisting sin began to cause some Christians to believe that “it wasn’t the ‘dos’ but the ‘don’ts’ that characterized [Christian] practice.” Keswick spirituality, then, pushed evangelicalism to focus on not doing wrong rather than doing or becoming good. Similarly, J. I. Packer paints Keswick spirituality as encouraging Christians to stop attempting to handle their problems or accomplish their sanctification out of their own power, but to hand such things over to God. However, he argues, with such a view, one may be tempted to truncate sin to be only about actions while neglecting sinful motivations, eliminate the possibility of growth in holiness, and turn Christianity ultimately into being about one’s personal joy through freedom from sin. While such implications may not have developed immediately through the Keswick conventions and spread of this spirituality, the possibility was raised. By the late twentieth century, that possibility had not only been considered, but, in the opinion of Packer, accepted. The result was a Keswick model of sanctification implicitly dominating most of evangelicalism despite many evangelicals being unfamiliar with the model’s history.

While Keswick spirituality is not focused on the issue of conversion, it changed the character


78 Packer, 147.

79 Ibid., 153-155.

80 Sawyer, 7
of sanctification, which had an indirect effect on perceptions of conversion. As Keswick spirituality spread, sanctification became increasingly understood, not as a process of change over time, but rather as a consistent effort. Either one did or did not surrender at a given moment in one's life. One cannot more or less surrender. This either/or framework meant there was little, if any, possibility of growth except potentially for the frequency of one's surrendering. The concept largely eliminates development, but transformation still remains a constant in Christian ideology. If transformation did not happen post-conversion, then it must be concentrated at the moment of conversion or in a single event quickly afterward.\textsuperscript{81} The widespread appeal of Keswick spirituality produced the idea that the moment of belief, salvation, and conversion enables the new Christian to reach out to be made holy where this was heretofore impossible. Conversion was becoming a moment of transformation.

As the nineteenth century was readying to give way to the twentieth, revivalism continued to be a theme in the evangelical spirit, but a shift began to occur in the purpose of the revivals. The First and Second Great Awakenings were largely aimed at those who already believed in the gospel but were half-hearted or only marginally interested in the demands it placed on one's life and behaviour. These revivals were trying to stir up Christians to live holy lives that would be dedicated to fulfilling the will of God on earth. As an increasing number of people, largely due to the immigration of non-Protestants, were not believers, large meetings began to be aimed at converting these people to believe in the gospel. Popular and influential figures such as D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey\textsuperscript{82} stressed the need for the conversion of the

\textsuperscript{81} Lovelace, 234-5.

\textsuperscript{82} Dwight Moody was a preacher who rose to prominence as an evangelist in England, but gained international acclaim in the 1870's. He founded a number of schools, including the Moody Bible Institute, and a
unchurched, as they believed there to be hope for people to live holy lives only if they first trusted in the gospel.\textsuperscript{83} Ian Randall suggests that evangelicals were becoming united in the idea that holiness was a fruit of conversion,\textsuperscript{84} making conversion the necessary priority.

Also toward the end of the nineteenth century, some theologians had begun to integrate modern historical, literary, and scientific methods into their theological work. Many of these scholars began to question and reject traditional perspectives on issues including the authorship of various books of scripture, the chronology of the biblical record, and the veracity of Jesus’ resurrection and divinity.\textsuperscript{85} They also began to attend more closely to Jesus’ life and ministry, appearing to eclipse his death and resurrection in the process,\textsuperscript{86} which some saw as negating the heart of the gospel message and biblical narrative.

A division developed, particularly in the Presbyterian denominations of the northern states, where conservative theologians, clergy, and laypeople argued that these modernists were becoming heretical, detaching themselves from the fundamentals of the faith.\textsuperscript{87} Theologians produced essays declaring what they understood to be the elemental and essential doctrines of Christianity, largely in response and opposition to the modernists. Modernist theologians began to integrate into their theological frameworks micro- and macro-evolutionary theories, publishing company, both of which remain today. See John Pollock, \textit{Moody} (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983). Reuben Archer Torrey was a congregational minister who worked with Moody as an evangelist and administrator. He wrote prolifically and was one of the editors of \textit{The Fundamentals}, also founding the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) and the Church of the Open Door. See Roger Martin, \textit{R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty} (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Pub., 1976).

\textsuperscript{83} Woodbridge, 149-50.

\textsuperscript{84} Randall, 111.

\textsuperscript{85} Hankins, 19-20.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 29-30.
which fundamentalists mistakenly understood as tied to German philosophy and therefore German militarism, which was threatening European peace.\textsuperscript{88} Their response was to work against any effort to reconcile evolutionary principles with religion,\textsuperscript{89} stressing that Christianity was necessarily supernatural rather than being modulated by these principles of science that described the natural world. Further, the modernists made religion to focus on the incarnation and the human person’s innate and therefore natural ability to imitate Jesus, which fundamentalists understood as failing to recognize and accent the supernatural character of new birth.\textsuperscript{90} Conservatives responded by stressing the atonement and new birth that occurs at conversion and justification. The atonement grew in importance for conservatives in response to this theological threat, and with this, attention became focused on conversion as being a supernatural event wherein a spiritual change occurred that had consequences for both the spiritual and, though perhaps to a lesser extent, material person. The whole person was transformed in ways that transcended natural potentials and processes. Moreover, gradual growth post-conversion may have sounded too much like evolution and dependent upon natural processes, which left conservatives ill at ease.\textsuperscript{91} The idea that one would be made holy or grow toward righteousness over time was not abandoned, but the potential parallels may have made it uncomfortable for them. This discomfort became easy to avoid, however, because the supernatural character of conversion increased its importance and made for an easy focal point. As already noted, late nineteenth and early twentieth

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 22-3.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
century preachers such as Moody emphasized conversion and individual repentance more fervently than had been the case for past preachers,\textsuperscript{92} which only demonstrates the increasing importance of conversion and belief and the reduction of that of sanctification in some minds.

Many of these conservative leaders coalesced around particular doctrines, codified in a set of books called \textit{The Fundamentals}, including the inerrancy of scripture, virgin birth of Jesus, atonement at the cross, bodily resurrection of Christ, and veracity of Jesus' miracles.\textsuperscript{93} Becoming known as fundamentalists, these conservative evangelicals, who spanned the theological divide of Calvinism and Arminianism, largely focused on these doctrines and the threat that they saw modernist theology presenting.\textsuperscript{94} The question of whether or not a particular church or denomination held to these fundamental doctrines became a principal issue within many Protestant circles. With attention being directed largely to doctrine and individual conversion, a diminished, though not extinguished, concern with some of the outer workings of these matters such as social action resulted.\textsuperscript{95} What happened after conversion was not as relevant as conversion itself. Additionally, theological debates with modernists

\textsuperscript{92} Catherwood, 97.

\textsuperscript{93} Noll, \textit{History}, 381.

\textsuperscript{94} Calvinist leaning evangelicals came under the fundamentalist umbrella because of their stress on God's sovereignty and rule, which made supernatural realities the heart of Christianity. Inerrancy, the virgin birth, the atonement, and other doctrines were indelibly tied to the will and rule of God. Such evangelicals felt a need to emphasize these core doctrines of classical Christianity. Arminian leaning evangelicals likewise stressed these fundamentals, but the emphasis was on choosing to believe in the deity and power of Jesus, who alone enabled the individual to be made holy. These evangelicals stressed that one could only be made perfect or sanctified through the Holy Spirit and not through natural means. Despite their significant differences, many Arminians and Calvinists worked together to defend and preach these fundamentals, which they saw as threatened by new and corrosive modernist theologies.

\textsuperscript{95} Catherwood, 97.
over the nature of the atonement\textsuperscript{96} resulted in a focus on what happens at conversion, again raising its importance for the evangelical mind.

Another factor that bolstered the importance of conversion in conservative evangelical culture was the adoption of pre-millennial dispensationalism. This theology and its place in the historical narrative will be examined in more detail later, but it is necessary to note here that one of its major assumptions was that the moral character of America, if not the world, was degrading, and chaos and sin were increasing.\textsuperscript{97} This was understood as a sign that the second coming of Jesus would happen soon.

However, as David Bebbington’s quadrilateral describes, activism is a major marker of evangelical character. Evangelicals could not sit idly by, waiting for something to happen; they needed to be doing something. If Christ was returning soon, then unbelievers needed to be converted as soon as possible, lest Jesus return before they can choose to follow God in faith. Evangelicals’ efforts in society became almost solely preaching the gospel and urging the need for salvation in order to convert people.\textsuperscript{98} The evangelistic and missional drive had always been a hallmark for evangelicals, so this was not necessarily a new trend, but this eschatological imminence brought an additional urgency to that thrust. The last opportunity to turn to God could be at any moment, and the urgent need for proselytizing eclipsed everything else.\textsuperscript{99} Because of this, Jesus’ Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 gained

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} Hankins, 22, 90.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Balmer, 32-4.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Hankins, 28.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Hankins argues that the epitome of this dispensational urgency is perhaps most openly displayed in the narrative of the popular \textit{Left Behind} series of books where the protagonists have only until the end of the
\end{itemize}
increasing importance as a rallying cry for conservative evangelicals to make sure the world heard quickly.\textsuperscript{100} The limited time before Christ's return not only required evangelicals to convert others quickly, it also afforded little time to grow and become sanctified.\textsuperscript{101} Change needed to happen rapidly, if not immediately, first because there was potentially no time for a more gradual transformation and, second, so that Christians would be capable of proselytizing effectively. Christians that were not transformed surely could not be capable of evangelizing well, but the limited time and importance of evangelizing meant that they had to be at least partially transformed very quickly. Grenz notes that biblical metaphors such as putting off the old man and putting on the new from Romans 6 and Colossians 3 are typically highlighted in evangelicalism and understood as pointing specifically to the conversion experience.\textsuperscript{102} All of this went further toward integrating conversion and transformation into a single event.

Finally, the fact that these fundamentalists found themselves at odds with the modernists created a clear dichotomy between them. However, fundamentalism became increasingly frowned upon, first by the media and later by mainstream Protestants and other evangelicals, often of the Reformed tradition, who favoured an amillennial eschatology or who simply rejected dispensationalism. They also became disagreeable to American culture overall as

\textsuperscript{100} While evangelism was the primary responsibility of evangelicals, their love for celebrities such as Whitefield, Finney, and Moody may have made them feel absolved of some of that duty since more effective others were already engaged in the task. If their influence was so much smaller than that of these seeming spiritual giants, they couldn't hope to do very much and therefore did not always engage in the process, potentially leaving a dichotomy between belief and practice.

\textsuperscript{101} Hankins, 109.

\textsuperscript{102} Grenz, 32.
many Americans saw them as obdurate and unyielding to scientific progress. This disfavour reached its climax in the infamous “Scopes Monkey Trial” wherein substitute public school teacher, John Scopes, was accused of violating Tennessee law by teaching Darwinian evolution.\(^{103}\) Soon after, perhaps due to the publicity of the trial or perhaps due to the death of the prosecutor of the case and the movement’s leader, William Jennings Bryan, fundamentalism began retreating from public discourse and participation, forming its own subculture, in many ways separate from overall American culture.\(^{104}\) Woodbridge notes of the academy, “An entire generation of evangelical scholars withdrew from the marketplace of ideas...”\(^{105}\) and, more generally, fundamentalists ceased working to confront and convince the prevailing culture directly and instead focused on building up their own institutions, communities, and societies, forming their own American subculture.

This retreat from society and efforts to transform it left fundamentalists with an us-versus-them mentality. The problem with them, which included both the modernists and society in general, is that they were not born again of the Holy Spirit and did not believe the correct doctrines. The solution, therefore, was for them to be converted to us and be truly saved. Evangelism was the only hope for the unbelievers, which for them included nominal Christians and those belonging to mainline churches who were not born again, and therefore the primary task of the Christian, which meant, again, that conversion became the focal point of conservative evangelicals.

\(^{103}\) Hankins, 51.

\(^{104}\) Mark Edwards, “Rethinking the Failure of Fundamentalist Antievolutionism after 1925,” *Fides et Historia* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2000), 90.

\(^{105}\) Woodbridge, et al., 79.
By the mid- and late-twentieth century, conversion had become the centre-point of evangelical spirituality. In attempting to define evangelicalism earlier, this thesis pointed to Bebbington's characteristics as well as particular historical markers, but some theologians have come to believe that the movement should presently be defined more by its relationship to conversion. Stan Grenz, pointing to a proposal by Lane Dennis, suggests that evangelicals are defined by their shared experience of personal salvation instead of doctrine or history.\textsuperscript{106} That experience may be something that happened to the person or a moment of decision to accept Jesus in an act of faith, but in either case, it means a change of person. Conversion has become so integral to evangelicalism that some define the boundaries of the movement by pointing to the conversion experience.

More, however, conversion had become not merely the definition of American evangelicalism, a major viewpoint was that it also became its power. For many, the conversion experience was understood largely as that moment in which transformation and sanctification occurred. Even some evangelicals who are critical of the American manifestation of the movement still maintain the idea of transformation at conversion, as evidenced by Christopher Catherwood’s direct statement, “it is conversion… that leads to moral change”. [emphasis his]\textsuperscript{107} While Catherwood does not necessarily mean that nothing further is necessary, the statement does imply that conversion is a critical seed for moral change, if not a portion of that change itself. The Keswick idea of the ability to be holy originating in the spiritual renewal that occurred at conversion loomed large in many


\textsuperscript{107} Catherwood, 135.
evangelical circles. Some in those circles were more direct than Catherwood, stating things like, “I was taught that life transformation took place at salvation…. [T]he solution to my struggle was exclusively spiritual.” For a large portion of twentieth century American evangelicals, conversion was the goal of Christianity as well as its almost exclusive source or channel of transforming power, both at the moment of conversion and into the future.

2 The Application of the Will

Despite not being one of the four elements of Bebbington’s quadrilateral, dynamics surrounding volition have played a large role in much of evangelical spirituality. Calvinism had a strong presence in the theology of many of the leaders of the First Great Awakening such as Edwards and Whitefield. Wesley's Arminian philosophy was of course influential as well, but Balmer argues that Edwards was the foremost apologist and theologian of the period, and he emphasized the divine visitation of God upon the people in bringing about revival rather than the will of those people themselves invoking it. Still, revival preachers urged their hearers to take action, to repent and accept the forgiveness of God and devote themselves to righteous lives, which required the employment of their will, even if it was enabled by the Spirit of God to do so.

Also during this period, revivalist preachers, who were initially invited into parishes, became seen by the clergy over time as becoming too influential and drawing attention away from the structure and culture of the local churches and were therefore often barred from preaching in


\[109\] Balmer, 19.
church buildings.\textsuperscript{110} Undaunted, these itinerant preachers moved their meetings outside. Being forced outside allowed for even larger gatherings, which served to increase the influence of the revivalists and lessen that of the local clergy. Balmer describes an increase in itinerant preachers and circuit riders that went directly to the people.\textsuperscript{111} Whereas towns previously had only a central church as a place of worship, American religion now had more options of preachers to whom to listen. The populace gained some measure of choice over the kind of religion to which they devoted themselves.

Mark Noll argues that this shift was compounded by the creation and structure of the United States government, which granted religious freedom. Freedom of religion meant that the government would not support any particular faith or denomination. The correct religion or denomination would not be determined by governmental authority, which left the choice up to the individual. Multiple churches began arising in towns, and people were free to choose which to attend.\textsuperscript{112} While location was still limiting as compared to the present era, choices were becoming more prevalent in American Protestantism.

The Second Great Awakening heightened the role of human volition even further. As noted above, Charles Finney believed wholeheartedly in the individual person's ability to choose whether or not to believe and follow God. These, he believed, were necessary foundations for revivals to be meaningful or effective.\textsuperscript{113} Therefore, this second revivalist movement was marked by the insistence that one could of one’s own volition assent to the gospel, and that

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Noll, \textit{Scandal}, 66.
\textsuperscript{113} Finney, 186-7.
that assent was sufficient for salvation.\textsuperscript{114} This Awakening promoted the premise that the human will was unbound, that any person could either choose or reject the gospel, though there was not only an acknowledgement of, but a thorough embrace of the fact that the will could be influenced by one’s external environment.\textsuperscript{115} People could not be forced to choose one way or another, but through careful management of circumstances and the flow of the revival, people could be moved toward a particular choice. Finney's Arminian theology made the human will critical to religion, but he also knew he could influence his audience, spurring them to engage their wills in reaching for God's salvation.

Keswick spirituality also bolstered evangelicalism's commitment to free-will due to the fact that its theology of sanctification, as noted previously, emphasized that the Christian should at every moment choose to surrender to God. One's holiness was dependent, therefore, on one's choice to turn to God continually and consistently. This choice was enabled by the Holy Spirit, but divinely empowered or not, it was up to the individual to make that choice. Keswick spirituality made the human decision to surrender or not central to every moment, thereby making volition key to the religious life.

This spirituality, in turn, became a force in the formation of fundamentalism,\textsuperscript{116} and Evan Howard argues that a primary concern of the fundamentalists, at least from a practical standpoint, was freedom from sin.\textsuperscript{117} Being holy and living righteously became to some extent equated in the early twentieth century with not sinning, which, according to Keswick

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Balmer, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 22-3.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Dockery and White, 16.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Howard, 181.
\end{itemize}
spirituality, was something one could indirectly choose. So long as one wilfully surrendered to God at all times, one did not sin and therefore was living as God intended. One had only to choose God.

This emphasis on the person’s responsibility to choose could only be maintained with the possibility that one’s capacity for choice was not bound in any significant way. The prominence of conversionism added further weight to this. If conversion is of such great focus, then one must of necessity possess the capacity to choose to be converted, which diminishes or even negates external forces having influence over the will. One’s identity and capacities are determined by one’s personal choices in the moment and not by external, non-intentional forces such as societal structures.\footnote{Hankins, 129-130.} Presumably, this rejection of the influence of non-intentional forces also produced the rejection of the influence of non-intentional internals, even going so far as to deny the existence of those non-intentional internal forces completely. One’s intention was the only force that determined the ultimate direction of one’s life and character.

Calvinism became more prominent in fundamentalism in the twentieth century, particularly among Southern Baptists and Evangelical Free churches,\footnote{Balmer, 24.} a progression that de-emphasized human volition and increased the emphasis on God’s sovereignty and the inevitable binding of the will to that rule. At a theological level, Calvinism and Arminianism continue to be debated, but some argue that this has not been the case in evangelical praxis, particularly due to the influence of Keswick spirituality. James Sawyer posits that while some churches and
denominations emphasize God's sovereignty and election as well as humanity's inability to resist God's call, the daily life of such denominations often retains the texture of Keswick spirituality or a consistent struggle to choose to do the right thing. Balmer likewise observes that even though Calvinism may have increasing weight in scholarly evangelical circles, at the popular level, the movement has not escaped its revivalist roots and still practically functions as if Arminianism is true. Evangelical spirituality and churches still function under the assumption that free-will is a given and that it is the responsibility of each person to choose to not sin. Some have even referred to evangelical spirituality's practical expression of sanctification as “try-harder-ism”, the belief that if one has fallen into sin, one must try harder to not sin or try harder to give oneself over to God. The underlying assumption is that one has chosen poorly, likely due to the influence of sin yet remaining in the person in some fashion, and that one is capable of choosing better, resisting that indwelling sin. Regardless of any individual's particular theology, whether Calvinist or Arminian, contemporary American evangelical spirituality is grounded in the idea that one can and must choose to cease from sin. Volition, the ability to make that choice, is assumed.

3 Morality: Love Versus Code of Law

In the mid 1500's, John Calvin, lawyer become theologian, sought to shape the city of Geneva into a godly state through the application of civic reforms. His intent was to bring about righteousness through a code of principles and regulations that defined how citizens

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120 Sawyer, 7.

121 Balmer., 25. Packer disagrees on this point, arguing that Keswick spirituality is giving its “siren song” and “last gasp”, (Packer, 124-5) though he admits that it has had strong influence on much of twentieth century evangelical spirituality.

122 Steve Porter, course discussion, La Mirada, CA, October 2003.
were to act, what has commonly become known as the third use of the law.\textsuperscript{123} The underlying belief here is that morality arises through discipline, order, and clear boundaries defining right and wrong, an idea with clear biblical support in the Decalogue and the Levitical law, though an idea that can subtly drift toward a belief that morality and discipline are accurate signs of holiness or even means of salvation and sanctification.

Those Puritans who migrated to America in the 1600's brought with them a Calvinist drive for morality and order, expressed through an emphasis on virtue and the practice of self-examination and personal discipline.\textsuperscript{124} This Puritanism, in turn, formed the foundation for much of American Protestantism, including that of evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{125} As noted, Whitefield was Calvinist, as was Edwards and many other revivalist preachers of the First Great Awakening, and they aimed their revivals at those already in the church with the intent of inspiring them toward devotion and, a natural outflow of this to their minds, godliness. When summarizing the gospel, Whitefield said it was, “the new birth and the power of godliness,”\textsuperscript{126} which largely encapsulates the Calvinist ideal as well. One is saved and made new, and then one endeavours to lead a godly life.

Calvinism forms one pole of a tension in the source and expression of morality in American Protestant spirituality. The other pole manifested in its current expression initially through John Wesley. Were one to consider Wesley’s early life, his perspective would not differ

\textsuperscript{123} Charles Partee, \textit{The Theology of John Calvin} (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 139.


\textsuperscript{125} Balmer, 2.

\textsuperscript{126} Howard, 180.
significantly from the Calvinist ideal as he strove to keep himself holy through discipline and a personal code of imperatives for keeping oneself moral. He even encouraged others to do the same as seen in the Oxford Holy Club, which he and his brother Charles created during their studies, and of which Whitefield himself was member, as a means to keep one another accountable and encourage one another to strive for holy lives.\footnote{Noll, \textit{History}, 91.}

Wesley never discarded the idea that discipline was valuable to the spiritual life, but a different emphasis emerged later in his theology. While still seeking to become holy, Wesley began to see morality and holiness as defined by the cardinal virtue of love rather than by a standard of laws.\footnote{Wesley, 6.} Goodness is good because it is an expression of love. This manifests most clearly in his theology of Christian perfection or entire sanctification, which proposes that Christians may be made entirely holy in this life. To reiterate from earlier in this chapter, Wesley sought to articulate that this perfection was one of intention, such that all acts were motivated by love, though many interpreted his use of the term to mean a complete cessation from all wrong-doing. Others interpreted him as arguing that one could in this life cease from doing wrong or violating the law, but his book, \textit{A Plain Account of Christian Perfection}, was an attempt to clarify the term, emphasizing that Christian perfection allowed for mistakes and transgressions if they were still motivated by love. One perfected or entirely sanctified could violate the law, but it could only occur if one did so with the intent to love. Such unintentional wrong-doings he referred to as sin improperly so called, differentiating them

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from unloving or intentionally wrong acts, which he called sin properly called. This perspective on morality being defined by love became the standard of holiness and morality for Wesleyans.

These two perspectives, the Wesleyan and the Calvinist, are not necessarily antithetical, but they can lead to different emphases. An extreme form of Calvinism can stress a strict moral code of what one ought and ought not to do, while an exaggerated Wesleyanism can become focused on loving or solving the ills of the world while neglecting disorder and immorality. Morality without love can become harsh and legalistic, and love without morality can be chaotic and give way to too much license. Both are necessary, but it is difficult to find a means of balancing them.

With the influence of the Puritans, the dominant perspective on love and morality in Protestant America was generally Calvinist prior to the influence of Wesley. Love was hardly absent from their theology, but a connection between morality and love was not emphasized. Morality was valued for its own sake, and becoming moral was accomplished through discipline and work rather than through the application of love.

The Wesleyan ideal of morality as defined by love began to grow as Arminianism began to rise in popularity during and after the First Great Awakening. Finney came to believe that revivals could not fully flourish under Calvinist theology’s emphasis on God’s election of people, as this eliminated the need for people to choose of their own wills to accept or reject

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129 Ibid., 19.
130 Lovelace, 235.
God’s invitation.\textsuperscript{132} If God elected people to salvation, then the urgency to choose for oneself was diminished or even eliminated. This argument against Calvinism as a basis for revivalism could not have been true, given the significant influence of Calvinist George Whitefield a century before Finney, but history shows Finney tangentially correct in that revivalism correlated with the movement of the overall stance of American theology away from Calvinism and into an Arminian position. As noted previously, if one is called to choose to devote oneself to God, one must bear the capacity to make that choice, implying more generally the ability to make choices freely. This is the classic Arminian position, emphasizing humanity's ability and responsibility, though never divorced from the enabling of the Spirit, to choose for or against God, as opposed to Calvinism's emphasis on God's sovereignty over the will of individual people.

As Arminianism's stress on humanity's ability to choose began to take hold, so did another of Wesley's emphases: love as social responsibility. Humanity's responsibility to choose how to live gave way to an increasing sense that Christians were called to not only live holy lives, but to transform society into a holy place, which meant making society a more loving place.\textsuperscript{133} This was furthered by a change in eschatology to be examined later, but the growing sense was that Christians were to make the world good and loving, leading to social reforms such as abolitionism and the creation of schools and hospitals. Evangelicalism became known in the late eighteenth century for societal reform.\textsuperscript{134} Finney's fervent Arminian position only encouraged this ideal in the early nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{132} Balmer, 22.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 30.
A few national circumstances pushed back against the Arminian ideal, however. The first was the American Civil War. Evangelicals saw themselves as generally successful at reforming society and making the nation a more holy place, but such a perspective became far more difficult to maintain in the face of the schism, chaos, and horror of the war.\textsuperscript{135} The atrocities of the war seemed to demonstrate that society was not as reformed as many had come to believe and that love was not a dominant factor in people's hearts or the culture as a whole. Noll even argues that the Civil War began the erosion of evangelicalism's dominance in American culture.\textsuperscript{136}

Increasing mechanization and industrialization also brought squalor and accidents leading to injuries and deaths, compounding the potential for disillusionment with Christians’ ability to bring about a holy world. Making small-town America into righteous communities seemed straightforward, but solving problems of urban cities seemed insurmountable.\textsuperscript{137}

Another circumstance was a change in the demographic of immigrants to the country. Up to the late nineteenth century, most immigrants to the United States were from Western Europe, where Protestantism was the dominant religion. Protestants migrating to America shared many of the same theological, cultural, and societal assumptions and perspectives, but after the Civil War, many of those immigrating were from eastern Europe, where Roman Catholicism and Judaism were stronger. The values of these new immigrants did not match that of American evangelicals, and evangelicals had little success in convincing them to

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 32-3.

\textsuperscript{136} Noll, \textit{History}, 4.

\textsuperscript{137} Balmer, 44.
adopt their ways. The immigrants did not share the evangelical fervour for societal reform and personal temperance, and this further demonstrated to evangelicals that they were unable to change the world to be holy and loving.

These factors pushed against the idea that human capacity, even empowered by God, could effect real change, that love could accomplish the task of bringing about righteousness. The drive to establish a holy nation began to wane. Personal transformation became a more prominent thrust than social transformation, and conservative evangelicals began looking for God to change the world rather than for Christians to do so. Liberal evangelicals continued to push for social justice and change, but a divide was growing between the liberal and conservative views. For the latter, personal examination became “a minor obsession” and ensuring that one's life and actions were righteous became an increasingly prominent focus.

The increasing adoption of Keswick spirituality aided this movement away from love as the root of morality as well. Sanctification in Keswick spirituality is largely concerned with how one escapes temptation and sin, a matter of doing the right thing or, rather, not doing the wrong thing. Morality is, again, a matter of what one ought and ought not do rather than a matter of how one is to love God and others. One loves God by obeying God's law, making the laws of morality the basis for love rather than, as Wesleyanism stressed, love is the basis

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139 Balmer., 34.
140 Ibid., 44.
141 Ibid.
142 Howard, 181.
143 See John 14:15.
of morality.

Fundamentalism's espousal of Keswick spirituality solidified this ordering of the two concepts well into the twentieth century. As noted, fundamentalists emphasized what Christians were not supposed to do rather than what they ought to do, making holiness almost entirely a matter of rules that one should follow. The emergence of neo-evangelicalism in the 1940's, a largely successful endeavour to retain the theological positions of fundamentalism while working to integrate with society rather than separating from it, loosened the stringency and extent of the rules to be followed in many circles, but as Sawyer notes, a Keswick view of sanctification has remained dominant among evangelicals throughout the twentieth century.

There may be some signs, however, of a shift, at least in some parts of evangelicalism. Packer's assertion that Keswick spirituality's influence in evangelicalism may be waning has already been noted, though others, like Sawyer, disagree. A more studied opinion may arise out of the work of Richard Flory and Donald Miller. They separated 21st century American evangelicals into four categories, imply that those in the resister category, which are most similar to early twentieth century fundamentalists, are struggling to maintain relevance in the face of post-modern culture and are potentially losing influence in American Protestantism

144 Dockery and White, 16.
145 Sawyer, 7.
146 Flory and Miller identify their sample more broadly as “post-boomer Americans” rather than specifically evangelicals. However, the churches they identify as sources of their research are generally evangelical. Additionally, they reference a migration of young people to mainline churches, which suggests that their sample was not mainline initially. Despite the lack of appellation, it is clear that their research was specifically on “post-boomer” evangelicals and not American Protestants as a whole. See Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller, Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press: 2008).
This category of evangelical is most concerned with moral rules and ceasing from sin, and their decreasing influence may imply a lessening in this emphasis. Conversely, Flory and Miller argue that those in their innovator category are highly concerned with finding ways to meet societal needs and take on an authentic Christian life. Their concern for meeting the needs of the less fortunate in society is reminiscent of the eighteenth century evangelicals who were known for societal reform and a focus on love. The potential waning of the one and Flory and Miller's hopefulness for the other may suggest a return toward an emphasis on love in evangelical theology and spirituality.

4 Dispensationalism and Objectivism

Dispensationalism is a theological system that is largely concerned with eschatological matters, though the framework it creates has implications for the present as well as the future. The reason for its emergence as a dominant theological framework is based in changes in evangelicalism's cultural and spiritual tenor over the movement's history. Therefore, it is useful to once again consider its origins, but prior to this, at least one issue of biblical interpretation must be noted so as to explain Protestant thought on eschatology.

While interpreting the book of Revelation is notoriously difficult, the beginning of chapter twenty presents an especially divisive question.

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147 Flory and Miller, 122-3.

148 Ibid., 13, 21.

149 Ibid., 50-1. The appropriators category does not seem to emphasize love or a moral code exclusively, and the reclaimers are exiting from the evangelical tradition, which largely negates their perspective on the matter. Additionally, the resistors and innovators are depicted as the holdouts and leading edge, respectively, of the cultural and spiritual momentum of evangelicalism. Therefore, Flory and Miller seem to understand them as indicators of the direction the movement may be developing theologically.
And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while. ... Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.\textsuperscript{150}

Theologians debate the exact interpretation of the “thousand years” noted here, referred to as the millennium, when Satan is bound and Christ will reign over the earth. The two major possibilities are that the thousand years are referring to the present age of the church or a future era. A theology viewing this thousand year millennium as the present is the amillennial position, which sees the number as metaphorical and the reign of Christ occurring now through the ministry, obedience, and love of the church.\textsuperscript{151} This position has not generally favoured by Protestants in America and has not had the theological and cultural influence that its alternatives have had. If the present is not the millennium, then Jesus will directly reign over the earth for a literal one-thousand year period. Additional texts referring to future periods of peace and prosperity such as Isaiah 11:5-9 are then understood as reflective of the millennium as well. Many evangelicals have historically subscribed to this latter understanding of the passage in one of two forms.

What distinguishes between the two forms is the question of how that future era emerges. The premillennial position, which expects Christ to return in order to forcibly set the world right and establish his reign of peace is the first possibility. In this view, Christ returns prior to the beginning of the millennium.\textsuperscript{152} The other position is the postmillennial position, which understands the millennium as being gradually initiated through the efforts of the

\textsuperscript{150} Revelation 20:2-3, 6 (Revised Standard Version)


\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 1106.
church. Global evangelization will cause the entire earth to convert to Christianity, and the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of all people to establish peace and holiness. Christ reigns, but not visibly or bodily in this interpretation of the millennium, but he will appear bodily after the thousand years to bring history to completion. While there are significant nuances and debates regarding the details of each of these positions, this should be sufficient for understanding their role in evangelical spirituality in the last three centuries.

Because revivalism led to an increase in acceptance of Arminianism, particularly during the Second Great Awakening, evangelicals' eschatology began to consolidate to a postmillennial focus. As discussed previously, Arminianism focuses more on people's ability to choose for or against God than on their depravity and inability to choose good. This optimistic view of humanity, combined with the Wesleyan emphasis on love as the ground of morality, gave evangelicals hope that they could bring about righteousness in the world, that they could make the world a better and holy place. Such an idea matches a postmillennial theology. Evangelicals began to understand that it was not only possible, but their responsibility and call to convert all or most people and to make society perfect, at least in the sense of being motivated purely by love, if not in terms of complete sinlessness. While evil may remain, it would be reduced to negligible proportions. The drive to reform the world and make society good was necessary to bring about the culmination of history. Once Christians had finished the task of making the world holy, Jesus would return to reign over the world in a visible and

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153 Balmer, 32.


155 Balmer, 30.

156 Ibid., 31.
material fashion.¹⁵⁷

Just as the Civil War and the change in immigrants demoralized evangelicals, changing their foundation for morality, so did it also change more conservative evangelicals’ eschatology. The Civil War seemed to show that Christians' efforts at reform were futile, and the new immigrants whose culture was so different and who could not be convinced to change suggested that Christians could not convert the world.¹⁵⁸ The postmillennial idea that American Christians would usher in the final age through their transforming righteousness began to seem absurd, but this left an eschatological vacuum.

Into this void stepped John Nelson Darby, as popularized by the spread of the Scofield Reference Bible, a widely circulated study Bible that integrated commentary alongside the text and incorporated a cross-reference system, both features that were new to the era. Darby, an Irish Anglican clergyman that later helped to form the Plymouth Brethren, proposed a particular premillennial theology that separated the world into seven distinct periods or dispensations. It was this dispensational system for which he became most famous. In each dispensation, God related with human beings in different ways.¹⁵⁹ The period from creation to the Fall formed Darby’s first dispensation, wherein God dealt with Adam and Eve directly. The second dispensation lasted from the Fall to the flood wherein Darby understood God as primarily dealing with humanity through their consciences. The period between Noah and Abraham formed the third dispensation, an era marked by people forming their own, separate


¹⁵⁸ Balmer, 32-4.

¹⁵⁹ Noll, Scandal, 119.
governments from one another. Darby's dispensation of promise lasted from Abraham until Moses, during which God related to humanity primarily through the Abrahamic covenant. Moses' Law formed the foundation of the new means of communication and relationship during the fifth dispensation, which lasted until the time of Christ. The church exists in the sixth dispensation, where Jesus' sacrifice and the activity of the Holy Spirit within believers form the ground and means of relationship between people and God. The final earthly dispensation is the thousand-year Millennial reign of Christ, during which Jesus will rule over the earth directly and personally. An eighth dispensation is conceived by some as occurring after the Millennium, and God will create a new heaven and earth that will last for eternity.

Inherent to dispensationalism is the understanding that the era prior to the millennium would be one of increasing immorality. The earth would become gradually more unrighteous until eventually Jesus would return to set everything right and begin his kingdom. Dispensationalism is, therefore, inherently premillennial, often being referred to as dispensational premillennialism, and those disheartened by the promise of postmillennialism found it a satisfying theology in that it explained why efforts to transform the world were met with the seeming failure and chaos of the mid and late nineteenth century; such efforts were doomed to failure as the world increasingly rejected God and God's ways. It was earlier noted that it was mostly the conservative evangelicals who began abandoning

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160 Erickson, 1169.
162 Balmer, 34.
postmillennialism. Those of a more liberal theology continued to hold to their postmillennial ideas, striving to integrate modern ways of understanding the world into their theology in order to discover and demonstrate the means of transforming humanity and society. They became the modernists against which fundamentalism reacted, and their efforts to integrate modern scientific methodologies and ideas into theology only served to demonstrate to the conservatives that the world was becoming increasingly immoral. Even sound theology, the fundamentalists perceived, seemed to be growing tainted by heretical ideas, which compounded the appearance of dispensationalism's validity. Society's failure to embrace the fundamentalists as bearing the truth as well as the eruption of World War I only increased the apparent obviousness of the world's march toward unrighteousness and the fundamentalists' expectation of Jesus' imminent return.

By the advent of neo-evangelicalism, dispensational premillennialism had become the dominant eschatological view of the fundamentalists, and it carried with it a number of additional theological implications. One implication most significant here was forcefully endorsed by B. B. Warfield in the 1918 book, *Counterfeit Miracles*, which argued that the miracles and signs that accompanied the apostles' ministry in the biblical record were of a particular dispensation and ceased afterwards. While miraculous guidance remains possible in this view, it is of a purely spiritual character and is not accompanied by visible or audible manifestations, particularly those that correspond to overt spiritual gifts such as

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163 Ibid., 37.
164 Hankins, 90.
tongues and healing.\textsuperscript{166} Thus, Christ's incarnation, the apostolic age, and the age of the church were all understood as distinct dispensations by many fundamentalists.

This cessationist theology put fundamentalists at odds with the emerging Pentecostal and later charismatic movements. Late twentieth century neo-evangelicalism has softened and often eliminated the barrier between evangelicals and charismatics, however, leading to many integrations of the two ideals, though many evangelicals have continued to hold Warfield's position, rejecting the possibility of sign gifts and miracles in the contemporary age.\textsuperscript{167}

In addition to the rise of dispensationalism, there was an increasing fervency for objectivism in evangelical theology. This was largely in response to part of the modernists' efforts at multi-disciplinary theological integration. One of modernism's inclusions was nineteenth century romanticist philosophy, which advocated that a person's feelings and intuitions were of the utmost importance, sometimes going so far as to advocate feeling as the purpose of human existence. While few theologians could adopt such an extreme position, many did follow this philosophical ideal at least to some extent and worked to integrate feeling, intuition, and personal experience into their theology.\textsuperscript{168}

Conservative theologians saw this as a dangerous course. Already liberals were altering traditional theological tenets and perspectives through the adoption of modern scientific, philosophical, and methodological ideas. To include personal experience and feeling as valid

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 47-8.


\textsuperscript{168} Hankins, 20.
theological matters was to potentially undermine traditional theology further.\textsuperscript{169} The subjectivity and unreliability of feelings and experience could possibly distort the boundaries of theology to an even greater extent, so they rejected anything subjective in their theology. The rejection of all subjectivity required that an objective foundation be presented, leading to the creation of documents specifying the foundational doctrines of Christian theology, i.e., the fundamentals, and the exaltation of the Bible as the only infallible source of truth and the core of the spiritual life.\textsuperscript{170} Bebbington established biblicism as one of his four marks of evangelicals, but fundamentalists magnified this tendency toward concentrating on the Bible. While many books continued to be written and read, the Bible was stressed as the most important and only completely trustworthy text.

Such fervency for the scriptures and the need to establish them as trustworthy against the subjectivism of the modernists led to the advocacy of the doctrine of inerrancy, that the scripture, at least in its original text, contained no errors and was entirely true and trustworthy. This doctrine came gradually to be the most definitive tenet of fundamentalism and eventually became something of a \textit{shibboleth} for many evangelical coalitions who required adherents to publicly affirm its validity.\textsuperscript{171}

The combination of dispensationalism and objectivism created a Christianity wherein the canon was not merely closed, but potentially the only means of communication from God to human persons. Intuition, internal experience, and feelings were often seen as unreliable and

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{171} Grenz, 28.
ways that God no longer used to lead or speak to believers. There was no need, it was suggested, because all that was necessary for life and godliness was already provided in the scriptures. While people were expected to pray to God, presenting their concerns, praise, and requests, the present dispensation was one wherein God was rarely expected to respond back, if at all, except through the text of the Bible. One's responsibility as a Christian was to know the Bible well, to do what it commanded, and to disregard subjective experiences as erratic and untrustworthy phenomena that could be too easily used by the flesh to lead the believer into sin.

5 supernaturalism

A final matter to be considered is the rise of supernaturalism among evangelicals, particularly in the early twentieth century. Some roots of this tendency, however, go back into seventeenth century Pietism, whose characteristics had long-reaching effects on American Protestantism. Ernest Stoeffler points to one of those characteristics as other-worldliness, a tendency to focus on either spiritual or future realities at the expense of the present, material world. It could be argued that the intensity of this tendency waxed and waned with the prevailing eschatological views of the culture. That is, other-worldliness was strong when premillennialism dominated simply because the expectation was that the present age was nearing closure and a very different future was imminent. Conversely, other-worldliness was weaker, though not entirely absent if Stoeffler is correct, when postmillennialism dominated because of humanity's capability and responsibility to change the present world. Even such a focus on the present world, however, was for the purpose of ushering in the future, which

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only supports the idea that other-worldliness was a consistent American Protestant characteristic.\textsuperscript{173}

The twentieth century form of other-worldliness, however, took shape largely, though not exclusively, as a reaction against modernism. When the modernists began their integrative work, some of their efforts revolved around incorporating evolutionary theory and other ideas based on science of the natural world. Many began to consider natural explanations for seemingly supernatural events and phenomena in scripture as well, explaining biblical events through scientific or psychological means. Liberal theologians began, for example, to see the atonement as meaning a particular part of the process of human development toward the divine rather than a divine appeasement of guilt.\textsuperscript{174} Spiritual development in this perspective no longer depended so strongly on the intervention of spiritual dynamics or agents, but was rather a process integral to the biology and psychology of human nature guided toward moral and socially beneficial goals. The supernatural character of conversion, sanctification, and atonement diminished or in some cases ceased entirely, becoming explained in natural terms.\textsuperscript{175}

Further, these theologians began to attend to Jesus’ life and activities to a greater extent than had often been the case in the past. Modernists began to attend more carefully and critically to Jesus’ activities and interactions with others, coming to see these as the more important parts of his incarnation rather than, as had been the prevailing view among Protestant theologians to this time, Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Modernist theologians moved

\textsuperscript{173} Noll, Scandal, 32.

\textsuperscript{174} Noll, History, 374.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
away from the idea that the incarnation was a medium by which the ultimate sacrifice for sin would be made and toward the belief that the incarnation was a medium by which God demonstrated in human form that one could live a holy life and the means by which it could be accomplished.\textsuperscript{176}

The argument developed from this that emulation of Jesus’ life was possible for all and followed natural pathways because everyone was a child of God and God was near to all. If one sought to become like Jesus and live as he did, the means were already in place. Human beings, in this view, were generally good, and good works, which Jesus demonstrated to the world, were the heart of true worship and devotion to God.\textsuperscript{177} This led to and correlated with the idea that the resurrection was merely the remembrance of Jesus’ life and goodness and the desire to fulfill his teachings and way of being in the world rather than a historical event.\textsuperscript{178}

The human person did not need to have a transformation of substance because the capacity for Christ-likeness was already inherent to human nature if only one truly desired to live as Jesus lived and taught.

Furthermore, if Jesus’ life and activities were of as great or greater importance to the Christian narrative and theology than his death and resurrection, then the life of Christians and of all human persons was likewise of as great or greater importance than their eventual death and afterlife. Social action in the present became a focus of modernist evangelicals, and while this did not differ drastically from the social action of the past, the theological underpinnings shifted at least in part from an eschatological base to a Christological one.

\textsuperscript{176} Hankins, 22.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
Human potential, social progress, and the redemption of the world through social structure and justice became the heart of modernist doctrine rather than the natural consequences of what had been Christian doctrine’s core truths of divine action in the world and in human persons.¹⁷⁹

Because these integrative techniques required, as they saw it, amending traditional theology and scripture itself, the conservative, fundamentalist response was to reject these modernist conclusions.¹⁸⁰ Spiritual phenomena were not merely natural processes under poetic nomenclature, but were actually supernatural happenings. One was not converted and did not progress in the Christian life through simply natural patterns, and one could certainly not become like Jesus through natural means and his or her own efforts. Such a proposal was impossible because human beings were not generally good. Sin is present in all, twisting all things away from righteousness, and only a divine act could turn one toward righteousness. Therefore, spiritual phenomena such as conversion and sanctification required supernatural causes.¹⁸¹

If this is the case, then divine acts are necessary, and those divine acts are found in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit at conversion and in the atonement accomplished through Jesus’ death. While Jesus’ activities in Israel were far from inconsequential, they were the developments that led up to the much more important events of his death and resurrection. Fundamentalists therefore emphasized those events, pointing to them as the culmination of all history and therefore to be attended to most carefully. Jesus’ life paled in


¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 446.

¹⁸¹ Hankins, 22.
comparison to the importance of his death.

The changes to conversionism also reinforced this emphasis on the spiritual. Evangelicals began to emphasize transitioning from an old life to a new life as Paul described in 2 Cor. 5:17. Such a new life was understood as possible only through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and not something capable of being accomplished by persons themselves. The crux of evangelical life depended on other-worldly action. More and more, what was important to fundamentalists was spiritual and other-worldly phenomena and realities. Evangelicalism became largely focused on things not of this earth and even anti-natural in regards to religious matters.

Moreover, as premillennialism, particularly in dispensationalist form, continued to grow in favour among conservatives, the conviction likewise grew that the present, material world was coming to an end. Jesus’ return to earth to establish his reign was imminent. Even more, the present world was of limited duration compared to the impending eschaton. Time devoted to the societal progress and the creation of structures intended to support and care for people’s physical needs and issues was not as significant as time spent working to change the eternal destiny of those people’s souls. Many evangelicals therefore began focusing on heaven and the future earth, which drew attention away from present, material realities. While not neglectful of daily life, their attention, hope, and conversations, particularly theological, turned largely to the future and its spiritual realities.

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182 Grenz, 32.
183 Hankins, 28.
184 Balmer, 42.
In general, as fundamentalists felt themselves defending the truth against the modernists, their time became largely devoted to the defence of these matters. In particular, the effects of Jesus' death and the atonement on the Christian person were accented, as were, as discussed previously, the inerrancy of scripture, deity of Christ, truth of the resurrection, and virgin birth of Jesus.\(^{185}\) As increasing time was spent defending these theologies, they grew in importance to conservative evangelicals, coming, to some extent, to preclude discussion and examination of others. What happened now and in the impending future in the supernatural and spiritual realm took on greater significance than what happened in the material. Further, any natural explanations were suspect because of their potential liberal origins, and therefore natural processes were shunned in discussions of matters related to the Christian life.\(^{186}\)

Once again, the advent of neo-evangelicalism loosened the boundaries on this supernaturalism manifesting as anti-naturalism, though its effect is not consistent throughout evangelicalism as a whole. As Miller and Flory have observed, there are the innovators, who seek to engage with the world, which can include understanding aspects of the faith in terms of natural processes, and there are the resisters, who hold to traditional standards, continuing to focus on the supernatural and avoid some amount of application of scientific or natural processes to Christianity, as well as the appropriators, who utilize cultural elements in order to promote a generally conservative, traditional message.\(^ {187}\) Joel Green serves as an example of an innovator through his integration of neurological data in his accounting for the nature of the human person, explaining the soul in terms of biological dynamics while grounding

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\(^{185}\) Hankins, 29  
\(^{186}\) Ibid., 85.  
\(^{187}\) Flory and Miller, 13-5.
the argument in biblical texts.\textsuperscript{188} Miller and Flory also highlight the activities of evangelical organizations such as the Dream Center in Los Angeles, which focuses on the present material and psychological needs of communities in addition to their spiritual ones.\textsuperscript{189} Social action for many innovators has regained its place as a crucial evangelical expression.

Resisters and appropriators continue to emphasize the spiritual and supernatural, though not typically with as much resistance to scientific progress as their progenitors. Few contemporary evangelicals reject scientific research, but figures such as J. P. Moreland do argue against scientism, a conviction that science can accurately portray all aspects of reality and provide meaning and explanation for them.\textsuperscript{190} He argues that science can provide new information, but it cannot provide an explanation for all things, particularly that which cannot be measured or which may transcend the sum of its parts.\textsuperscript{191} The dynamics of reality and of human life, they insist, require elements that are beyond the scope of scientific observation and explanation, and these elements are critical in particular to theology and ethics. Additionally, evangelical events such as the Harvest Crusade attract crowds with entertainment and consumer goods, but do so with the purpose of preaching warnings about the end of the age and inviting people to “make a decision for Christ,”\textsuperscript{192} an evangelical phrase for choosing to convert and accept the spiritual and atoning work of the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{188} Joel B. Green, \textit{Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

\textsuperscript{189} Flory and Miller, 180-2.

\textsuperscript{190} James Porter Moreland and Scott B. Rae, \textit{Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics} (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 7.

\textsuperscript{191} E.g., the concept of supervenience in Moreland and Rae, 131.

\textsuperscript{192} Flory and Miller, 58-9.
Resisters and appropriators downplay the present and material world in favour of the future, spiritual world and present spiritual dynamics.

Twentieth century supernaturalism, then, is an other-worldly focus on spiritual or eschatological issues that surpasses attention to the material world. Jesus’ death and resurrection are of greater importance than his manner of living, though his teachings and life are not to be discarded. The body influences the soul and therefore must be taken into consideration, but of greater import is the soul because of its eternal nature and control of the material person. Similarly, the present world is quickly coming to an end and is therefore of lesser importance in comparison to the coming age. A person's natural development is of secondary importance to his or her spiritual development. Moreover, that spiritual development is dominated by a conversion event, which is of such great important that it came to largely eclipse social activism,\(^\text{193}\) which rendered the spiritual world of more significance than the physical. In each of these cases, the present, material world is relegated to a secondary position in favour of the spiritual and eternal.

6 Summary

While this is not a complete historical overview of American evangelicalism, it elucidates the major points with which Dallas Willard contended. Conversionism had become increasingly stressed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until conversion became, for some, the defining characteristic of an evangelical – those who were “born again”. That conversion act became the focal point of the individual evangelical’s life and the principal, if not singular, point of transformation. Sanctification and spiritual development were condensed into that

\(^{193}\) Catherwood, 97.
single event, which was the source of all righteousness that was to follow. Moreover, the
importance of this event made it the chief focus of evangelical effort. The need to proselytize
and convert others was increasingly stressed as the main job of the Christian. By the middle
of the twentieth century, conversion became the identity, power, and task of the evangelical.

Concurrently, evangelicalism began elevating the role of the human will until it became,
through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, almost unlimited in its power within the individual.
American Protestantism began with conversion as an experience mediated by God, but
Holiness figures shifted the idea toward an act of choice by the person. More, Keswick
spirituality made the will the focal point of the spiritual life, as one’s primary task was to
choose to surrender to God at every moment. Ultimately, evangelicalism had to come to
assume that the will was unbounded post-conversion so that one could freely choose to not
sin at all times. There could be no external or internal dynamics that swayed one’s will
beyond one’s ultimate control.

While evangelicalism stressed social action in the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth
century, social action gave way to a personal focus after the Civil War, and with this came a
change from understanding morality as defined by love to morality being codified as a set of
rules. The effort to transform society by love seemed to fail, thereby leaving only the option
of choosing for oneself to act righteously. Further, the spread of Keswick spirituality made
the focus of the spiritual life ceasing from active sin, and fundamentalism emphasized what
the Christian ought not to do in order to be separate from the world. By the middle of the
twentieth century, morality for the evangelical became a matter of not acting wrongly and
following a code of rules rather than a matter of lovingly engaging. While love was hardly
absent from evangelicalism, they defined morality as a ceasing from doing wrong.
Eschatologically, evangelicalism moved largely into premillennial dispensationalist thought, which separated off the present age from that described in the scriptures. In the present age, it was argued, God spoke primarily through the Bible, the finished work of revelation. The fundamentalist push against the subjectivism of romanticist philosophy further compounded this argument. The Christian needed an objective stance by which to understand the faith, and this could be found only in the Bible. Some circles eliminated the possibility of hearing from or experiencing God in any fashion other than through the Bible, and those circles that did not eliminate the possibility, still understood it as suspect. Only the Bible was trustworthy, which for many meant that only the Bible as a means of divine communication was possible or valuable.

Finally, evangelicalism began to de-emphasize the present material world in favour of the present spiritual world and the coming future world. As modernists began integrating natural science into theological dynamics, fundamentalists emphasized the spiritual nature of the atonement, the veracity of miracles, and the fundamentally spiritual nature of humanity. Moreover, the immanence of Jesus’ return diminished the importance of the present world, elevating the importance of the coming eschaton. Natural science was not to be discarded, but it was increasingly understood as suspect and unable to describe the true character of reality and of the human person. Only other-worldly dynamics could fully capture how the universe and its God-image-bearing inhabitants function.

It was in this evangelical culture, history, and thought that Willard was raised, and it was, in part, the cultural traits noted here that shaped him spiritually and mentally. However, it is also these specific traits with which he contended, seeking to uncover and present a Christianity that was true to divine intent and human nature and a process of spiritual development that
reflected the same. It is to his thought and commentary on the evangelicalism of his age that this thesis now turns.
Chapter 2
Willard's Critique of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism

There have been two scholarly attempts thus far to describe Willard's overall body of writing. Steve Porter argues that it is largely an attempt to provide a unified and comprehensive account of spiritual development, which had been missing from evangelical theology for numerous decades.\(^{194}\) This categorization seems fitting given Willard's prominent position within spiritual formation circles in evangelicalism. Gary Black's depiction, however, argues that, while Porter's categorization seems to be how many perceive Willard's thought, it is too narrow an understanding. Instead, Black sees Willard's corpus as providing a universal theology, exploring all matters of doctrine relevant to evangelical theology over the last two-hundred and more years.\(^{195}\) Black considers this theology to be universal but not systematic in the scholarly sense.

This attempt to universalize Willard's work is perhaps too great a reach, considering that Willard rarely, if at all, discussed in depth some topics relevant to twentieth century evangelicalism, including eschatology and the doctrine of scripture. However, Black goes on to describe Willard's body of writing as “a potential corrective ... to American evangelical theological reflection in general”,\(^{196}\) which may be a more fitting description. Black devotes

\(^{194}\) Porter, 240-1.

\(^{195}\) Black, xix

\(^{196}\) Ibid.
a full chapter to Willard's prescribed corrections for evangelicalism, though what he provides is only a partial depiction of Willard's critique, mostly incorporating those elements that are most explicit in the corpus. In fact, the majority of Willard's body of writing can be understood as a critique of twentieth century evangelical theology and spirituality, or at least particular aspects of it. It is never merely a critique, however, as he expanded upon doctrinal matters to create a practical theology and framework for a lived spirituality.

The themes noted in the previous chapter are the primary ones that Willard sought to correct. There are likely others, though these five are woven throughout the majority of his writing, while others are only touched upon more briefly or in more isolated writings. It should be noted that he often did not refer to these themes directly, choosing instead to explain how the Christian life was designed to work differently than many Protestants had come to understand it. Willard's correction of these evangelical tendencies could be considered an expression of his overall intention in a negative sense. Expressed positively, on the other hand, Willard sought to proclaim the gospel as gradually transformative, the will as limited and dependent, love as the apex of Christian spiritual life, God as personal and presently interactive, and Christianity as crucial for everyday life.

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197 Ibid., 143ff.

198 Ironically, Willard notes pejoratively that most Protestant denominations define themselves as against something another group does or believes, pointing even to the fact that the term, Protestant, originates from the Reformation's protest against Roman Catholicism. He, too, could be understood as protesting against 20th century evangelicalism, though his purpose was to change and transform rather than to separate from those he opposes. See Willard, Renovation, 236-7.

199 For example, his book, Knowing Christ Today, is a treatise on faith as knowledge rather than merely opinion or supposition, and the essay, “The Failure of Evangelical Political Involvement”, was intended to critique late 20th century attempts to change the culture through political involvement, though much of this essay could fall under a discussion of the will. Issues such as these do appear in Willard's writing, though they are not reflective of his entire corpus. See Willard, Knowing and Willard, “Political Involvement,” 74-91.
1 The Gospel as Gradually Transformative

1.1 Willard’s Statement of the Problem

Willard presented a number of critiques to the way in which evangelicalism views the gospel and conversion, but one of the most prominent is in the way it makes the gospel primarily about affirmation of a correct belief structure. “The doctrinal struggles of many centuries,” he stated plainly, “had transformed saving faith into mere mental assent to correct doctrine.”\(^{200}\)

When one came to agree that the doctrinal tenets that the evangelical church generally held were correct, then one was considered a Christian and saved. This made faith a matter of information and knowledge, connecting it only to the mind. The assumption behind this is that what the mind accepts to be truth, combined with the spiritual change that the Holy Spirit works at the moment of that acceptance, is all that is necessary to bring about good in the individual as well as in how the individual engages with God, others, and the environment around him or her. Willard, however, heartily disagreed with this assumption. He pointed to American culture and suggested that if this were true, then just as a large portion of salt would be unmistakable in a piece of meat, the 25% of Americans claiming to be the salt of the earth should have an unmistakable flavour within the culture, but the culture carries little to no such flavour.\(^{201}\) The church overestimates, he argued, the good that comes from doctrinal correctness.\(^{202}\)

He went on to argue that the evangelical church has failed to understand something more than correct doctrine is necessary, that the gospel is about a right kind of life and relationship,

\(^{200}\) Willard, *Disciplines*, 23 (emphasis his).

\(^{201}\) Ibid.

\(^{202}\) Ibid., 16.
not merely the right kind of belief. The disconnect is most obvious when one considers the content of the belief, which includes numerous commands from Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles. Such commands are taken as dogma and as truths about how one is supposed to live under the rule of God, yet many, said Willard, do not intend to obey them. Christians believe that people in general are supposed to live this way, but each individual Christian does not make efforts to do so. Similarly, many promises are made in the scriptures about God and Jesus, but many evangelicals do not actually trust in those promises or in the persons about whom those promises were made. Like Jesus' own brother, Willard criticized Christians for becoming hearers of the word without becoming those who do it (Jas. 1:22). This, of course, makes sense if all that is necessary is to assent to the proper knowledge, but the content of that proper knowledge contradicts such an interpretation.

The result, Willard asserted, is that evangelicals trust in facts about Jesus or a spiritual and juridical arrangement involving Jesus, but they do not actually trust Jesus. Salvation is merely a matter of the atonement and forgiveness, but it has little to do with Jesus himself. They neither believe that what he said to do is, in fact, what they ought to do, nor that what he said is valuable in any fashion. Further, they do not trust that relationship with God beyond the spiritual arrangement around atonement is worth investing in. God is not worth relying on in any fashion. This result is quite prevalent in the church, said Willard, but it is defeating to the individuals who adhere to it, as they fail to experience God's good intention for them, but also to Christianity overall, as it lowers the good of the entire Christian

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205 Willard, *Disciplines*, 33 and Black, 85.
community as yeast spreads through dough (Gal. 5:9). Additionally, it damages Christianity in general, he argues, as those claiming to have what is good, that is the gospel, while still living in ways that are not good, imply to others that the gospel is not truly good at all and that Christianity is false.  

A related issue is the equation of acceptance of right doctrine with conversion. As already implied, one is considered converted upon the mental acceptance of correct Christian doctrine. This conversion, then, means the acceptance of Christ's atonement for one's sin and nothing more. Given that acceptance of doctrinal tenets occurs in a particular moment, then conversion, likewise, is an event. Its significance to evangelical spirituality also makes it a singular event in the Christian life. “[O]nce the soul is ‘safe’ it is usually treated as needing no further attention.” Christian spirituality almost collapses into a single moment of mental assent. Willard even argued that the process of discipleship, which should follow conversion, is a mystery to many churches, causing them to substitute making more converts or adding numerically to the local church body. Once one is convinced of the truth, one is converted, and then the task is to convince others of the truth so that they will likewise be converted. Willard perceived this as the general pattern of evangelical spirituality.

The results of this, however, are clear. Evangelicals expect that being convinced of the truth and thereby becoming converted will result in characterological change, but this alone produces little to no change, as evidenced by the prevalence of condemnation and

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206 Willard, Renovation, 87, 239.
207 Black, 85.
208 Willard, Renovation, 208.
209 Willard, Conspiracy, 300-1.
divisiveness that exists within many churches.\textsuperscript{210} Evangelical churches aim to “get people into heaven rather than to get heaven into people,”\textsuperscript{211} mistaking them to be equivalent. Most churches do acknowledge that some further activity is necessary to actualize the change that has already occurred at conversion, most of which is a matter of reading the Bible in order to continually attain knowledge, to refine the proper doctrine that one first accepted at conversion. However, the reading of scripture in this way still does not bring about personal or spiritual change because it is merely for the accumulation of knowledge and does not carry with it a posture of humility or intention to follow through with what it commands.\textsuperscript{212} Evangelicals do not intend to do what the Bible says; they merely seek to be capable of recalling it and rightly interpreting it, but this does not effect the change that they expect in themselves.

Troublingly, argued Willard, many evangelicals not only do not intend to do what God commands, they do not intend to be transformed. They typically do not oppose it, but neither do they seek it or see it as integral to their faith. Conversion as mental assent, resulting in forgiveness of sin, is often understood as all to which they are called, a result of the doctrinalism and focus on conversion discussed in the previous chapter. Willard referred to A. W. Tozer's declaration of this separation of forgiveness from taking on Christ's yoke (Matt. 11:29) as a prevalent modern heresy.\textsuperscript{213} That heresy, he asserted, manifests as a “gospel of sin

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\item \textsuperscript{210} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 70 & Willard, Renovation, 237.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 238-9.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Black, 63-4.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 242. Tozer was a mid-twentieth century Protestant writer and speaker, known for his integration of historical and mystical elements of Christianity into evangelical thought. See A. W. Tozer, \textit{The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life} (New York: Harper &
management", a conservative interpretation of Christian doctrine that makes the gospel solely about atonement such that one's guilt is remitted and one's eternal status secured positively. With the gospel solely about atonement, however, evangelicals are then able to assuage their feelings of guilt, affirm themselves as good or okay, and cease being concerned with anything further. They are already forgiven, so there is no reason to strive to follow Christ's commands or example. He largely blamed pastors and teachers for failing to present a vision that inspires their hearers to desire transformation and change, though it is likely that those same teachers are simply passing forward the same vision that was handed to them by their own teachers.

This uninspiring vision is partially a manifestation, in Willard's mind, of the lack of framework in evangelicalism's practical theology for how spiritual development occurs. Conversion is expected to accomplish the majority of it, but Willard's time pastoring demonstrated to him that this did not happen. Moreover, what he and other pastors were telling Christians to do was not helping them grow spiritually either. Evangelical life could be summarized as attending church, reading the Bible, giving money to support God's

Row, 1961) and A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1993). Tozer posited that evangelistic appeals were being made with the claim that people needed to make no changes and give up nothing, but just believe in Jesus as saviour, which led to a divorce of seeing Jesus as saviour and seeing Jesus as Lord. See A. W. Tozer, I Call It Heresy! (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread Publishers, 2010), 7.

214 Willard, Conspiracy, 41ff. Willard expresses a gospel of sin management applicable to more theologically liberal Christians as well, reducing the gospel to a matter of love and earthly liberation of the oppressed. However, this “gospel” is applicable to few evangelicals, as Willard understood them and meant to be a critique and corrective to an expanded survey of Christianity.

215 Black, 152.

216 Willard, Renovation, 91.

217 Willard, Disciplines, 17.

218 Ibid., 18.
mission, attending and supporting church functions, evangelizing, and generally trying to be good. This framework, Willard observed, rarely results in significant transformation.\textsuperscript{219} Attempting to use these methods and tools that evangelicals had passed down through the decades results in failure, causing Willard to conclude that evangelicals, by the middle of the twentieth century, “had lost any recognized, reasonable, theologically and psychologically sound approach to spiritual growth, to really becoming like Christ.”\textsuperscript{220} Evangelicals had a distorted idea of how spiritual growth happened, which effectively meant they did not know.

Part of the reason for this lack of framework came from the rejection of historical means of growth. Many historical practices were rejected due to their association with Roman Catholicism or, implicitly, the Eastern Orthodox church. These include anything associated with monasticism, iconography, and an elevated understanding of the eucharist. More, however, evangelicals returned strongly to the Reformation emphasis on faith alone as the means of justification. This firm dichotomy between faith and works, however, caused evangelicals to separate faith from anything one does. Behaviours and actions of any kind became dissociated from one's religion.\textsuperscript{221} In this way, disciplines once accepted as beneficial or even necessary for the spiritual life by progenitors of evangelicalism such as the Puritans, became anathema.\textsuperscript{222} Many evangelicals shunned ascetic practices, meditation, structured practices of poverty, and other disciplines as futile attempt to save oneself.

Willard also argued that evangelicals developed a mistaken understanding of grace. Grace

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., x.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 133.
\end{flushright}
became seen as a gift and that this gift would cease being a gift were one to attempt to do anything in order to receive it. Should one work in any way in order to obtain grace, then it would become wages rather than a gift. This high understanding of grace meant to some that Christians must not do anything at all, lest it become an attempt at salvation by works.\textsuperscript{223} The necessary corollary to this idea is that Christians only needed to trust that strength and insight would be automatically given to them at each moment it was necessary in order to bring about good. That is, in moments of temptation or suffering, one could always find a means of escaping if one trusted in God's grace.\textsuperscript{224} Preparation, particularly in as much as it meant training oneself through practice and discipline, was not only unnecessary but anathema.

Willard brought much of this down to the issue of evangelicals failing to understand the actual condition of the human person and the need for something beyond right doctrine. Once converted, the Christian was assumed to be made entirely right internally. Churches missed the continually ruined state of even the converted.\textsuperscript{225} Yet because of this failure to acknowledge the Christian's ruined state, evangelicals also do not see the need to deal with the inner life in any way,\textsuperscript{226} instead seeing the real need as numerical, financial, and programmatic growth in churches.\textsuperscript{227} The solution to all of these failings, Willard stated bluntly, was to “do nothing less than engage in a radical re-thinking of the Christian

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{225} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 45.

\textsuperscript{226} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 315.

\textsuperscript{227} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 246.
conception of salvation.”

1.2 Willard's Corrective

The issue of salvation was too long considered a purely spiritual and systematic issue. Evangelical theology's concentration on dogmatic theology needed to be paired, if not supplanted, with practical theology. Issues of doctrine were not unimportant to Willard, but they largely mattered only insofar as they were related to a practical result. Therefore, at the intellectual level, the kind of theology that matters to evangelicals needs to change.

With this change comes an alteration in language. Willard asserted that belief that fails to produce any sort of action cannot even be called belief in the biblical sense of the word. Belief not leading to action could be considered knowledge, but belief should cease being used to describe it. So long as evangelicals continued using the term to mean only mental acceptance, it would not accomplish what Jesus intended when charging his followers to “believe in me.” (e.g., John 14:1) True belief should push followers of Jesus to find ways “to transform right answers into automatic responses to real-life situations.”

Willard also suggested a change in the way evangelicals define and understand salvation and conversion. Salvation is the act of being saved, but it does not necessarily specify from what one is saved. Evangelicals generally consider salvation to mean being saved from sin and...
from damnation. More theologically liberal perspectives, according to Willard, may see it as salvation from oppressive systematic power structures. Willard included both the evangelical and the liberal perspectives but argued that neither is sufficient.232 “Salvation is deliverance – manifold kinds of deliverance,” he posits. The Christian is saved from sin and oppression, but also from the need to make something happen, misery, weakness, and having to bear the burden of life alone.233 Black summarizes this idea of salvation, and Willard would likely have agreed, though noting it is only partial, saying it is being saved from self-idolatry, the placing of oneself in the role that God intended as God's own, whether from fear, pride, or a mistaken idea of how life works.234

This conceptualization, however, could still be interpreted as being about an event or a particular moment, but this remains a truncated version of Willard's idea of salvation. Salvation is continual. It is a state of being where one is connected to and living out a certain kind of life and character.235 He argued that salvation to the first centuries of the church was conceived of as being about the life of Jesus, not only about his death or resurrection. If salvation was about Jesus' life, an unfolding rather than an event, then it is likewise about the unfolding life of the Christian both in the first centuries of the church as well as in the present.236 One was not once saved in the sense that it is complete. Salvation is continually happening to Christians, or at least it should be.

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232 Black, 139.
233 Willard and Ortberg, 70-1.
234 Black, 139.
235 Ibid., 85.
236 Willard, Disciplines, 34-8.
Salvation, therefore, has not reached its fulfilment at the moment of acceptance of doctrine, the commitment of one's life to God, or the speaking a sinner’s prayer. It may begin at these points, but it continues on, not reaching fulfilment until the resurrection. The Christian always yet needs saving from the oppression of others, the tyranny of sinful habit, the idolatry of oneself such that one becomes increasingly “like Christ in character and in power and thus [realizing] our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing.” This is “the heart of the New Testament message.”

While Willard rarely used the terms, Black presents Willard as seeing justification and sanctification as a single process rather than as separate matters. Where evangelicalism tends to break the two apart and allow justification to dominate the speech and life of the Christian, Willard called for an integration of the two concepts, making the Christian life about transformation and reformation and not merely about affirming the proper information.

For sanctification to even be a major consideration, however, one must accept the need for it. This requires that evangelicals believe that all persons have the readiness to do evil present within them, including those who have already been justified. There is a distinction between Christians and non-Christians, but that dichotomy cannot be carried beyond its measure. The mere fact that one is a Christian does not automatically mean that one no longer has the inclination to sin and is no longer in need of God's present help and direction. Evangelicals must recognize the continuing ruined state of the Christian's soul and character.

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237 Ibid., ix.
238 Black, 70.
239 Willard, Disciplines, 225, 234-5.
This is not to say that all evangelicals do not recognize it. Many do, but Willard chastised these evangelicals for believing instead that nothing needs to be done about it. Their perspective says that the soul is indeed ready to do evil, but Christians are already forgiven, so there is no need for anything further except potentially an effort to not do the same evil in the future.\textsuperscript{240} Forgiveness is the best that can be hoped for, leaving the ruined state to never be dealt with effectively. Just as those who deny the ruined state of the Christian soul must amend their views, so those who say this ruined state is permanent must come to understand, said Willard, that there are means of dealing with it and remedying it. Spiritual renovation, that is, sanctification, is possible in the present era and is an integral, and not merely optional, part of salvation.

Conversion, therefore, is a process. Willard wanted evangelicals to understand conversion such that it does not occur in a moment, but rather one is always in the process of being converted. There is an entry point, and something does change at that entry,\textsuperscript{241} but more change must occur over time. There is an immediate as well as a developing change that must both be recognized as conversion.\textsuperscript{242}

He used Israel's entry into the Promised Land as a metaphor for the spiritual life. Something miraculous did occur when the Israelites entered into the land. They trusted God's seemingly

\textsuperscript{240} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 43.

\textsuperscript{241} See Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 115, where Willard posits that conversion causes sin to become disgusting or uninteresting while pointing out that the converted still engage in it despite this change. One could argue that this idea is not biblically sound based on passages such as Hebrews 11:25 where Moses turned down “the pleasures of sin” in favour of solidarity with the captive Israelites. However, while this damages his assertion that something changes at conversion, it only reinforces his larger argument that conversion does not accomplish an instantaneous transformation.

\textsuperscript{242} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 40. See also Black, 75.
futile command to march around Jericho's walls and blow trumpets at intervals without making a move against the city. At the completion of this ritual, God then collapsed the walls through miraculous intervention. The first step into the Promised Land was miraculous, but what followed was many years of effort, taking more territory gradually and through labour and work. That work was often guided by God, but the Israelites still had to fight. Willard suggested that this pattern matches the way the soul is “taken over.” At the initial entry, something miraculous occurs, but that does not mean that one's character is completely under control. More work, if guided by God, is necessary to enter the “promised land” of having one's inner life transformed into the likeness of Christ.243

The entry into the Promised Land is only one example of the process of formation inherent to true conversion. While spiritual formation necessarily involves a spiritual element, the human person is not only spirit. Therefore, spiritual development in large measure follows the same kind of pattern as any other human formation process.244 Change almost always occurs over time. Learning to play the piano or learn a foreign language, Willard suggested, will be similar in shape to the long-term spiritual conversion of one into godliness. All of them involve aiming for something in particular, a willingness and design to engage in effort toward the goal, and proper tools and processes for achieving that goal. He used the acronym, VIM, for beginning with a vision for the good in the spiritual life, the intention to attain the good, and the means of working toward it.245 VIM implies a process, a gradual change, as well as intentional involvement of the Christian in his or her own conversion. This was

243 Willard, Renovation, 42.
244 Ibid., 82.
245 Ibid., 85.
perhaps Willard's most frequently repeated theme: the need for Christians to intend and work toward their own transformation rather than assuming it is already complete or avoiding the required effort out of concern for works-righteousness. Conversion is a continuing process of becoming Christ-like in which Christians must actively engage.

One of the principal reasons that the process is gradual, as already implied, is that human persons are embodied beings. The material aspect of human nature follows material patterns of change. Willard put great stock in the body, as will be explored later, arguing that it stores habits and automatic behaviours that are put into action when exposed to certain stimuli. Those habits and behaviours are necessary for human functioning. One no longer has to think about each individual action necessary to drive a car, for example; after a time, those habits have become embodied such that one no longer has to think about them. Those habits, however, can carry both positive and negative implications.\textsuperscript{246} One may build up habits of blessing as well as cursing, stopping at red lights and also shoplifting. The spiritual aspects of the person may experience change at the moment of reconciliation with God, but the body remains habituated as it always has been, for both good and evil.\textsuperscript{247}

Therefore, conversion requires various tools to be used throughout the process. The proper tools will depend on the circumstances and the specific goal being sought or sinful habit being challenged. Various means, however, are beneficial in a more general fashion, but whatever the means being employed, Willard advocated a lifestyle of preparation. As Paul likened spiritual development to training for a race (1 Cor. 9:24), so did Willard argue that

\textsuperscript{246} Black, 105.

\textsuperscript{247} Willard, Disciplines, 82.
the spiritual life is a matter of training oneself to become ready for turning moments in life that one could not handle righteously given one's current habitual state. One may habitually curse when he or she is cursed. Willard suggested, for example, practising blessing others until it becomes automatic and habitual so that when one is cursed, a blessing becomes a natural and automatic response. One's whole life must be turned toward training for these automatic responses. He even summarized his first book by saying, “Hearing God's word will never make sense except when it is set within a larger life of a certain kind.”

That kind of life is one of consistently employing means towards conversion.

While a full examination of the many means that Willard proposed for transformation would be too lengthy to include here, some particular means are significant enough to be worth noting because of the frequency with which Willard referenced them or their importance to transformation overall. One fundamental tool for transformation is time spent interacting with God. While much of his time was spent discussing the human responsibility and activity in the process of conversion, Willard was firm on the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that accomplishes conversion. Therefore, true spiritual formation must be done in concert with God and through interaction with God in some manner. This is most obviously done in prayer, but the breadth of how prayer can happen, including practising or being mindful of God's presence and mindfully devoting an activity to God, suggests that prayer must be understood in a broad sense.

In addition to one's interacting with God, Willard advocated interacting with others as a

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248 Ibid., 4-5.
249 Willard, Hearing, 211.
250 Willard, Disciplines, 114.
means of transformation. His work was often devoted to individual practices and does not always mention communal matters, though they are also assumed at times. For example, he suggested that church ought to be a place where one can “get really mad at people and not run off and leave them.” In this kind of environment, such anger can be “unlearned.”

Similarly, he mentioned and advocated small groups of Christians meeting to worship, celebrate, and study, and referred to the ideal state of the church as “the community of prayerful love.” Relationships are a necessary place for one to practice, and at times fail, at becoming Christ-like, as well as where sinful habits may be unearthed and thereby examined.

A second set of practices that arose frequently are disciplines of solitude and silence. Both of these are required, he argued, because they are necessary for one to be capable of interacting with God and particularly able to hear the subtle promptings of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, solitude, and to a lesser extent silence, strengthen one's capacity for withstanding external and possibly internal pressures. Jesus retired to the wilderness after his baptism, not to be tempted at his weakest point, but rather to build up strength to withstand temptation and undertake a difficult ministry. Because of their importance to Willard's schema for transformation, these disciplines will be revisited when discussing the impact of

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251 Willard, “Political Involvement”, 77-8.
252 Willard, Disciplines, 177.
253 Ibid., 179.
254 Ibid., 11.
255 Willard, Conspiracy, 215ff.
256 E.g., Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Dr. Willard's Diagnosis: Why We Really Need to Die Before We Can Really Live,” Christianity Today 50, no. 9 (Sept 2006): 51; and Willard, Disciplines, 101.
257 Willard, Disciplines, 101-2.
the emotions on his spirituality. These two disciplines are part of a larger list of classical
disciplines such as fasting and study, but they are the most frequently mentioned and have a
particular significance to Willard's spirituality.

A third means of conversion is subtly woven through his writing. He did not seem to directly
advocate self-reflection and self-examination as necessary spiritual disciplines, but they form an
underlying theme that surfaces at times. Cornelius Plantinga suggested that Willard's view of
spiritual disciplines advocated them as necessary for the Christian to experience him or
herself as he or she really is, a sort of experiential self-reflection. When one fasts, for
example, one begins to recognize how dependent one's sense of well-being is on having one's
appetite satisfied. Black posits that self-examination was a principal discipline of Willard's
idea of Christian development. One was only able to accurately obtain a vision for what was
good when one saw what was not good within the person already. The Christian undergoing
conversion must recognize his or her weaknesses, whether in thoughts, feelings,
relationships, or bodily dispositions, in order to know what to seek to correct. Perhaps the
most explicit place where Willard advocated self-awareness was in the foreward to Gregg
Ten Elshof's book, *I Told Me So*, where he noted that self-deception is not only quite
possible, but also very common, even among Christians. This self-deception can become a
significant impediment toward transformation and therefore must be combated through active
self-examination. While he was rarely explicit about it, Willard believed that conversion

258 Plantinga, 51.

259 Black, 136.

September 30, 2013).
depended upon being aware of oneself, both in terms of the nature of one's relationship to God and one's distorted and sinful dispositions.

Conversion for Willard, then, was not only a matter of changing one's mental understanding of the universe and its creator, but a process that occurs over time, transforming the inner character and behaviour of the Christian, and dependent upon effort applied toward becoming Christ-like. Evangelicals need to change their view of what is necessary for the spiritual life. This change includes alteration of how the human person functions, particularly as it is concerned with how the will works, to which this thesis now turns.

2 The Will as Limited and Dependent

As a pastor, Willard found that providing information to people in difficulties or working to overcome temptation tended to satisfy them, but it did not bear any fruit. Telling them right principles did not result in appropriate changes to their behaviour or lives. Even though people knew they ought to love God with all their hearts, for example, they didn't much of the time. It became clear to him that people can know one thing, but do something different.

To explain this, Willard pulled apart knowledge and belief as separate concepts. Knowledge is that which one espouses intellectually, verbally, and in regards to facts. Belief, on the other hand, is a form of information possessed by a person that leads to action.\(^{261}\) Knowledge and belief may overlap. One could know that ice cream is good and therefore eat some. However, they do not necessarily have to overlap, as already implied. One could know that God is sovereign over the universe, but not obey God's commands, which defies that knowledge.

\(^{261}\) Willard, *Conspiracy*, 317.
Therefore one can know something without believing it, but a person can also potentially believe something without knowing it. “Often we are not even conscious of having chosen,” he noted, implying that belief created action without knowledge being accessed. Action depends on belief but not necessarily knowledge.

All of this leads to the conclusion that there is more going on in the human person than merely a body of known information leading to behaviour. Evangelicals tend to function as if this were true, as if information, particularly doctrine, leads to righteous action, but Willard insisted that human nature involves deeper complexities. “Wrong action,” he said, “is not the problem in human existence...” It is a symptom of the complex internal and spiritual realities of each individual.

In analyzing the Sermon on the Mount, Willard suggested that many read the text as if Jesus were providing instructions on what to do, on actions to take in given circumstances, but he argued that this was far from Jesus’ intent. Jesus was not concerned with specific actions and behaviours that could be bound by circumstances. That is, Jesus was not providing behavioural laws, but he was rather striving to provide a picture of the kind of person the Christian was to become. When one became the right kind of person, then righteous action would naturally flow from that person. What needed to be dealt with was not the action itself, but with these spiritual dynamics of the inner person, as merely attending to what one

262 Willard, Hearing, 9.
263 Willard, Conspiracy, 139.
264 Ibid., 144.
265 Ibid.
does will never allow one to enter into the kind of life that God intends for humanity.\(^{266}\)

Willard proposed a faculty within the human person capable of making choices, that is, the will. This is common to evangelical theology and philosophy, but he specifies that the will is incapable of working on its own. That is, actions never arise solely from the will, but in concert with additional faculties.\(^{267}\) Two frequently referenced faculties in play here are thought and emotions. The will relies on both of these in order to make any action.\(^{268}\) Willard did not spend much time discussing the way the will depends upon thoughts, though it can be supposed that it does so by using what the mind is focused on as an object of choice. That is, one must have an action or goal in mind in order to will it.

Willard likewise did not detail extensively the character of the will’s dependence upon emotion, though some details will be considered in the following chapter. Here, however, it should be noted that he repeatedly pointed to the tendency for persons to have their wills over-dependent upon emotion. The will is intended to choose among options, but Willard suggested that most times people do not choose, but rather allow their emotions to dictate their actions.\(^{269}\) At times, they may even be unable to choose, causing them to be in “bondage to how they feel,”\(^{270}\) that is, their actions are determined solely by their emotions without any possibility of choosing otherwise. Willard implied that this is essentially a voluntary state in that one chooses to take on a lifestyle that results in it. Much of *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

\(^{266}\) Willard, *Hearing*, 12-3.


\(^{268}\) Ibid., 142, 147.

\(^{269}\) Ibid., 35.

\(^{270}\) Willard, *Disciplines*, 99-100.
is dedicated to explicating a method of being free from being able only to act on one's current feelings, though few undertake the process.

Willard also suggested that the will is dependent upon the body. One's body becomes predisposed or habituated toward acting in a particular fashion, and the strength of those predispositions is too great for the will to choose otherwise.\textsuperscript{271} These four aspects of the human person, the will, mind, emotions, and body, are intertwined in producing action. While the one is the principal choosing mechanism, it is fully dependent upon the others, which can at times result in what appears to be multiple, conflicted wills.\textsuperscript{272}

What is already implied in the will's state of dependence is the fact that the will is not infinite. It is not completely free because it must rely on other faculties. Those faculties may and often do present influences upon the will that it is not capable of overcoming. Therefore, one may desire something so strongly that one is incapable of choosing against it.\textsuperscript{273}

Furthermore, human beings have a particular nature, and that nature restricts what one is capable of and ought to choose.\textsuperscript{274} An infant, for example, cannot choose to reject its mother. That nature can also be shaped over time, and the shape that it takes, its spiritual formation,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 120.
\item \textsuperscript{272} Willard, Renovation, 145. Willard used language at times that could be interpreted as meaning that a person may actually contain multiple wills that are aimed at different goals, though it seems that he used this as a figure of speech. More likely, he envisioned the singular will struggling to choose only one option when presented with multiple and conflicting influences from thoughts, emotions, and bodily states.
\item \textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 118; Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation and the Warfare between the Flesh and the Human Spirit,” Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care 1, no. 1 (Spr 2008): 82.
\item \textsuperscript{274} Willard, Renovation, 28.
\end{itemize}
constrains the person to behave in particular ways.\textsuperscript{275} As the alcoholic cannot merely choose to stop drinking without a structure for change, so each person has developed tendencies and habits that cannot be chosen against directly. The meek cannot suddenly rise up to challenge those who lord their power over them, and the arrogant cannot abandon their conceit in an instant. They have become shaped such that they think, feel, and behave as they do, and change must happen over time, if it is possible for it to happen at all. Each person responds to life most often in ways that one is prepared to do so.\textsuperscript{276}

Two additional factors of which Willard speaks could be noted. The first is that all persons live, to some extent, in patterns of self-deception. The will does things that a person does not understand because one's internal dynamics have become arranged such that one hides one's true beliefs and feelings from him or herself.\textsuperscript{277} The will, then, is under influence from feelings and beliefs that are not available to the conscious mind or are muddled too darkly to be understood or perceived. The second is that even if the will were not dependent on these other faculties, it would still be unable to control all that happens in a person's internal dynamics. “[T]here is much more in us than what we can consciously command.”\textsuperscript{278} The internal space of human nature is so extensive that the conscious will cannot encompass it all. Too many dynamics are at play at any given time that the will simply is unable to attend to them all. Some must always go untended.

This, along with the inability of the will to choose against strong influences from other

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{275} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, xv.
\item \textsuperscript{276} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{277} Ibid., 147-8.
\item \textsuperscript{278} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 68.
\end{itemize}
faculties such as emotion, leads to the conclusion that not all actions and behaviours are under the direct control of the will. That some actions and behaviours are determined by other aspects of the person was a frequent theme in Willard's thought. “[H]uman life as a whole does not run by will,” he stated plainly. The majority of human life runs through automatic processes that are stored in the body, usually considered habits. Those processes could either be neurologically determined or developed over time, but in either circumstance, they operate independently of the will. The body, then, can seem to have a life of its own, acting without instructions or even contrary to conscious thought and will. He pointed to Peter's denials as an example of this phenomenon of bodily habits working against the will. Peter intended to support Jesus, but in the moment of peril, his body's habitual response to fear overpowered his wilful intention. Peter may have consciously willed to stand with his rabbi, but his body's automatic processes acted too quickly and powerfully for the will to act against them. The body, then, is what enacts most of humanity's actions rather than the will.

With the will being so limited and not in control of all of a person's actions and behaviours, it follows that transformation of the will alone will be insufficient for conversion in the Willardian sense. The will depends on other dynamics within the person and is at times overpowered by them. Therefore, those dynamics must also undergo change in order to effect

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279 Willard, Renovation, 35.
280 Ibid., 166.
281 Willard, Disciplines, 84-5.
282 Willard, Renovation, 143.
Similarly, attempting to cause oneself to change by willpower alone will be insufficient. The will is predisposed toward certain choices that may or may not be righteous ones due to its dependence upon thoughts and emotions and potentially its own leanings. One simply will not always will righteously, making willpower haphazard until its supportive faculties are also transformed.

Further, because the body enacts most of one's actions, the will will never be sufficient to bring about transformation. What the body enacts may be independent and turned either righteously or unrighteously, and the will is too small to encompass all that the body may do. Therefore, again, the body in its habits must undergo transformation. Evangelicals have tended to see the will as ultimately strong enough, after justification, to always yield to God or act in a holy manner. Willard denied this, calling the church to recognize the will as limited and only part of what must undergo renovation for one to become like Christ.

3 Love as the Apex of the Christian Life

The issue of morality was one that was woven throughout Willard's writings and thought. As a philosopher, he grounded his thought on certain fundamental questions, including, “What is the good life?” and “Who is the good person?” These kinds of questions ultimately lead to matters of morality, a moral life being the only kind that can truly be a good life and led by a good person. To be converted was, in part, to be continually changed into one who is truly moral.

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Problematically, however, Willard saw Western culture, particularly in the academy, which he saw as having heavy influence on cultural thought, as having lost a foundation on which to base moral knowledge. Morality is rarely examined carefully, but when it is, people are taught to investigate it carefully, to consider it, but to never come to a grounded conclusion. Students are trained to consider what makes something right or wrong and the complexities of circumstances that may affect its moral quality, but they are never told what is right or wrong and cannot be penalized for thinking one way or another. They cannot be held accountable for believing something to be right or wrong, only whether or not they think carefully about it. In this way, morality becomes amorphous, a matter of debate without conclusion and defined by personal and subjective stances rather than an objective and external source. As a scholar and philosopher, Willard devoted himself to re-establishing a foundation for moral reasoning within the academy.

With morality having become, as Willard described it, a matter of subjectivity in the culture, he saw feelings, particularly positive ones, as the new apex of morality. Contemporary life, then, developed enmity with traditional morality, as it seemed repressive of those feelings. That which once was good became bad because it steered people away from following their feelings. Even the good person became, not the upright one, but the one who freely feels and expresses one's emotions at all times. The academy could not provide a basis for morality

285 Ibid., 1-5.


288 Ibid., 152.
at all, with its dismissal of morality as having an objective foundation, and society deemed it based primarily on feeling good. With no definition or standard for what is good, desire is left unbounded, and therefore Willard posited that to desire desire itself was all that remains.\textsuperscript{289} An objective standard for morality is necessary.

Willard suggested that evangelicals instinctively recognize this moral subjectivity and so turn to traditional moral rectitude as the objective standard. The Bible and conservative theology provide the code by which morality is determined. However, the pendulum, as it so often does, has swung too far in Willard's perspective of the evangelical mindset. This code of rights and wrongs became excessive. Christianity tends to devolve, he argued, into "deadening legalisms and pointless parochialism,"\textsuperscript{290} and this is the case for twentieth century evangelicalism. It is overly focused on the rules and how to follow them perfectly, on absolute conformity to the moral law, perhaps what might be seen as twentieth century phariseism.

A significant fault with such a perspective is that it focuses only on externals without recognizing any internal dynamics to the self. The Christian is then concerned only with transforming behaviour and not with transforming the whole of the person.\textsuperscript{291} Evangelicals have become determined to do what the Bible says without becoming the kind of person that the Bible prescribes, failing to recognize that when one becomes this kind of person, doing


\textsuperscript{290} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 23.

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 85-6.
that which the scriptures prescribe flows from hearts already inclined toward such actions.\textsuperscript{292}

This is not to say that Willard had no use for prescriptions of moral behaviour. As already noted, he criticized society for failing to have an external code at all. Objective moral laws are necessary, but they are insufficient. He pointed to examples in society such as bumper stickers with the phrase, “There's no excuse for domestic violence,” arguing that the implied rule is good, but it is not enough. Knowing that domestic violence is bad provides the necessary boundary to define moral limits, but the boundary does not effect change on the person for whom domestic violence is an inclination. That inclination itself must be transformed.\textsuperscript{293}

Therefore, when evangelicals focus on the objective law of morality, they are not wrong. This is a necessary component of becoming moral, but it is not the primary goal of being a disciple of Christ.\textsuperscript{294} This is, in part, the case, because few teachings on becoming a good person can be captured by simple rules, particularly those containing absolutes such as “always” and “never”.\textsuperscript{295} Behavioural dictates are insufficient for encompassing what God intends for being the good person. Moreover, as already implied, strict adherence to rules does not reach to the heart of the person, which is God's main concern. In fact, scrupulousness may be a strategy for avoiding God rather than relating with God, a means of

\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 223-4.

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 109.

\textsuperscript{294} Willard, Conspiracy, 320.

\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 364.
keeping fear at bay and keeping one safe rather than bringing about reconciliation.\textsuperscript{296}

External adherence to a moral code is insufficient because one's behaviour depends on one's being, making being more important than actions. When Willard exegeted the Sermon on the Mount, he argued that Jesus' intention in expanding Old Testament laws in the latter half of Matthew 5 was not to create more laws or dictate what people should specifically do, but to demonstrate the kind of person that they should become.\textsuperscript{297} Jesus called his disciples to become the kind of people for whom doing what is right, obeying those Old Testament laws, would be a natural and automatic thing because they would be inclined toward the other's good in each circumstance.

Of more importance to Willard than looking for the other's good, however, was looking toward God's good. Those that love God will desire to do what pleases God as they are already inclined toward the Father’s will,\textsuperscript{298} and therefore obedience flows naturally from those who love and have a healthy relationship with the Lord.\textsuperscript{299} Love of Jesus also eases weariness in self-denial, which is necessary for growth and maturity because such people are connected to God in life-giving ways.\textsuperscript{300} To be disconnected from God and thereby separated

\textsuperscript{296} Willard, \textit{Hearing God}, 204-5.

\textsuperscript{297} E.g., Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 184.

\textsuperscript{298} While there is certainly continual debate in both large and small contexts over what pleases God, Willard saw American evangelicals as largely considering their own pleasure first. Everyday habits and behaviours of most ordinary people are built, in his eyes, on satisfying oneself rather than on attempting to determine what satisfies God and seeking it. He saw the popular approach to decision-making one that habitually neglected God's pleasure.

\textsuperscript{299} Willard, \textit{Hearing God}, 12.

\textsuperscript{300} Catherine Looker, “‘Living with the Lord Always Before Them’: Considerations of Spiritual Guidance Offered by Ignatius of Loyola and Dallas Willard,” \textit{Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care} 3, no. 2 (fall 2010): 199.
from these life-giving resources is even how Willard defines sin, thereby avoiding making sin merely about behaviour and turning it into a relational dynamic.

A loving dynamic, however, can easily be distorted back to a mere to-do list of commands. One may mistake doing the things that are loving for really loving, a fallacy that will inevitably lead to failure. The one acting patiently and kindly may still bear wrath, contempt, and fear, which preclude the existence of love. Such loving acts may over time generate love in the right relational and humble context, but they are not themselves love, nor will they instantly generate it. Love requires positive relationship and not merely behaviour.

Ultimately, God is looking for that relationship. Pointing to common views of God as a killjoy, someone primarily interested in repressing joy, pleasure, and fun, and a deity who looks for followers to divest themselves of passion and extinguish desire, Willard instead argued that God created passion and pleasure and seeks to normalize them as part of everyday life, including the spiritual life. God does not intend to push down the self, but rather restore it to its proper shape and function. God is not merely against things, looking out for things that need to stop, but one encouraging full lives to flourish.

The moral laws that God institutes, the various commands of scripture, are not means God
intends to use to quash life, but to bring about its fulfilment. More than a mere code of rules, God's commands are prescriptions for how life is supposed to work, what is best for humanity.\textsuperscript{307} Rather than being a divine autocrat, focused on keeping tallies and correcting errors, God seeks to do good for creation, to maximize people's good, not only in terms of moral laws, but also in terms of health and joy.\textsuperscript{308}

This must be the case because God's nature is characterized by love. Willard used the interplay of the Trinitarian persons as demonstrative of God's inherently relational nature, each person loving and being loved by the other two.\textsuperscript{309} That love, then, cannot but be applied to Creation as well. God is ultimately caring, a joyous father looking to nurture humanity and interact with people in joyous, loving ways.\textsuperscript{310} The provision of commandments and moral laws is therefore a part of this, boundaries meant to help people flourish and attain what is best for them.

Moral law, therefore, is not an end unto itself, but rather originates out of love. Willard stated this explicitly in his essay on evangelical political involvement,\textsuperscript{311} but it is woven throughout his discussions on the matter. That is not to say that morality is fulfilled in love, though this is certainly the case. Rather, love is its source. Faith, hope, and love, but especially love, are not principal virtues for Willard; they are the ground out of which all virtue and morality

\begin{footnotes}
\item[310] Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 236; Porter, 259.
\item[311] Willard, “Failure of Evangelical Political Involvement”, 87.
\end{footnotes}
Conversely, immorality, particularly as it is expressed in social ills, is inevitably a form of lovelessness. It should be noted that love, for Willard, is not merely an emotional matter, nor even a virtue, as already implied, that can be easily isolated. Neither is it simply a behaviour or tendency of the will. Willard did not exclude any of these facets, incorporating all of them in his understanding. Love is an overall quality of life that includes all aspects of the self. He noted that love is frequently used in popular culture as a euphemism for desiring something such as money or ice cream, but he notes that in such cases, the intention is to use the object of such “love” for one's personal gain or pleasure without concern for the object itself. To love, as divinely intended, is to will the good of the object. The willingness, which may include desire, emotional involvement, and likely action, integrates the whole self in desiring and bringing about the well-being of the other.

This, then, is God's ultimate intention for humanity, to relate to the Trinity and one another in love. Willard described his ideal for the church as “The Community of Prayerful Love”, lovingly in communication with God and interacting with one another. Willard understood that this is the ideal and that the church cannot immediately jump to this ideal. There must be a process of transformation. Therefore, the church must also become a place where one

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312 Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, VII.
313 Willard, Renovation, 181.
314 Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, V.
315 Willard, Renovation, 130. See also Willard, “Failure of Evangelical Political Involvement”, 88; Willard, “Warfare”, 82.
316 Willard, Conspiracy, 215.
learns to love.\textsuperscript{317} He intended the church to be a school where more than merely doctrine or a code of law was taught, but where people were trained to love one another and the world as God does. Such training gradually brings the Christian to a place where one's feelings are characterized by love,\textsuperscript{318} and one's will responds even to one's enemies for their good.\textsuperscript{319} Even the body would automatically respond to others in a loving fashion, acting without the will's direct oversight.

A person so oriented toward love would no longer need a moral code. That is not to say that the code could be abolished or that he or she would be free to act immorally. It is simply that such a Christian would, because of his or her orientation toward love, fulfil any moral law automatically.\textsuperscript{320} Jesus did not abolish the Law, but rather fulfilled it through his life, death, and resurrection (Matthew 5:17) which were grounded in love and oriented toward the good of the Father and humanity as well as all of creation. In the same way, the Christian is to become transformed so as to fulfil the Law through her or his whole self being established in love. This is the fulfilment of not only morality, but the whole Christian life.

4 God as Personal and Presently Interactive

Willard's spirituality had always been one wherein God was active and communicated

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{317} Willard, “Failure of Evangelical Political Involvement”, 78.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{318} Willard, Renovation, 209.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{319} Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, VI.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{320} Such a perspective points back to Willard's dependence upon Wesleyan theology, as it carries textures of Wesley's idea of being perfected in love. It is unclear whether or not Willard saw this as being ultimately possible in this present life, but his long-term goal for individual believers was for their behaviour and motivation to become increasingly characterized by this orientation toward love in all actions.}
directly, if not always plainly, to Christians. He confessed that as a young man, he heard of people having difficulty hearing God and assumed that it was merely a lack of faith. While he later realized that a simple lack of faith did not respect the complexity of the circumstances and the persons involved, the assumption, regardless, is that the capacity to hear God is inherent to every believer and that God speaks to every believer. He believed God may not speak to Christians at every moment, referring to this as the “message a minute” idea of God, but God does communicate with those who are willing to engage in a positive relationship and become converted to the image of Christ.

Willard expanded on this view of God and Christians' interactions with God throughout his writing, though primarily in his first book, In Search of Guidance, later renamed, Hearing God, which was dedicated to exploring the dynamics of God's present-day interactions with believers. He grounded this aspect of his theology in the scriptures, arguing that the kinds of things that happened to people in the past could happen to people of any age. God has not changed (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8), and therefore the way that God may interact with people remains unchanged. Angelic visitations, prophetic words, miraculous phenomena, dreams and visions, and so forth are all quite possible in the present age. Moreover, it is not only that God can use such means of interaction and communication, but that God does use them currently. They are not “pronouncements... for another age or 'dispensation','’ but

321 Willard, Hearing God, 17.
322 Ibid., 57-8.
323 Ibid., 36, 90, etc.
324 Ibid., 103.
relevant for all time.\textsuperscript{325} The Lord is not a silent God.

Willard was clear that the Bible is the ground of the Christian faith. He understood it as the divinely provided and inspired provision of God's narrative, history, commands, and prophecy to humanity in written text, and he argued that it is the plumb-line against which all other forms of communication from God must be measured.\textsuperscript{326} However, contrary to some evangelicals' doctrine, it is not the only means by which God communicates intentions or desires to people. If it were, he argued, God would be concerned about many issues that are not explicitly referenced in the scriptures and thereby be unable to communicate or provide guidance about them. Specific details of each person's life simply are not and cannot be conveyed in the text of the Bible. Therefore God must use additional means to communicate with people.\textsuperscript{327} He even posited that the belief that God has provided the scriptures, and therefore humanity no longer needs God to speak, is a dangerous one, leaving people without guidance and without spiritual connection to the source of life that is God.\textsuperscript{328} Therefore, Willard sought to describe and encourage a spirituality of interaction with God for every believer that he understood to be the norm prior to early twentieth century evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{329}

The highest faculty of the human person is that which enables one to connect with God, he submitted. Connection to God is natural to human design and necessary for the whole person to function well. Disconnection, on the other hand, causes distortion of all other faculties.

\textsuperscript{325} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 2.

\textsuperscript{326} Willard, \textit{Hearing God}, 183.

\textsuperscript{327} Ibid., 58-9.

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., 106-7.

\textsuperscript{329} Black, 68.
One's thinking, will, feeling, perceiving, and even acting and moving, among others, will all function more poorly when disconnected from one's source of order and life.\textsuperscript{330} Therefore, one must engage this faculty so as to “suck in order” in the same way that all organisms absorb order from their environment in order to maintain themselves and stave off chaos and entropy.\textsuperscript{331} Relationship and communication with God is the means of accomplishing this.

Willard described a number of methods for fostering that relationship. As already noted, he saw the Bible as the standard against which all other communication must be compared. One goes first to the Bible as the most definitive divine communication. When the Christian clearly understands God's character and commands in the Bible, he or she may more readily recognize and discern God's interaction by other means.

Despite being that ultimate standard, Willard did not see the Bible as God's most personal interaction with people. These would be an individual's own, personal thoughts and feelings, which God may and does use to communicate.\textsuperscript{332} He stated that God may steer particular thoughts, feelings, memories, or sensations to rise to the surface. Most thoughts, etc., belong solely to the individual, but God may evoke such internal events as well, seeking to make a particular point to the person. With the presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer, these internal dynamics may be products of the Spirit's activity as well as the person's.\textsuperscript{333}

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\item \textsuperscript{330} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 63.
\item \textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 65.
\item \textsuperscript{332} Willard, \textit{Hearing God}, 99-100.
\item \textsuperscript{333} Willard did not spend a great deal of time discussing the process of discerning which internal dynamics were products of the Spirit and which were the natural processes of thought and feeling, uninfluenced by divine activity. His primary goal was to encourage Christians to train themselves toward godliness, intentionally foster interaction and relationship with God, and set their intentions against the plumb-line of scripture, trusting that these would gradually cause them to align themselves with God's will. As one grows to
\end{itemize}
Willard also made the case that when Jesus spoke of “heaven”, he was not merely speaking of a celestial, spiritual realm. The term could rather be understood in two additional ways. First, the word for heaven in the Greek, οὐρανός, is the same work in the Greek for sky, and the Judeans of that age used a single term to mean both. Sky was considered that which was beyond earth, so the term could point to the visible sky or all that was beyond, including the whole universe. Second, the term could also indicate the immediate atmosphere, or in contemporary terms, “out of thin air”. Therefore, when Jesus prayed, “Our Father, who art in heaven,” he was indicating God as present in all three understandings: God is in the spiritual realm, the entirety of the material universe, and also immediately present to the one praying.

This immediacy was vital for Willard's understanding of God interacting with people because God was always near. Even without the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within, God is present all around. Therefore, just as God spoke to Peter from the opened heavens, or perhaps out of thin air, when directing him to meet with Cornelius (Acts 10), so may God speak with persons directly from the air around them. Likewise, God may cause circumstances around a person to signify something that one ought to attend to. Therefore, Willard urged Christians to be alert to how events and situations may be ways that God is seeking to communicate.

God is not, however, limited to communication, as is implied by the possibility of circumstances being turned to divine purposes. God may also cause events and personal circumstances to become the kind of person with whom God would interact, he implied, one will then perceive God's intentions and actions naturally and habitually. See Willard, Hearing God, 203.

334 Willard, Conspiracy, 48, 71.

335 Ibid.

336 Willard, Hearing God, 214.
experiences directly. Willard spoke of having at least one spiritual experience where he felt “enveloped by a cloud” and lost consciousness, and he advocates the possibility of other dramatic experiences as well, as already discussed. The miraculous in ordinary life was not beyond Willard's spirituality, though he argued that the more dramatic experiences and phenomena were not intended to be everyday occurrences. More striking phenomena were intended to be signs for those whose faith was yet immature. A mature relationship with God is one where the Christian is attuned and attentive to God as one might be so with a close friend. “The first act of love is attention,” he noted, and therefore a loving relationship with God is one where God need not make dramatic efforts to attract attention. It has already been given. Therefore, he saw God's most common and meaningful communication and interaction as the “still, small voice” of 1 Kings 19, subtle movements of the Spirit in the interior or near space around the person for which the believer is looking and ready to notice and follow.

To summarize directly, as did Black, Willard was not a cessationist dispensationalist. God continues to be active in the world in the same way as was presented in the scriptures, particularly as given in the New Testament. The Bible is a crucial means for God to communicate with the church, but it is not the only means, and to leave it only with that is a dangerous possibility that cuts people off from God's life-giving presence and activity in the

337 Scheller, 48.
338 Black, 67.
339 Gangel, 160.
340 Willard, Hearing God, 91.
341 Black, 66.
world and in their persons. The miraculous is quite possible, the mystical is, at least to some extent, present, and the whisper of God still guides those who are mature and attentive to their Lord.

5 Christianity as Relevant to Everyday Life

The final theme that Willard attempted to correct in evangelical theology is the excessive concern with purely spiritual matters to the neglect of ordinary, earthly matters. He pointed to the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy, arguing that this debate created two sides who defined themselves, in part, through automatic negation of the doctrinal tenets of the opposition. The result was a distorted gospel, Willard's gospels of sin management, as previously noted, gospels that were divorced from the actual human condition.\textsuperscript{342} For the conservative position, Christianity became primarily an issue of atonement, the remediation of sin. Once sin was covered, then nothing further was necessary. The only moment of real importance to any person was the moment of changed belief, in which one was justified, renewed, and potentially filled with the Holy Spirit or at least reconciled to God. The remainder of one's life was either a lead-into or outgrowth-of that moment and therefore was of diminished importance.\textsuperscript{343} Everyday life other than the committing of sins was of marginal concern.

Evangelical spirituality, therefore, became concerned only with internal, spiritual states of being. One's intention or lack of intention to sin was based entirely on one's spiritual

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\textsuperscript{342} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 41.

\textsuperscript{343} Ibid., 36-7, 42-3.
condition, whether or not one was covered by Christ's atonement. What one did beyond not sinning had nothing to do with the Christian life. The bearing of appropriate beliefs and intentions was all that mattered. This left evangelical spirituality unconcerned with the day-to-day lives of individuals. It ceased to prescribe anything specific for its believers regarding how they ought to live beyond simply not sinning. Evangelicals in time, then, became free to live however they chose, taking on attitudes and behaviours from the surrounding culture, resulting in a Christianity that looked little different than the whole of American life and culture. With no recommendations on how else to live, consumer Christianity became the accepted norm.

Such a theology was only possible through the diminishing of the role of Jesus in certain respects. Jesus became seen as a means that God used to accomplish the end of justification. Jesus, of course, had to live perfectly, but the perfection of that life was its only significance. The specifics of how he lived were of no consequence save for how they led to his sacrificial death. The death of Christ became the most significant moment, not only in Jesus' life, but in all of history, but its prominence was so extreme that it eclipsed everything else. Willard avowed that a truth about Jesus became more important than the person of Jesus. What Jesus said, therefore, as well as how he lived became often seen as pointing to spiritual realities and never earthly, immediate, or material realities. His life pointed to the eschaton rather than being grounded in the ordinary of the present. The final result of all of this is

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344 Willard, Disciplines, 152.

345 Willard, Conspiracy, 311.

346 Willard, Renovation, 87.

347 Willard, Conspiracy, xiii.
that evangelicalism “has not been imparting effectual answers to the vital questions of human existence.” It has been pointing only to other-worldly matters that are divorced from the present.

The irony that Willard pointed to is that Jesus was not, in the first century, appealing because of his dissertations on internal, spiritual, and eschatological issues. He appealed to so many people because of his ability to show himself and God as present to meet human need. He healed the sick and lame; broke through cultural barriers to connect with others in their real needs and feelings; and dealt with children, food, and God's care and concern for “the least of these”.

Willard went on to suggest that Jesus' appeal was due to his effectiveness as a teacher and rabbi. He opened people's eyes to how God and life worked in ways that they understood. Unlike the scribes, however, he depended not on writings passed down, but on his own understanding, which was borne out through his ability to produce the miraculous. He did not need others to support him on an intellectual level. He was clearly the smartest rabbi in Israel. Those who truly wanted to know truth went to the smartest available: Jesus.

Jesus' primary message, therefore, was of critical importance, and that message was summed up in Matthew's gospel by the idea that the kingdom of God was near or present. For Willard, a kingdom is that realm under which a monarch's will is effective. Therefore, God's kingdom is wherever God's will and desire is carried out, wherever divine power produces what God

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348 Willard, Renovation, 21.
349 Willard, Conspiracy, 17.
350 Ibid., 95.
chooses. That the kingdom was and is present suggests that God is not distant, but present and active, able to make a difference immediately.\textsuperscript{351} Rather than being focused on the afterlife or restricted to matters like the legal state of guilt of the soul, God was available in all aspects of life and to all people, regardless of their juridical status.

As Willard noted, that which happened to people in the biblical era is possible in the present, implying that God’s kingdom is likewise near in the contemporary age. Contemporary Christianity is also about immediate, real-world matters. The spiritual state of the soul is hardly irrelevant; Willard argued that the ills of the world are spiritual ills, and spiritual solutions are the only solutions that will be effective in dealing with them,\textsuperscript{352} but spiritual matters are not restricted to spiritual effects, nor are they utterly divorced from material matters. Each affects the other in strong ways. Spiritual matters can and should affect physical ones, and physical realities impinge upon the spiritual, particularly in the case of human beings. Therefore, the spiritual realities of Christianity ought to make a difference in the material world, and physical processes, constraints, and dynamics will all affect spiritual aspects of the Christian life.

One of the major places where Willard pointed this to be true is in the case of the human body. He contended that the evangelical church has, overall, failed to do justice to human nature, particularly with respect to the role that the physical body plays in all of life.\textsuperscript{353} This failing in the church results in evangelicals not integrating their bodies into their spiritual

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 25-8.
\item \textsuperscript{352} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, iii.
\item \textsuperscript{353} Ibid., 18.
\end{itemize}
lives, but to do so eliminates the principal manner of interacting with the world, others, and even God from the Christian life. One perceives, speaks, loves, acts, sins, blesses, senses, and so on using one's body. Therefore, ignoring the body means that all such actions are split off from Christianity.

On the contrary, “God is not opposed to natural life with all its pleasures and pains and is even very favorably disposed toward it,” reasoned Willard. God is attentive to ordinary life and to how one uses and responds to one's body in its pleasure and pains. The body is the human person's primary kingdom, that realm over which one has control, and therefore, how one rules the body determines and is determined by the spiritual realities of the human self. The body is not separate from Christianity, it “lies right at the center of the spiritual life...”

The second realm that Willard contended makes Christianity about ordinary rather than only extraordinary things is that of the natural processes of life, of natural law. That human beings bear bodies implies that they are constrained by physical laws in most circumstances. Surely God can and does miraculously transcend such laws, but this is not the most common manner for God to work. Again, most of Israel's process of taking the Promised Land was through effort; miraculous works were only occasional. The same is true of the spiritual life. The pattern of human development, whether a spiritual one or an intellectual or psychological one, follows a general pattern. Spiritual aspects will surely be involved, but natural dynamics

354 Ibid., 28.
355 Ibid., 79.
356 Porter, 253.
357 Willard, Renovation, 159.
will determine the shape of development. Reliance on supernatural transformation only has not produced the kind of transformation that the evangelical church claims. He acknowledged the possibility, but also contended that it is not the norm and should not, therefore, be relied upon as the proper or only method. Likewise, reliance only on natural dynamics should also be avoided as God is present and active in ordinary life. The science of ordinary development must be integrated with spiritual realities to produce a right process for spiritual growth.

In the end, Christianity is deeply concerned with ordinary life. Moreover, Christianity is about how ordinary life is intended to work. Jesus' teaching dealt with ordinary matters and pointed to how to rightly work with everyday issues, particularly in dealing with relationships with others. He was a teacher of practical realities, how to live the present life to its fullest. Rather than pointing to the future, Jesus prescribed a way of being that matched up with God's design for humanity in the present, in the everyday world of dealing with Roman soldiers, handling money, interacting with neighbours. Jesus' way, said Willard, is the way this present life is supposed to work. Christianity is not merely relevant to everyday life; it is a prescription for it.

Willard's principal correctives for American evangelicalism could be summarized in these five perspectives. Evangelical spirituality needs to be grounded in ordinary life, concerned

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358 Ibid., 82-3.
359 Black, 73.
361 Black, 123ff.
for present realities and happenings and not only focused on a spiritual change that affected one's eschatological destiny so that the spiritual and material aspects of life are integrated into a single way of being. That spirituality likewise needs to recapture a process-oriented conversion and transformation, wherein the believer puts in effort toward a vision of righteousness and grows over time rather than believing that a single moment of conversion held the power for all righteous living or that righteous living was actually unnecessary because of God's forgiveness. Beyond this redefinition of conversion, evangelicals need to understand that the will is highly influence-able and dependent upon other dynamics both internal and external as well as dynamics of which one is both aware and unaware and therefore know how to intentionally shape that will to be oriented toward God's will for the world. Morality needs to be understood as an objective reality, but it also needs to be one that finds its roots in love instead of a code of rules that defines goodness, and evangelicals therefore need to ground themselves in real love rather than in that code of law. Lastly, Willard saw evangelicals as needing to interact with God freely, believing that the Holy Spirit continues to speak with Christians in the present age and that the miraculous also continues to occur in the present. Collectively, these correctives required a right understanding of human nature, an accurate theological anthropology, which, while primarily located in *Renovation of the Heart*, was dispersed throughout his writing. Rather than recapitulate *Renovation*, this thesis will narrow the focus to examine one particular aspect of that anthropology. To be transformed results in right emotions, and those same emotions affect the will, one's capacity to love, how one interacts with God in relationship, and what ordinary life looks like and how one deals with it. Therefore, it is to Willard's affective psychology that things now turn.
Chapter 3
Willard's Affective Psychology

Some may find it odd to discuss the psychological perspective of an academic philosopher. Others, however, would find it entirely appropriate in the case of Dallas Willard.

Psychologist Gary Moon, for example, referred to Willard as “my favorite psychologist” and said that, despite being himself a psychologist and having studied under those whose field it is to understand the mind and human behaviour, no one helped him understand the whole of the person, the process of transformation, and other matters of the psyche better. As many like Moon can attest, psychological matters were very much a part of Willard's thought.

Given Willard's primary branch of philosophy, this may not be so surprising. He focused on Edmund Husserl and phenomenology, which he described as largely interested in the nature of conscious states, a matter perhaps conceived of as a psychological investigation by the layperson, but explored by figures such as Husserl, James, and others from a philosophical perspective as well. By assuming that one's experience was accurate and undeniable, Willard considered the essence of that experience, particularly in terms of mental constructs.

This sort of exploration was exceedingly important to him. He more than once avowed that,


364 Ibid., 281-2.

“To develop accurate knowledge of the human soul is the primary need of our times.”  

He believed that evangelicals had lost a sense of both how the human person functions and, as a corollary, how the human person develops, particularly spiritually. So long as evangelicals were attempting to force themselves and others to do things that their natures defied, they would, at the very least, fail to grow spiritually and to grow more generally as persons and would potentially harm themselves. An accurate theology was therefore incomplete without an accurate psychology. He pointed to Paul's letter to the Romans, arguing that it was a treatise primarily on theology but also one on social and individual psychology as it described the character and formation of the spiritual aspect of the person, both in how it was distorted and how it could be restored.  

His own writings, therefore, were an attempt to similarly integrate theology and psychology and to provide evangelicals with a proper understanding of human nature.  

With the importance of a psychological framework to Willard's thought, human emotion was naturally an issue he considered regularly. He theorized largely on individual emotions rather than on affect as a whole, but he did consider the overall nature and character of emotionality when necessary, and his perspective on it in this general sense can at times be inferred from his discussions of particular feelings. Not all of his thought on emotion was consistent, however, and its interplay with other faculties could at times be unclear or contradictory. An overall analysis of his thought on emotion, including these issues, will be considered here, though in order to set his affective psychology in context, this chapter begins with a more

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367 Willard, Disciplines, 112.
general overview of his theological anthropology and then narrows to examine the specifics of emotion.

1 Willard's Theological Anthropology

Human nature is, at least in part, that of an animal, said Willard. The material flesh of the human person is the same as that of created animals, but there is a difference: human beings' animal nature is one “suitably adapted to be the vehicle of God's likeness.”368 Thus Willard placed human beings both very like and very unlike the rest of creation. Human persons are simultaneously “dust and divinity.”369

In examining Willard's divine dust, three matters will be considered: the dual nature of humanity, human nature's distinct faculties, and the issue of automaticity. Each of these three matters plays a part in his theology, but also is related to his view of emotion.

1.1 Dualism

As is the case with many evangelicals, Willard followed the Greek philosophical perspective of viewing human nature as being both material and spiritual. The real self, he argued, is not to be found in the physical body.370 So long as people are within a physical universe, then the physical body mediates what the spiritual self intends and who the self is in relation to that universe, but the actual self is not the body, nor is it located within the body. Indeed, were the

368 Ibid., 52.
369 Ibid.
370 E.g., Willard, Conspiracy, 75, 395.
self removed from a physical environment, the body would no longer be required, which will be, at least to some extent, the case in the eschaton.\footnote{Ibid., 395.} In its present, physical condition, however, human nature requires the body. Indeed, he noted that the physical body and spiritual aspect are both necessary to describe the whole person.\footnote{David O'Connor, “Gray Matter and the Soul,” Christianity Today, November 18, 2002, accessed August 27, 2013, http://dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=82.}

This dual nature of the human person caused him to challenge the notion that the brain is where the self can be located. He argued that the human person is not the brain, nor is it located within the brain, just as it is not located in any other organ such as the heart or liver. He pointed to past concerns, prior to the prevalence of medical heart transplants, that transplanting a heart from one patient to another would cause personality change because of personal characteristics that were believed to be located within the heart. It is now known that a person's personality does not change upon transplantation of the heart, and the same should occur, were it at any point possible, upon transplantation of the brain.\footnote{Black, 93.}

This is not to say that the brain is unnecessary for the manifestation of thought, will, and emotion. Without the brain, a person would have no means of expressing or physically generating thought, affect, or volition, but he also posited that without a spiritual reality expressing itself through a brain, a brain alone would accomplish and generate nothing. The brain is the physical medium by which mind, will, and emotion manifest in the physical universe, but it does not contain them.\footnote{O'Connor.}
The question that remains is the character and nature of the spiritual aspect of the human person. Given the fully integrated nature of the human person in the physical world, Willard seemed to have difficulty isolating it in such a way that it can be described. It involves a number of aspects, some of which will be considered in the ensuing section, including unembodied power. A few elements will not be described explicitly, however. Those include creativity, character, and, at least to some extent, intellect. Of those, character is that which he referenced as being impossible to isolate in the physical body and indicative of the necessity of a spiritual reality in the human person. One cannot dissect the brain and find the “character lobe”, but character's necessity in defining the human person implies that there is more to the human person than merely the brain. Human nature must consist, therefore, of both body and an immaterial element according to Willard's thought.

1.2 Willard's Distinct Faculties

Approximately half of Willard's book, *Renovation of the Heart*, is dedicated to explicating the various parts of human nature. He described them as distinct but interrelated aspects, each having its particular capacity and functions, but not isolated. Each part relies on the operations of other parts for its full functioning and may not even be capable of operating independently. For example, all choices involve thoughts and feelings, implying that the will cannot be separated from the mind. While the one has a specific and distinct function, that function cannot be executed without the simultaneous functions of the other parts of the

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375 Willard, *Conspiracy*, 75.

376 Black, 100; Willard, *Renovation*, 94.

377 Black, 104.
person.

At the deepest core of human nature is the spirit, which Willard equated with the heart and will. Each of these three terms describes a single faculty, but as viewed from different perspectives or focusing on different functions or aspects. The will is that aspect that chooses, while the term, heart, depicts it as the core of the person, and spirit refers to its immaterial but evocative aspect. Willard defined spirit in a general sense as “unembodied personal power”. On a more universal scale, reality responds to the power of spirit and will. Creation responded to God's command. Similarly, the human body responds to the human will, and other persons respond to the will of one who impinges upon them or makes requests of them. Reality moves in response to the power of spirit in general, very directly in the case of the human spirit working to move the body and to a lesser extent in relational interchanges. However, Willard suggested that Jesus and the apostles, after Christ's ascension, demonstrated the telos of the human will through the enacting of miracles. When a person is connected to God as it was divinely intended, more of creation will respond to a human will, such that one may cause external realities to act as he or she commands. Such miracles are the expression of reality responding to the spirit. History contains numerous examples of these miraculous movements of spirit, as does the contemporary age as well.

God's primary intended purpose for the human spirit is to choose an overall path and pattern


379 Willard, *Disciplines*, 64.

for one's life. He likened it to the CEO of a corporation, who is not involved in every decision that gets made, but rather sets an overall vision and guidelines with which lower-level decisions will be aligned. Because there are simply too many decisions to be made at every moment, the will “farms out” actions to the body, which then carries them out without its direct involvement. Ideally, then, one's will would orient one toward God and God's vision for oneself, one's environment, and creation in general, including the general choices that the body makes on its behalf. In this manner, all of one's decisions and actions would be pointed toward God's desire and plan.

The will must delegate decisions to the body because it is limited in its scope and capacity. It cannot encompass everything or attend to every choice that happens as its capacity for attention is limited. There is a limit to the number of choices it can make in any given moment. Further, the will gains a particular orientation over time, and that orientation limits the choices it can make, as already implied in the previous chapter. One's will, for example, may be so oriented toward choosing dessert after a meal that one simply does not have the capacity to refuse it.

Because the will is the core of the person, the ultimate source of whatever comes from the person, one cannot be without will. One may will only weakly or in a conflicting and therefore seemingly paralysed manner, but this does not negate the presence of the spirit,

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381 Black, 112.
382 Willard, Renovation, 35.
383 Black, 118.
384 Willard, Renovation, 57.
385 Ibid., 144.
only its efficacy in a given circumstance.

Integrating yet distinct from the heart is the mind, in which Willard included both thought and feeling. He described thought as the faculty by which human persons may focus on or avoid ideas and images, which he defined as groupings of concepts that carry a particular meaning in either abstract, in the case of ideas, or sensory form in the case of images. Those ideas, images, or concepts on which a person focuses will cause the person to move toward them or take them into him- or herself, though the motion itself does not originate from the one's thoughts; rather, the thought process influences other faculties including the will and emotions. However, that thoughts are the means of focusing on a concept or group of concepts means that it is the principal faculty for directing one's actions and emotional experience.\(^{386}\) Thinking on God, that is, focusing one's mind upon God will inevitably result in love and service for God.\(^{387}\)

That which is focused on in the mind and stored in memory becomes knowledge or information. Every mind is in possession of knowledge, but, Willard argued, there are two potential problems. The first is that possessed information may be incorrect or incomplete. One must know the right things in order for it to have any beneficial effect.\(^{388}\) The second issue is that not every person applies knowledge to the activity of other faculties. He differentiated between knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance, the latter of which is akin to his definition of belief, as both of the latter two have the ability to

\(^{386}\) Willard, *Conspiracy*, 324.


\(^{388}\) Ibid., 103.
motivate, whereas the former cannot. It is merely “head knowledge.”\textsuperscript{389} Knowledge and belief must be joined together, which may occur in the process of reasoning and active thinking, the internal scrutiny of information and knowledge and the integration of that knowledge to other faculties, particularly the will. Reasoning is a major, divinely intended activity of the mind and its only defence against the influence of wrong information and cultural ideas and images that defy the divine will for humanity.\textsuperscript{390} Rationality, the ability and process of reasoning, he argued is a virtue, implying that the failure to analyze and apply one's knowledge is a vice and a common one, Willard seemed to suggest, in American society.\textsuperscript{391}

Beneath, in a sense, the heart and mind is the body, about which Willard had a significant amount to say, in part due to his perception that evangelical spirituality neglects it to such a great extent. He saw the body as the singular interface of the spiritual aspect of the human person with reality and the locus of all social interactions, including that of interactions with God.\textsuperscript{392} Without the body, one would lack a means of exerting influence on the world in any fashion as well as interacting with it. Additionally, given that one's existence begins in and is carried with the body throughout life, one's identity will inevitably be attached to it. The real self may not be the body, but the self cannot be separated from it.

The crucial importance of the body requires, then, that a spirituality attend to it. What happens to the body happens to the whole self, and the means of reaching the real self must

\textsuperscript{389} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 141-2.

\textsuperscript{390} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 102.

\textsuperscript{391} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 18-9.

\textsuperscript{392} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 35; Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 77.
come through the body. All knowledge and experience enters through the body in some fashion, and therefore to gain the proper knowledge, including knowledge of God, one must position the body in the proper orientation. He even defined spirituality at one point as “a relationship of our embodied selves to God”.

As noted, Willard understood the heart as delegating responsibility for choices to the body in order to free it to attend to other matters. The will, in a fashion, comes to settle in the body this way. The body enacts choices that the will has previously directed without the need for the heart or other faculties' input or attention. This embodied will enacts those choices and behaviours automatically. One's character, therefore, is largely made up of what the will has habituated the body to do over time. What the body is ready to do, having been trained in this fashion, becomes the majority of one's character because those “readinesses” will define the majority of one's actions.

When Paul discussed “the flesh”, then, Willard posited that it should not be understood as a sinful nature or anything inherently negative, but rather that it should be seen as the habituated patterns stored within the body. Because each person has made sinful choices and has lived apart from God, those choices and that orientation have become embodied and become what the body is ready to enact. Therefore the flesh is inevitably turned toward evil

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393 Willard, *Disciplines*, 82-3.

394 Ibid., 31. See also Willard, *Disciplines*, 92.


397 Willard, *Disciplines*, 71.
and autonomously without God, and this is the manner in which Paul typically spoke of the flesh. It is merely the habituated patterns of the body.

This embodied will and wrongly oriented flesh must therefore be trained in the right direction in the same way that it was originally trained in wrong directions. This is a short summary of Willard's book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. One must engage with the body in various manners in order to make it ready to do what is according to God's will as opposed to its typically sinful and self-directed habituation.

More broad than the body, according to Willard, is the social environment. Willard saw this environment as necessary for defining the whole person and therefore must be included in a complete theological anthropology. He pointed to the very beginning of life, noting that the bond between mother and child is fundamental to development of a life and self, and further connections are necessary to sustain them. Further, relationships with God and others have significant effect on one's character and identity. Who one becomes and what one becomes ready to do is determined in large part by the relationships that one currently has as well as those had in the past. One's character is also largely defined by social interactions. He offered assault and withdrawal as fundamental social actions that are inevitably damaging to oneself and others and are thereby sinful. Both are expressions of acting or failing to act in love, the ground out of which morality sprung in Willard's mind, which makes them large categories of sin. Willard's social domain is intended by God to be one “far from assault and

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398 Ibid., 86.
399 Black, 106.
401 Ibid.
withdrawal” and “meant... to be a play of constant mutual blessing.”

Repeatedly, Willard stated that the most crucial social relationship is between an individual and God. Life is inherently lonely without God, he suggested, and people do not function properly apart from relationship with the divine. God is perfect order, and all organisms maintain their own state of order by reaching out and absorbing the orderliness of others. This is generally accomplished through the nourishment of food, but the existence of the social nature of human persons implies that they require social orderliness as well, and therefore they must reach out in relational ways to absorb relational order from others. The ultimate source of order being God, one must, in order to maintain one's own orderliness, reach out in relationship to that perfect order in God. Without God, human nature dissolves into chaos.

Finally, Willard saw the soul as encompassing all other faculties, including one’s social environment. From a neurological standpoint, one might see Willard's conception of the soul as the solution to the binding problem, that question of how neurological phenomena as well as individual subjective experiences are combined together into a single experience of the world. For Willard, this was God's intent in creating the soul. It is the faculty which unifies and orders the other faculties into a coherent whole. The soul operates almost silently beneath the operations of all other faculties and is therefore generally not experienced by

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402 Ibid., 188.
403 Willard, Hearing God, 186.
404 Ibid., 9.
405 Willard, Disciplines, 65.
406 Willard, Renovation, 37.
most persons, though one may become aware of it and its working if one allows all other faculties to quiet.

Perhaps the time when the soul becomes most felt is in moments of meaninglessness, as the soul, he suggested, is fuelled by the presence of meaning.\textsuperscript{407} When there is meaning in one's life, the soul carries the person forward, but in meaninglessness, one can merely carry on through willpower, but the smallness of the will means that an individual can carry on in this fashion for only so long. Apart from meaning, the soul ceases to integrate, and the individual faculties must operate without properly influencing one another, resulting in internal chaos.

Not including the social environment, Willard saw these faculties as having a proper hierarchy. The heart is intended to order the mind, which in turn orders and provides meaning to the soul, which then integrates the body into a whole. However, he suggested, most persons have the ordering in reverse. Most set the body's physical demands as what orders the soul's integrating capacity, which then determines what the mind focuses on, leaving the will to be directed entirely by the body's demands.\textsuperscript{408} A proper Christian spirituality, then, must reorder the faculties back into their divinely intended hierarchy.

\section*{1.3 Unconsciousness and Automaticity}

One final issue that is worth noting in Willard's anthropology is the matter of automaticity, which is closely related to his understanding of the unconsciousness. The body, as already noted, can and does move without input from the mind and will due to its storage of the

\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 203.

\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., 40-1.
embodied will. One acts without thinking about it as when one presses on the brake pedal while driving when the car in front suddenly stops. The will and immaterial aspects of the self in general are not involved, but because they are not involved, what is happening is unconscious behaviour. The body is, therefore, the source of unconscious behaviour.\(^{409}\) Beyond this, most of what one does is driven by unconscious factors, stimuli and even thoughts that are not in awareness.\(^{410}\) The body takes in information and may even generate information that the conscious self is unaware of and then make decisions automatically in response. Spiritual formation, then, is partially a process of uncovering unconscious and automatic behaviour and stimuli and readying the body to enact proper choices in response to them.

However, there is some discrepancy in Willard's writing as to where the unconsciousness resides exactly. At times, he was almost explicit in arguing that that which occurs unconsciously is due to the storage of habit in the body, as already noted.\(^{411}\) The flesh becomes his explanation for the existence of activity and processing that occurs outside of conscious awareness. On the other hand, when discussing the will, he at times spoke of it as if it included unintentional choices or choices that were not made through conscious deliberation.\(^{412}\) Moreover, while discussing the mind, he referred to unconscious thoughts occurring there rather than in the body and being caught up in ideas that are not consciously

\(^{409}\) Black, 105.


\(^{411}\) E.g., Black, 105; Willard, *Renovation*, 35.

\(^{412}\) E.g., Willard, *Renovation*, 52.
understood. Additionally, the soul seems to act almost entirely unconsciously in its integration of the other faculties, and the possibility of self-deception further suggests that activity in the mind may be hidden from itself. It is difficult, then, to determine the extent of the unconscious in Willard's thought. The easiest solution is to suggest that all faculties have conscious and unconscious aspects, but this goes against his inference that the body is the source of unconscious behaviours. Unconscious behaviours, experiences, and phenomena must occur in more than the body's habituated patterns, though for the purposes of Willard's prescription for evangelical spirituality, the automaticity of the embodied will is that aspect of unconsciousness that is principally necessary to change.

2 Willard's Affective Psychology

2.1 The Character of Emotion

Not discussed above in any detail is Willard's concept and location of emotion. He seemed to prefer the term feeling over emotion and uses it as a category for a number of different sensations, some of which are quite familiar and others perhaps more unusual under that title. Love, as already noted, is more than an emotion, but when discussing emotions, he included it, implying that feelings are a crucial component of it. Pleasure, he also noted, is an emotion, as are anger, fear, joy, peace, envy, and jealousy. He also included desire under the category of feelings as well as faith and hope, at least in part, as both involve a thought

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413 E.g., Willard, Renovation, 115, 96-7.

414 Willard, “Foreward,” in I Told Me So.

415 Willard, “Evangelical Political Involvement”, 82.
component. Feelings, then, seems to be an umbrella for numerous non-rational, internal, not directly bodily-related sensations.

One of the repeated ideas in Willard's discussion of emotion is its normalcy. He didn't seem to stress the idea, but it arose regularly when discussing individual feelings. He noted that desire is a natural movement of the flesh, anger is a spontaneous response to frustration, sexual arousal is a normal human experience, and so forth. Feelings are inherent to the human condition.

That normalcy implies that feelings are not inherently good or bad morally. Even anger, which Willard described as being a principal root of evil, is not inherently evil. Anger is, instead, a spontaneous response to frustration of the will. He described other emotional responses including desire, sexual arousal, sorrow, joy, fear, and pleasure in similar ways. He often referenced feelings in ways that seem to characterize them as inherently negative, for example, accusing Americans of being governed by their feelings or the

416 Willard, Renovation, 128-9.
419 Willard, Conspiracy, 164-5.
420 For further notations of the idea, see Willard, Omission, 221; Willard, Disciplines, 180, 181, 226; and Porter, Steven L., John C. Ortberg Jr., J P Moreland, Kelly M. Kapic, Aaron Preston, and Dallas Willard. “Book Symposium.” Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care 2, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 281.
421 Willard, Conspiracy, 147.
423 See Willard, “Warfare”, 81; Willard, Conspiracy, 164-5, 393-4; Willard, Omission, 221; and Willard, Disciplines, 180-1, 226.
424 E.g., Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 82.
aforementioned discussion of anger being a root of evil. Such depictions can cause readers to see Willard as characterizing emotions as innately bad or destructive. The reason for his frequent depictions of emotion in this fashion came not from his overall anthropology, but rather from his observation that feelings carry too great a weight in contemporary culture and can, when unbalanced in this fashion, result in sinful and damaging consequences. He was attempting to provide a corrective that could be wrongly interpreted. It must be understood that his principal view of emotion was that it is necessary, natural, and morally neutral.

Willard even referenced various emotional conditions that are fundamental to being human. He noted that desire itself is necessary and that lack of desire correlates with depression.\textsuperscript{425} Specifically, desires for goodness, rightness, acceptance, and significance are all inescapable and should be respected and dealt with in godly ways.\textsuperscript{426} That which is unimaginable inescapably results in fear,\textsuperscript{427} and the need to love and be loved cannot be denied or avoided.\textsuperscript{428} Many emotions are foundational to human nature and therefore must be acknowledged and worked with in the spiritual life.

Willard also pointed to the idea that emotion is constant. “We never get beyond seeking,” he said,\textsuperscript{429} implying that desire is an emotion continually occurring in the human person. Even when it appears as if one is not feeling anything, the actual case is that the emotions are


\textsuperscript{426} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 9, 14-5.

\textsuperscript{427} Ibid., 87.

\textsuperscript{428} Ibid., 323.

\textsuperscript{429} Willard, \textit{Living}, 71.
simply very small. One may have very weak, insignificant, or suppressed emotions, a condition that may be correlated with depression, but the feelings are always happening.

This constant emotion is necessary because emotions are what gives the human person a sense of being alive. He argued that lust is so powerful because it, perhaps more strongly than any other emotion, causes one to feel alive, and people are instinctively drawn to that feeling.\textsuperscript{430} In a less powerful fashion, desire in and of itself results in pleasure, and gratification of desire causes one to feel both alive and complete.\textsuperscript{431} That lack of desire results in depression and desire's natural result gives a feeling of completion implies that desire, if not emotion more generally, provides human nature with a necessary and positive sense of life.

The provision of a sense of life may be a most fundamental purpose to emotion, but another purpose is its generation of value. Willard argued that emotions are that which generate a good or bad, attractive or repulsive sense.\textsuperscript{432} One's thoughts are merely information being processed and analyzed by the mind, but they are necessarily neutral to the human person without an emotional tag attached to them. Only by this emotional tag is one, at least initially, able to recognize that murder is bad or that ice cream is good. The thought of ice cream only, without emotion, cannot carry a good or bad quality. Emotion, feeling, and valuation were therefore all identical phenomena to Willard,\textsuperscript{433} or are at least so closely entangled with one another than it is unnecessary to differentiate them in most circumstances. This valuation that

\textsuperscript{430} Willard, “Beyond Pornography”.

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{432} Black, 103.

\textsuperscript{433} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 80.
is emotion produces a tendency to move toward or away from objects, but also toward or away from thoughts, information, images, and ideas.\textsuperscript{434}

Feelings' tendency toward movement, however, may not be all that results in action. There is some difficulty disentangling how emotion is connected to action. He seemed to describe a number of separate though not necessarily distinct ways that one results in the other. In one case, emotion seems to automatically result in action. For example, he suggested that desire spurs a person forward automatically.\textsuperscript{435} There is some implication in his argument that there are means of countering that movement through application of the will. This suggests that the will may exert power to counteract emotion's motivational power. He also discussed the necessity of the will to cause one to take action even when one does not “feel like it”,\textsuperscript{436} implying that action may not necessarily require desire at all. He made similar references to emotions other than desire such as fear,\textsuperscript{437} which would make this possible direct link from emotion to action universal, but, as noted, the will seems to also provide a motivator toward action that may work with, against, or apart from feelings. It is also worth noting that action may occur through, as previously noted, the application of habits stored within the body, a circumstance that does not necessarily require the stimulus of emotion. Action may therefore occur due to emotion, will, or bodily habits, all of which may work in concert or dissension with one another.

A final path he described is built on his concept of faith or belief. Belief is a tendency to act

\textsuperscript{434} Porter, 262.
\textsuperscript{435} Willard, “Warfare”, 82.
\textsuperscript{436} Willard, Renovation, 127.
\textsuperscript{437} Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 154. See also Willard, Disciplines, 232.
in a particular manner that is not necessarily connected to knowledge.\textsuperscript{438} One may possess knowledge that matches one's beliefs, but one may also possess knowledge counter to one's beliefs or possess beliefs with no connected knowledge at all. One may tend to act, therefore, with no understanding of how or why one acts in such a manner. In one place, Willard suggested that belief arises out of emotion, making it a sort of intermediary between feeling and action,\textsuperscript{439} but in another, he argued that feelings do not reliably result in belief, but rather that it springs from knowledge\textsuperscript{440} A third issue, however, arises from the fact that he included faith, which he used synonymously with belief in \textit{The Great Omission}, in his discussion of emotion.\textsuperscript{441} It seems most likely that he used faith and belief in non-technical ways, describing more than one phenomenon via the single term. Another possibility is that his thinking evolved on the topic, the concept of belief as an intermediary being the most recent discussion. In either case, particularly with the uncertainty of which is true, this results in difficulty understanding the relationship of belief/faith to emotion and how emotion, therefore, is connected to action. There appears to be no way to determine for certain how each of these three concepts was related to the others in Willard's mind. The most that one can determine is that emotion may lead to action directly or through an intermediary function, though it is not necessary for action to occur.

A final purpose of feelings is a means of communication or the transmission of understanding. There were two ways that this occurs in Willard's thought. A less discussed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{438} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 15-6.
\item \textsuperscript{439} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{440} Willard, \textit{Omission}, 194.
\item \textsuperscript{441} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 128-9.
\end{itemize}
manner is the bringing of unconscious beliefs and bodily dispositions to awareness. As noted, beliefs, in the sense of tendencies toward acting in particular manners, may not be correlated with knowledge. Similarly, what the body is ready to do is intentionally out of awareness so as to free up the person to attend to other issues. These unconscious “readinesses” enter into awareness through one's feelings. Therefore, one gains an understanding of certain unconscious aspects of oneself through awareness and evaluation of one's feelings.

The more commonly discussed way that feelings are used to convey information is in divine communication. Willard argued that one's own thoughts and feelings are the primary subjective means that God uses to communicate. The “still, small voice” of 1 Kings 19, he suggested, often manifests through God's bringing to mind and experience particular thoughts and feelings that need highlighting or attention. Sometimes the feelings that God may bring to the surface are identical to the unconscious ones already discussed. God specifically brings to awareness previously unseen tendencies that need modification or response. Other times, the feelings that arise may merely be ways that God attempts to direct one's attention in order to produce a response otherwise in concert with divine will.

Despite the fact that this is the primary subjective means that God communicates with people, its very subjectivity can make it unclear. Because it is a person's own thoughts and feelings, there is never a means of being completely certain that those feelings are being inspired or evoked by the Holy Spirit. They may be emotions sparked by oneself alone or by

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442 Willard, Renovation, 162; Willard, Conspiracy, 230.
443 Willard, Hearing God, 99-100.
444 Ibid., 102.
445 Ibid., 190.
earthly rather than spiritual circumstances or stimuli. Therefore, Willard cautioned Christians that they must compare their feelings to objective truths, particularly scripture, and that they must already have a relationship with God such that they share similar desires, wills, and intentions. In this way, feelings that may or may not be evoked by the Holy Spirit may be corroborated and may already be likely to be in alignment with God's design.

2.2 Emotion's Relationship to Other Faculties

Because all of Willard's faculties are interrelated, one of the more important issues to consider is emotion's relationship to these other faculties. Three are mentioned directly: the will, the mind in terms of thought, and the body. With regards to the will, in *The Divine Conspiracy* he argued that emotions are what enable the will to make choices due to emotion's capacity to add value to objects, thoughts, and ideas.\(^{446}\) Without value, there would be no means of making one choice preferable to another; all options would be completely neutral, and any choice made would be merely random. Therefore, emotion must provide a necessary quality to options, out of which the will then chooses among the most appealing.

In a later text, *Renovation of the Heart*, however, Willard presented the will as having its own orientation, its own preference toward or away from particular options.\(^{447}\) If the will contains its own preferences, then emotions are not necessary for the will to make choices, countering his previous assertion. In this same book, he also discussed self-control, defining it as a

\(^{446}\) Willard, *Conspiracy*, 80.

\(^{447}\) Willard, *Renovation*, 57.
capacity of the will to do that which one does not desire to do.\textsuperscript{448} That is, a necessary capacity for the human person to develop is the ability to choose in opposition to one's feelings. Given the previously discussed pathways for emotion to connect to action, it seems that his initial presentation of emotion as necessarily providing valuation to the will, which enables it to choose, is either incorrect or a depiction of only one possibility. Emotion, it seems, may provide value to options among which the will then chooses, but the will must be capable of choosing apart from emotion's influence.

Emotion, then, has the possibility of evoking the will through the generation or presentation of value, but the will also has the potential to evoke emotion, particularly through the experience of frustration. Willard presented anger as a person's natural and instinctive response to the obstruction of one's will\textsuperscript{449}, manifesting in a mild form as frustration. When the will is activated but blocked, it automatically evokes emotion. This also suggests that the ability to choose may result in some sense of pleasure or satisfaction, though Willard stated this explicitly only in response to desire rather than will.\textsuperscript{450} The will also bears the capacity to invite, allow, handle, and suppress emotions to some extent.\textsuperscript{451} To put it another way, “... what we feel is very much a matter of what we allow ourselves to feel.”\textsuperscript{452} One chooses, in a limited fashion, what one is allowed to and does feel. The will's inability to counter desire directly suggests that his reference here may be to the long-term, rather than in an immediate

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., 127.

\textsuperscript{449} Willard, “Restoration”, 108.

\textsuperscript{450} Willard, “Beyond Pornography”.

\textsuperscript{451} Black, 104.

\textsuperscript{452} Willard, Renovation, 142.
circumstance, though this still suggests that the will generally directs the emotions in a limited capacity. The two faculties are apparently intertwined, capable of invoking or quashing a response from one another in Willard's framework.

In regards to the relation of thought, emotion, and volition, Willard seemed to have order of processing. Black avows that Willard saw all choices involving thought and feeling, which suggests that volition is the last to occur in an order of processing. Willard also affirmed that thought is the principal faculty which sets the direction for one's emotional experience and actions, which sets up a progress of thought leading to emotion, which then leads to volition. However, Willard also directly stated several times that the most fundamental decision that one can make is what one chooses to think about, which implies that volition is not necessarily last, but may precede thought. Contrarily, he declared that one does not have the capacity to choose one's emotions, and emotions are never presented as leading to thought. All of this together leads to the conclusion that there is a chain of faculties, thought leading to emotion and emotion leading to volition, that may loop around upon itself such that volition leads back to thought. The reverse of this chain, volition leading to emotion and emotion leading to thought, does not seem feasible in Willard's conceptualization.

The relationship between emotion and the body are particularly difficult to discern because of seemingly contradictory statements. Black interprets Willard as locating emotions within the

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453 Black, 104.
454 Willard, Conspiracy, 324.
456 E.g., Willard, Renovation, 111.
457 Ibid., 240.
mind,\textsuperscript{458} which is part of the immaterial aspect of the person. This is reasonable, considering that Willard explicitly stated this to be the case when describing his anthropology in \textit{Renovation}. However, prior to this, he referenced the James-Lange theory of emotion,\textsuperscript{459} which argues that emotion occurs in response to bodily positions and behaviours. One fears because one is fleeing instead of one fleeing because one is afraid. While he did not explicitly endorse this psychological theory, it is the only theory of emotion to which he made reference. Additionally, Willard referenced William James a number of times in his writing, likely more than any other psychologist,\textsuperscript{460} which seems to suggest that Willard generally agreed with and trusted James' theories. This would imply that, for Willard, emotion is a function of, and therefore located in or at least reliant upon, the body. Additionally, after referencing the James-Lange theory, he went on to assert that emotion inhabits particular parts of the body, a thought repeated in later writings as well.\textsuperscript{461} Emotion seems to be located both in the immaterial and material aspects of the person, the mind and the body, at different times.

One could argue that, according to Willard's more global anthropology, the body incorporates the mind, and therefore the fact that emotions are located within the mind implies that they are likewise located within the body, but this seems an unsatisfactory explanation. When Willard created the scheme of more exterior faculties incorporating interior ones, he did not specify how this worked specifically. The only time he explicitly used this manner of one

\textsuperscript{458} Black, 103.

\textsuperscript{459} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 83.


\textsuperscript{461} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 83; Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 162.
faculty incorporating others is when describing the level of control and influence one faculty should have over another. The will ought to have control over the mind, which ought to have control over the body, etc., though he asserted that the reverse was typically the case. Each faculty does not, then, seem to be located concretely within another, and therefore to argue that emotion is located within the mind, and the mind is located within the body, therefore emotion is located within the body seems beyond Willard's intent. Additionally, when describing the relationship between faculties, Willard was fairly explicit, not using subjunctives or terms leaving room for alternatives. This suggests that he would not be vague on locating emotions in one or the other. He used the locating of emotion in the body as part of his argument in one location and the locating of emotion in the mind as part of an argument in another. He seems definitive about locating emotion in both quite distinctly, leaving the question of how this was possible or requiring his thought to have evolved on this matter.

One possibility is that emotions are primarily located within the mind, but, as is the case with choices and the will, the mind stores emotions within the body so as to free up the mind and will to attend to other matters. In this way, primary emotions are located within the mind, but habituated or perhaps certain innate emotions are stored within the body. The James-Lange theory, then, would be only one possibility of how emotions are evoked, though not one that could be neglected due to its frequency and potential for deleterious effects. This would suggest that thought could lead to primary emotions directly, while physical positions and behaviours would evoke habituated emotions. In either circumstance, then, those emotions could be used by or against the will in producing action. In this manner, the body becomes a

462 Willard, Renovation, 40.
storehouse of not only secondary will, but perhaps secondary manifestations of all the immaterial aspects of the self, including emotion.

The question that remains unanswered is Willard's understanding of the nature of emotion itself. This is a question, however, that may not be answerable. It may be an issue that Willard did not see as necessary to analyze. Much of his pastoral work was aimed at practical application, and even his philosophical stance began from certain assumptions that made understanding the exact nature of internal events unnecessary. “Anything what we can accurately report about our experience must be assumed to be the case,” he stated.463 Experiences, including emotions, could be analyzed for the manner in which they interact with one another and the results of their occurrence, but their nature was unnecessary for such analysis. Even those efforts that Willard made to investigate internal experiences were largely aimed at the nature of consciousness or thought rather than emotion.464 It may be that the most Willard could say about the nature of emotions is that they are, at least in their purest form, expressions of movements within the immaterial aspect of the person and therefore inherent to spiritual beings. They are expressions of the values that the beings hold, but little more could be ascertained regarding their exact nature due to their spiritual origin.


3 Willard's Affective Telos

3.1 The View of the Problem

Because so much of Willard's pastoral work was directed practically, his discussion of emotion typically sought to describe its distorted and ideal states and the means by which one could move it toward its telos. He typically began by presenting his perspective of how human nature and culture has distorted the divine intention for emotion, a pattern followed here as well.

The first issue is one inherent to human nature, the prevalence of negative emotion in general. Willard so often presented emotion in an unfavourable light or discussed individual emotions as being negative that it is difficult not to understand this to be his overall perspective on them. It is even possible that he himself felt somewhat antagonistically about them at times, given the problems that seem to result from them, though it must be remembered that at his most specific and technical, he did acknowledge emotion in general and emotions specifically to be inherently neutral rather than negative.

However, that neutrality may make it difficult to understand why he referred to emotions both generally and specifically as negative or destructive. Perhaps the best way to see his description of certain emotions as negative would be to understand it as shorthand for emotions that feel negative or, more likely, can lead to negative results. That such emotions did so often lead to evil was a significant problem in his mind. Fear, he suggested, may be a normal response to circumstances, but it can lead to evils unless quickly restrained.\(^{465}\) It may result in self-obsession and the need to take care of oneself rather than attending to God or

others. Anger, which he saw as likely the most problematic emotion, can lead, in its lesser manifestations, to a gradual sapping of strength, joy, and peace for the individual person and abuse toward others. In its greater forms, it can lead to malice and full-fledged harm of others, self-righteousness, and chains of evil as one person's wrath sparks fear and wrath from another, who then carries out his or her wrath in return or even toward others. Lust can result in the disregard of others, and loneliness, while not itself evil, points to conditions that are inherently evil. The church is no haven from these problems, as he argued that dogmatism, intolerance, and even violence have all been and continue to be present in the church, and all of these stem from anxiety and other emotional roots.

Of concern at this point may be the question of how neutral emotions may result in negative and sinful consequences. If the emotions themselves are neutral, it may seem that they should naturally lead to neutral consequences. Willard solved this dilemma through the differentiation of experience and indulgence. This topic, while mentioned only briefly at times, is critical for making sense of his affective psychology. Anger, for example, exists for the purpose of alerting one to an obstruction of one's will in ways that are more efficient than

\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{466}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Ibid., 165; Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 15.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{467}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Dallas Willard, “Taking God's Keys: The Keys of the Kingdom Also Unlock the Joys of Your Calling,” \textit{Leadership} 19, no. 4 (Fall 1998), 57.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{468}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Willard, “Political”, 82.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{469}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 148-9.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{470}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 227.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{471}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 161.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{472}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Willard, \textit{Hearing}, 43.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{473}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize Book Symposium, 273.}\]
the application of reason.\textsuperscript{474} One may experience that one's plans are being thwarted or interfered with quickly and without excessive attention or analysis. This can allow one to alter one's plans in a similarly efficient manner. However, many times, one does not respond to anger in such a fashion, but one instead takes hold of the angry feeling itself and takes it into one's person and character more completely or draws it out over a time longer than is warranted. Such indulgence results in anger becoming hostility, contempt, and condemnation, depending on its particular manifestation.\textsuperscript{475} What was only an experience turns into a patterned response or habituated way of behaving or feeling. He discussed similar paths of fear, initially a warning mechanism, becoming anxiety or worry\textsuperscript{476} or even fear resulting in indulgent anger.\textsuperscript{477} The emotions themselves are not problematic, but the tendency to hold on to or drawn out emotions rather than letting them dissipate as well as the habituation of emotional patterns that are unwarranted become problematic. Such patterns are even more problematic because they can come to conflict with one another, resulting in multiple, simultaneous emotions that pull one in opposing directions. This is part of his picture of the disordered person, one who has become dominated by emotion due to this pattern and habituation and torn in conflicting directions.\textsuperscript{478} The negative ways of dealing with emotion result in negative consequences.

Such emotions, argued Willard, need not be so prevalent nor lead to evil consequences, but

\textsuperscript{474} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 148.

\textsuperscript{475} Ibid., 151-2, 221.

\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 209.

\textsuperscript{477} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 92.

\textsuperscript{478} Willard, “Restoration”, 105.
evangelicals have failed to deal with the soul in proper ways. Emotional disorders are largely a result of a wrong understanding and manner of loving and a culture of ideas that are divorced from the true needs of the human person.\textsuperscript{479} However, the evangelical church does not address these issues sufficiently. The church primarily attempts to deal with wrong feelings directly while ignoring the roots of character and person-hood that evoke such feelings.\textsuperscript{480} Further, the church tends to focus only on internal and immaterial means of addressing all sin issues, including emotional ones, neglecting the physical aspects of the person and the embodied nature of the self.\textsuperscript{481}

Part of this focus on applying internal means of addressing sin results in an attempt to overcome sinful desires through direct application of will. That is, evangelicals experience temptation and then attempt to resist it solely by choosing not to, but such a methodology cannot work, as already noted, because the will cannot overcome desire directly.\textsuperscript{482} The evangelical church, however, tends to preach that the means of dealing with temptation is to intend and choose rightly in the moment. Willard himself preached that the means of countering temptation is volition,\textsuperscript{483} but he intended this to mean that, over time, one's choices would gradually change one's character such that one would no longer be inclined toward such a temptation rather than meaning one should fight directly against it at its strongest.

\textsuperscript{479} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 9-10.

\textsuperscript{480} Ibid., 202-3.

\textsuperscript{481} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 152.

\textsuperscript{482} Willard, “Warfare”, 82.

\textsuperscript{483} Willard, “Beyond Pornography”. 
Willard criticized not only the evangelical church, but also evangelical individuals as well, suggesting that they primarily want consequences and problems to be changed without having to change themselves or the circumstances of their lives. They want to continue on as they always have, he says, with the results changing so that things are suddenly good, a plan he sees as entirely absurd. People are embedded within their problems, and the problems, including problematic emotions, will not change until the persons themselves begin to change as well.

Part of the reason that these evangelicals are uninterested in change is because they have come to value the emotions in and of themselves, a tendency that is prevalent throughout the human race, though particularly in Western culture after the 1800's. He argued that philosophical trends in the 18th century idealized happiness as a principal virtue, resulting in a 19th century conceptualization of pleasure as the highest good. This philosophy dispersed throughout Western society, resulting eventually in an American culture where people primarily value feeling and sensuality. People define what is good almost solely by how it feels. Societal and political rights have become defined by this maxim, but Willard submitted that the right to happiness and hedonism is faulty. If one has a right to happiness, then one ought always to possess it, even if one's choices should not naturally result in it, but this defies basic cause-and-effect dynamics of creation. One cannot demand that one's choices should always result in pleasure without negating reasonable consequences.

484 Willard, Disciplines, 225.

485 Ibid., 99.

486 Willard, “Political Involvement”, 82; Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 199.

487 Willard, Disciplines, 121.
and natural law, which makes a right to happiness an impossibility.

Not only have pleasure and happiness become a civil right, but they have become the “true elixir of life”.\(^\text{488}\) To be alive, goes this argument, one must fully experience one's feelings, and those who suggest that one ought to limit one's emotional experience or expression because of moral rectitude are therefore preventing people from living well. Full experience of the range of emotions is what makes life worth living. Further, the good person is not the moral individual, but the one who follows his or her feelings to their utmost.\(^\text{489}\) Therefore, the nature of life itself demands that one should seek one's happiness through whatever means are appropriate, but Willard decried this philosophy as disastrous.\(^\text{490}\) It can turn morality into evil and places individual experience as the central value without fully taking into consideration natural law, the existence of God, and societal dynamics that result in conflict when millions of individuals consider only their own experience and not how others' seeking of pleasurable experience may conflict with it.

Unfortunately, certain strains of the church contribute to this situation. Willard painted with rather broad strokes in this situation, but he argued that liberal Christian theology can eliminate or obscure the reality of an active and relational God, eliminating the miraculous and making Christianity about cultural liberation, egalitarianism, and love without an objective definition of what those mean. He described the late twentieth century manifestation of this as one wherein people are to be freed from restriction and limitation in

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\(^{489}\) Ibid., 152.

\(^{490}\) Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, 49.
order to do as they desire. Ultimately, then, this makes desire sacred. 491 In other writings, he likewise argued that individual experience had become sacred, and the stymieing of desire and experience thereby becomes morally evil. 492 Liberal theology is not the only one culpable in this, however, as both liberal and conservative theologies result, again, in Willard's gospels of sin management, and sin management is largely about the relieving of guilt, both ontological and experiential. 493 The primary strains of Christian theology in America, then, are directed toward the elimination of negative emotion. Once beyond the relieving of guilt, Christians may then seek God, but they do so largely for the purpose of securing safety and comfort, that is, the elimination of anxiety and procuring of positive emotion. 494 Evangelicalism, in many cases, contributes to the problem of making positive emotion a principal value to be sought: conservatives seek to eliminate the experience of guilt in order to attain happiness while liberals seek to eliminate suffering in order to bring about the same goal. In first world cultures, Willard’s principal audience, both perspectives largely result in freeing people to do whatever they please.

Not all of evangelicalism so values emotion, however. Many strains retain the conviction that moral uprightness is necessary and that it requires the submission of emotion to reason. Willard agreed with this philosophy, though he noted that this submission can turn to repression, which is also not the divine intention. At a number of places, he argued quite directly that denial and repression of internal and physical states, particularly emotion, are

491 Willard, *Conspiracy*, 54.

492 Willard, “Evangelical Political Involvement”, 82.

493 Black, 151-2.

counter-productive, and philosophies and theologies that favour “divestment of passion [and] extinction of desire” are antithetical to authentic Christian spirituality.\(^{495}\) God does not demand that emotion be repressed. In fact, Willard acknowledged that wrestling with temptation is often easier when one is happy; therefore the elimination of the ordinary pleasures of life can backfire.\(^{496}\) The avoidance and elimination of emotion makes a moral life more difficult. Moreover, pleasure and play are not inherently sinful but are part of God's design for creation. Willard even suggested at one point that those who avoid and condemn emotion and emotional expression do so because of particular emotions they bear. Such people fear emotion because it limits their ability to hide their character and intentions from others and prevents them from obtaining what they desire.\(^{497}\) Even those who require the repression of emotions do so in order to seek or soothe other emotions.

This demonstrates the power that emotion has for motivating, which presents another problematic issue against which Willard argued. He acknowledged that emotions can and do motivate, but he was troubled by the fact that for many people, emotions were the principal, if not only, motivators of their lives. He described contemporary culture in more than one location as one in which people are “governed by their feelings”, and in “bondage to how they feel”, making choices based solely on emotions and unable to choose differently.\(^{498}\) However people feel or desire, they act, regardless of the potential outcome of those actions or whether they might be beneficial to themselves or society. He saw many people as so

\(^{495}\) Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, VI. See also Book Symposium, 281; Willard, Renovation, 123; Willard, Disciplines, 75.

\(^{496}\) Willard, Disciplines, 81.

\(^{497}\) Willard, Conspiracy, 76.

\(^{498}\) Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 82; Willard, Renovation, 126; Willard, Disciplines, 99-100.
caught in this circumstance that they could not differentiate between desire and will.\textsuperscript{499} Not only could they not choose differently from what they desired, they believed that their desires were equivalent to their choices.

The issue for Willard was that emotions are “disastrous masters”,\textsuperscript{500} leading only toward chaos unless tempered by other faculties, particularly thought and volition. Spiritually, he even noted that it is not possible for a person controlled only by emotion to move toward sanctification.\textsuperscript{501} They will move inevitably away from God and from the holistic life that God intended, living increasingly in a state of “helter-skelter”. That people primarily are motivated by emotion results in chaos.

This failure to temper emotion with other faculties was largely a failure to reason effectively in Willard’s mind. Emotion without knowledge is insufficient for sustaining the spiritual life.\textsuperscript{502} It becomes separated from right boundaries and oriented toward sensual or conflicting directions. Emotion is incapable of evaluation; it merely reacts without the analysis that thought and will are capable of adding. Similarly, emotion cannot effectively compare experience and circumstance to a standard. Therefore moral knowledge and consideration are necessary, but as society neglects morality or does not consider it in a concrete or practical manner, emotion turns back on itself rather than being guided effectively toward good.\textsuperscript{503}

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\footnotesize\textsuperscript{499} Willard, “Warfare”, 83.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{500} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 122.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{502} Book Symposium, 245.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{503} Willard, “Nietzsche vs. Jesus”, 165.
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Feeling cannot function on its own, disconnected from and in control of the rest of the self without producing a chaotic life and self.

### 3.2 The Ideal State

That Willard found the prevalence and undesirable results of negative emotions to be a principal problem for society, the church, and evangelicals on the whole might imply that part of his ideal state would be one where negative emotions were minimized and positive emotions were more prevalent, and this was indeed the case. When it comes to emotion, Willard stated plainly that the goal of sanctification was to remove or modify negative feelings and heighten or bring positive feelings to prominence. His goal was that one should feel differently, not that one should feel what one always has but choosing differently in response to them.\(^{504}\) That one should choose differently was still part of Willard's ideal, but given the will's typical inability to confront feelings directly, it is insufficient. Only the ceasing of negative emotion and increase of positive will be enough.

Of the emotions that should increase, the most prominent in Willard's writing is joy and its cousin, happiness. He described both God the Father and Jesus as being characterized largely by joy, even calling God the happiest being in the universe.\(^{505}\) That God's character is one described by joy suggests that this should likewise be a principal characterization of Christians.\(^{506}\) Christians ought to be happy, joyous people. Only by being thus will they be

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able to sustain themselves in the work that God sets before them, which is why Willard described the kingdom of God as having “no small element of hilarity.” His ideal person is, at least in part, one with the freedom to laugh and find joy, even in the face of grief and sorrow, which cannot mitigate the happiness that comes from a loving relationship with God.

Other positive emotions that ought to characterize the Christian are peace, faith, and hope, all of which should come to displace feelings of wrath, bitterness, anxiety, envy, loneliness, and insecurity. Emotion should not be shunned, but positive emotion should be sought, if in the proper manner and not as the sole goal of life. Willard was hardly denigrating of intense emotional experience, suggesting that people avoid it to their detriment. It is a needed foundation for life and can be the spark and beginning of positive things.

A discussion of positive emotion in Willard would be lacking if it did not mention the need for love. Love is not an emotion in Willard's psychology, but emotion does make up a part of love. It is an overall quality of life that includes elements of emotion, volition, bodily habituation and disposition, and perhaps aspects of thought as well. He defined love as commitment to the good or well-being of an object or other, which may or may not require feeling. One is still called to love even when one isn't experiencing loving emotion, which

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507 Willard, Conspiracy, 290.

508 Willard, Omission, 129.

509 Ibid.; Willard, Conspiracy, 312.

510 Hayford and Willard, 20,22.

511 Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, V.

places the matter largely in the domain of will, but one must recall that Willard also argued that, apart from emotion, the human person will be unable to fulfil the tasks set before them, and this included bringing about good for others. Christians must be able to love without feeling love, but their emotions must be oriented toward love in general such that the feeling flows readily, or the capacity to act from will alone will become extinguished over time.

*Agape* love, he pronounced, is the pinnacle of all human fulfilment, and the actual content of all morality. One fulfils the law entirely when one loves all others and becomes that which God intended for humanity, beings who are like God, who is love. Humanity is already designed for love, intended to live in friendship with God and others, but the good person is one who has fulfilled that design and is pervaded by love, not only as a choice, but in emotion as well. Therefore, Willard deeply desired that Christians would come to recognize that love was God's ideal for human character and would actively desire to become saturated by it.

While any positive emotion will in part lessen negative emotions, being saturated by love will result in the diminishing of negative emotions in greatest measure. It eliminates, for example, the possibility of anger, because anger necessitates the drive to harm others, but love seeks their good. Love for the right object, primarily God and the divine will, which cannot be destroyed, will similarly result in the lessening of anxiety and fear, because what

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513 Willard, *Conspiracy*, 137.

514 Willard, “Political Involvement”, 87.


516 Willard, *Conspiracy*, 151.
one seeks can never be lost.\textsuperscript{517} The emotion of love can come to displace other emotions that can potentially lead to sin.

That the object of love must be right is evidence of the more broad concept that the ideal Christian must have the proper values. Emotion, according to Willard, is what generates value in the self, and one's values and therefore emotions must be directed toward right objects. Because it is impossible to value nothing, the emotionally mature person will value those things that lead to what is good, primarily God. Such a person will also value what God values, as to value a person is to orient oneself toward that person's will and desires.\textsuperscript{518} This is why Jesus said that one must hate one's family and one's own life; such things are not to be valued in comparison to the value that one must place on God and the kingdom of heaven.\textsuperscript{519} When one values that which God intended for humanity, one's emotions will be stable and positive, naturally leading toward the good. For that matter, once one values the right things, the refrain from Judges will not become a condemnation, but rather a statement of how things ought to be: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judg. 17:6, ESV) When one values what is right, then one will naturally do what is right.\textsuperscript{520}

That the discussion has turned both toward love and then toward action might suggest that there is more necessary than the righting of emotion. Emotion is so intertwined with other faculties that the ideal person will not only be largely oriented toward positive emotion, but

\textsuperscript{517} Ibid., 209.

\textsuperscript{518} Ibid., 203-4. See also Aaron Preston, “Redeeming Moral Formation: The Unity of Spiritual and Moral Formation in Willardian Thought,” \textit{Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care} 3, no. 2 (fall 2010): 221.

\textsuperscript{519} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 293.

\textsuperscript{520} Ibid., 379.
the emotional faculty will be rightly related to the rest of the person. The ordering of the faculties is crucial to Willard's anthropological _telos_. In the divinely intended state, the heart or will will influence the mind, which will influence emotion, which will, in turn, influence the body. That is, what the heart is oriented toward should be the most influential faculty, and the body should be the least. Emotion, then, should have more sway than the body, but less than the will and thoughts.\(^{521}\) However, not only should the orientation of the will have greater sway than that of the other faculties, the orientation of all faculties ought to generally be in the same direction. For the will to be oriented toward the good is not enough, though it is often necessary in the short term;\(^ {522}\) one's emotions must support that will. An intention toward the good ought to govern one's feelings as well as one's will so that they are in cooperation with one another.\(^ {523}\)

Similarly, emotion must be joined with thought. In this case, Willard focused not on a single orientation, but rather on the concurrent application of these two capacities. One's emotions may be oriented in a particular direction, but Willard desired that people reflect on those feelings rather than immediately acting on them.\(^ {524}\) He placed both thought and feeling together in the mind as a single faculty in his formal anthropology, which highlights that they should work together and not separately from one another.

Finally, the emotionally ideal person will deal with their negative emotions effectively. Willard's ideal person would be capable of working with those emotions when they arise so

\(^{521}\) Willard, _Renovation_, 40-1.

\(^{522}\) Ibid., 127.


\(^{524}\) Willard, “Warfare”, 83.
that they fulfil their proper roles and then dissipate as no longer necessary. The person does not indulge in them, recklessly act on them without thought, or allow them to govern his or her life. He applauded those who are capable of being angry or afraid, yet still act for the good.\(^525\)

More broadly, Willard saw the ideal person as capable of not acting on emotion when it arises. This is how he described the biblical concept of death to self.\(^526\) One's desires are dead to him or her; they no longer have ultimate control. Therefore, one effectively deals with negative emotions, in part, though not acting on them. Part of this requires, once again, the joining of thought with emotion, as thought requires some time for reflection, but it also requires the application of will as well as the body to be ready to remain still. One's emotion ought to be positively oriented, characterized by love and joy; rightly integrated with the other faculties; connected to godly values; and able to be resisted when necessary. This is Willard's ideal.

### 3.3 Attainment of the Ideal

The question that naturally follows is how one moves from the distorted to ideal state in Willard's theology. There are a number of tasks that come together to bring this about, though there is something of an order to it as well. His VIM pattern suggests that the first piece of any pattern of human growth requires that one have a vision of what one is to work toward, and the righting of distorted emotion is no different. The first step in emotional development


is to develop a vision of the good, though while this includes a vision of right emotionality, he was focused more on a vision of God as the source of good.

A vision of the goodness of God results in a number of effects on emotion. Seeing and knowing that God is good calms fear because one knows that the one ultimately in control is working things toward good even in frightening circumstances. A vision of God can sustain one and ease dreariness during times of self-denial, which is necessary along the path toward growth. Grief is tempered by joy in times of the loss of fellow Christians because one knows that the one lost has been transported to a greater life with God, and, perhaps most importantly, a vision for and focus on the goodness of God will inevitably result in love for God. On the other hand, a vision of God's goodness may also result in a recognition of one's own “terrible readiness” to hurt others and lack of trust in God's will and character. These realizations should produce a desire to become more holy and more like the goodness that is seen. All of this implies that one needs to go looking for God however possible. One must become familiar with scripture, the written record of God's involvement with humanity, and pay attention to how circumstances may be revealing God in present life. One must look for God.

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527 E.g., Willard, Omission, 29.
528 Hayford and Willard, 24.
530 Willard, Omission, 221.
531 Willard, Disciplines, 251; Willard, Conspiracy, 336.
532 Willard, Disciplines, 227.
However, vision for the good alone is not sufficient. Without the intention to attain that vision or appropriate means to do so, it will not be reached. What Willard primarily focused on is the means, and the first to note is an expansion on the vision. A vision of God must form the foundation for a relationship with God. Positive relationship with any person cannot help but affect one's emotions, and that with God is no exception. So crucial is this relationship that he calls it the first step in “a curriculum for Christlikeness”, the necessary foundation on which all other means rest. If one possesses only a vision of God or of the good without relationship with God, one has merely rules or an ideal; a spiritual life is one lived in connection to the Holy Spirit.

If God is both good and powerful, then it needs little explanation that loving relationship with God should result in a feeling of safety and elimination of fear. Though he did not discuss it directly, one could assume that such relationship would also mitigate anger, the other principal negative emotion that Willard discussed. Beyond the ceasing of negative emotion, however, relationship with God also produces positive emotions, specifically joy, hope, and peace. This is, in part, Willard suggested, due to the natural process of a smaller being feeling connected to a larger reality and person. As a child gains joy in helping a loving parent, so the Christian experiences joy in being integrated into the larger life of God. Emotion is naturally changed in the context of relationship with divinity to match the

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533 Willard, Conspiracy, 321.
534 Willard, Disciplines, 67.
535 Willard, Conspiracy, 321, 389; Looker, 202; Willard, Renovation, 183.
536 Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 161-2.
537 Willard, Hearing God, 32.
emotional life of God and of one whose life is intertwined with supreme goodness.

This is not merely a passive reality. Both God and the individual Christian must make active efforts to eliminate negative emotion and produce positive. In the case of God, the Holy Spirit gifts the person with joy, love, and peace in the deep places of the heart where the Spirit resides, deeper potentially than the person is able to reach on his or her own. Willard similarly described Jesus gradually replacing old patterns of emotion and replacing them with his own patterns of feeling and ways of reacting emotionally. In fact, the most crucial emotions must be developed by God in the person as they cannot be generated apart from divine grace. The cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and love are not things that the good person can attain; they are primarily gifts.

However, all gifts require the act of receiving, and therefore the Christian must make efforts to gain these positive emotions. Willard tended to concentrate on the responsibility of the individual Christian, therefore devoting most of his writing to what the Christian ought to do. The first requirement is that the Christian desire and intend to have different feelings. If people are not interested in feeling in a different manner, then their feelings will not change. They will remain as they always have unless circumstance demands that change occurs, but most Christians actively avoid that possibility because they desire to remain the


539 Willard, Hearing God, 154-5.

540 Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, VII.

541 Ibid.

542 Willard, Renovation, 119.
same. This is emotionally opposite to Willard's necessary prescription. Not only should Christians not avoid circumstances that demand they change how their emotions flow, but they should seek out the right conditions to generate the kind of emotions that God intended. Because emotion is responsive to stimuli, one should seek environments that will provide stimuli resulting in positive emotions so that they may become habituated in the body.

This, however, produces only patterns of positive emotion. Willard largely believed that the habituation of positive emotion will automatically replace patterns of negative emotion, but he also implied that this is not sufficient. The Christian must actively “walk away” from destructive feelings over time. This is not repression, but a gradual training of character such that destructive feelings are not natural and habitual. The church, he argued, should be a school where this happens. Classes should be offered on overcoming anger, and questions of how people are growing in dealing with such destructive emotions ought to be part of normal conversations within churches. Church ought also to be a place where such emotions can be met with patience and love and where people become trained to stay with those emotions and the circumstances that evoked them so as to “unlearn” habits of feeding or ignoring such emotions and patterns. Gradually, as Christians work with one another to face their...

543 Ibid., 123.
544 Ibid.
545 Ibid., 124.
547 Willard, “Evangelical Political Involvement”, 77-8.
negative emotions, they would develop a habit of forgiveness, becoming less easily offended and more willing to turn to love even in the face of offensive circumstances.\(^{548}\)

Time spent in church, however, is not sufficient since so much of life occurs outside of the church environment. Work individually must occur as well. The most often mentioned individual means of building up positive emotion and training one out of negative emotions is through the application of various disciplines, which are activities that gradually allow one to do in the future that which one cannot presently do.\(^{549}\) The early church, Willard asserted, assumed the necessity of bringing one's desires and emotions under control and prescribed the use of such disciplines to bring this about.\(^{550}\) This is perhaps due to the prevalence of Platonic philosophy in the era and region, which saw emotion as wild horses needing to be under the reins of the charioteer of reason. Willard also stressed the crucial role that the body plays in life and spirituality, which means that attempts to master the soul had to go through the body, through physical practices that gradually mold the flesh toward a particular orientation.\(^{551}\) Because the body stores habits of action and emotion, those habits must be changed, and disciplines are the means of retraining it in this way, building up new, positive habits. Even the perfect man, Jesus, engaged in disciplines, training his own body toward habituation of peace, love, faith, and hope, as a life lived in this manner is the only means by


\(^{549}\) Not all disciplines are individual, and many are and should be practised communally, including in church, though other disciplines that Willard prescribes require solitude.

\(^{550}\) Willard, *Disciplines*, 100.

\(^{551}\) Ibid., 31, 92.
which such emotion and virtue can be developed.\textsuperscript{552}

While any activity undertaken for the purpose of training oneself in a particular direction can be a discipline, Willard specified a number of classical disciplines that have been applied throughout history, which all Christians should take on at least occasionally because of their effect on the spiritual life. The most important of them, in his mind, are solitude and silence. For Willard, however, solitude was not merely being alone, but time away from others specifically doing nothing.\textsuperscript{553} When one intentionally spends time not acting out internal impulses that constantly arise, one gradually develops the capacity to not give in to desire, even when not engaging in the discipline. One gains the power to choose whether or not to respond to one's feelings or, in Willard's terms, escapes from the dominion of feeling and reorients the faculties such that the will has authority over emotion.\textsuperscript{554} Solitude may be a bit of a misleading term, however, as he argued that it must be time spent apart from other human beings, but specifically time spent with God. In solitude, one may become increasingly aware of God's delight in oneself,\textsuperscript{555} and because God is the source of order and therefore of an ordered self, the Christian is strengthened in that space of awareness.\textsuperscript{556} In terms of its direct effect on emotion, these aspects all come together through solitude to generate a habit of joy and peace.\textsuperscript{557}

\textsuperscript{552} Ibid., 263.

\textsuperscript{553} Willard, \textit{Omission}, 36.


\textsuperscript{555} Willard, \textit{Omission}, 37.

\textsuperscript{556} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 101.

\textsuperscript{557} Willard, \textit{Omission}, 36.
Other disciplines have, perhaps lesser, but similar results. Worship and celebration push out despair through the engendering of joy.\textsuperscript{558} Meditation on God cannot help but cause one to see divine goodness and cause one to love God.\textsuperscript{559} Fasting has effects similar to solitude in that is trains one to not respond to impulse, though perhaps focusing more on bodily impulse than emotional, and it also creates habits of patience, peace, and happiness even in the face of suffering.\textsuperscript{560} Doing good in secret eliminates insecurity in being unknown and potentially peace in the face of social dissonance and misunderstanding,\textsuperscript{561} and service for others without the intention to receive in return can release patterns of anger in the form of resentment.\textsuperscript{562} For Willard, classical disciplines inherently have positive effect on emotion when practised properly and consistently.

Disciplines have another important effect as well, which is the generation of self-awareness and self-acceptance.\textsuperscript{563} This is not a topic that Willard dealt with explicitly very often, though it is woven subtly through much of his writing. Only in his forward to Gregg Ten Elshof's book, \textit{I Told Me So}, did he seem to address the topic directly, making the case that the ability to change requires the consideration of one's actual feelings and thoughts because self-deception is not only possible, but common.\textsuperscript{564} Self-deception impedes transformation since

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{558} Willard, “Warfare”, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{559} Willard, \textit{Omission}, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{560} Willard, “Restoration”, 108; Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 67.
\item \textsuperscript{561} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 182.
\item \textsuperscript{563} Willard, “Warfare”, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{564} Willard, “Foreward,” in \textit{I Told Me So}. See also Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 229-30, where Willard makes mention of the issue briefly.
\end{itemize}
it is more difficult to change emotion of which one is aware. The classical disciplines are partially intended to cause negative emotion and habit to surface so that they can be dealt with directly.\textsuperscript{565} Solitude, Willard suggested, creates a space where Christians “expose ourselves to ourselves” so that what is actually happening cannot be so easily hidden,\textsuperscript{566} while fasting specifically reveals how one uses material goods to escape discomfort or how much one relies on the world, instead of God, for one's peace. Silence can expose how much we rely on others' opinion and allows one to accept oneself for who one is.\textsuperscript{567} Each classical discipline has some potential element of self-revelation.

Self-awareness, however, is not only a matter of discovering hidden aspects of one's character and personality. It may also be a matter of discovering truths that one simply did not know, and such knowledge can have great effect on emotion. One must, for instance, recognize one's blessedness, as Jesus asserted in the Sermon on the Mount. Without the knowledge that one's well-being is secured through God's care, one cannot deal rightly with anger and contempt,\textsuperscript{568} which are born in part out of frustration with the seeming inability to gain what one needs. Once one truly recognizes that God has already supplied all one needs, there is no longer any need for such negatively charged emotion. Whether self-awareness is the discovery of hidden patterns and dynamics within the self or the taking on of knowledge about oneself, Willard affirmed the need for the Christian to examine and understand him- or herself.

\textsuperscript{565} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 155.

\textsuperscript{566} Willard, “Warfare”, \textit{5I}.

\textsuperscript{567} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 165-6.

\textsuperscript{568} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 138.
Finally, and this is perhaps least surprising given Willard's philosophical perspective, one attains right emotional dynamics through the integration of faculties in a proper fashion, most directly through the convergence of thought and feeling. Emotion without thought can be wild and uncontrolled, resulting in unintended consequences. One must be able to reason while in the midst of feeling, able to consider whether one's emotions might be distorted in some fashion. When one recognizes distorted feelings, one can more readily choose not to act on them, but this requires that one have a pattern of stopping and considering during emotional circumstances, which Willard acknowledged is rare, particularly when feelings are particularly strong. While he did not specify so in this instance, this might be an ideal circumstance for which to develop a discipline of stopping and considering one's emotions regularly in times when they are not strong so that one is capable of doing so in times when they become so.

4 Issues with Willard's Psychology

Not all of Willard's psychology is clear and consistent. There are various issues that are difficult to resolve. Some have already been mentioned, such as the difficulty in locating emotion, whether in mind or body, and the difficulty in determining emotion's exact relationship with action. Two additional issues, however, deserve acknowledgement here. The first is a consistent conflation of faculties and their capacities and operations, particularly emotion and will. Peace, for example, Willard considered an emotion, though he defined it as

\[569\] Willard, Renovation, 124-5.
“rest of will” and an end striving in any fashion. It is not clear how an emotion can be a state of will when emotion and will are separate faculties. He also noted that malice, which he defined as a particular manifestation of anger, can be located in the will, again conflating the two faculties. While thought is never confused with emotion, he did fail at times to differentiate between thought and will, in different places asserting that each are responsible for considering options and suggesting that both are the principal faculty to set the direction for one's life, actions, and emotional experiences. Perhaps the most problematic issue is Willard's confusion of will and desire, the latter of which he considered an emotion. As already noted, he clearly separated the two, but in various contexts, they seem interchangeable. He argued likewise that desire is chaotic, uncontrollable, and oriented away from what is good, but in other places discussed it as if it were something one can and must rightly orient and something one can choose, which are descriptions typically applied to the will. He also stated that one can and must desire a right life and relationship with God, which defies the previous assertion that desire is inherently oriented away from the good and, again, depictions that are usually applied to will. Desire and will cannot be

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570 Ibid., 134. See also Looker, 203.
571 Willard, Renovation, 131.
572 Willard, Conspiracy, 155.
574 Willard, Conspiracy, 324 and Willard, Renovation, 35.
575 E.g., See Willard, “Restoration”, 108 where he uses “desire” in a context normally described quite explicitly as will.
577 Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 161.
578 Ibid.
both entirely distinct and regularly interchangeable, but it is difficult to consistently disentangle them in Willard's thought.

The second contention is whether or not repression is an appropriate means of dealing with emotion. To this point, this thesis has taken the position that Willard explicitly stated, that repression is damaging and should therefore be avoided, but this is an oversimplification and reduction of his thought. In later works, he argued that one must be capable of suppressing one's desires.\textsuperscript{579} There may be a difference in Willard's mind between repression and suppression, though it is unclear what that difference might be. Additionally, he advocated that one should “walk away” from destructive feelings, which here was interpreted as a gradual process, but this seems like a somewhat awkward understanding of the euphemism. When one discusses walking away from something, it is generally an immediate action rather than a long-term journey. It is unclear, then, how one should immediately escape from one's negative emotions other than to repress them. A clue may be found when he advocated the subordination of lesser desires beneath more crucial ones,\textsuperscript{580} though there is, again, no explanation for how this can be undertaken apart from pushing them down. Perhaps there are circumstances where repression is appropriate but others where it is not, but Willard provided no guidelines to distinguish such circumstances. One is left uncertain of how to both suppress and not repress.

It could be a boon to Willard's work and legacy if these issues could be resolved, thereby providing a more solid body of work on the spiritual life and formation for evangelicals and

\textsuperscript{579} Ibid., 80.

\textsuperscript{580} Willard, \textit{Disciplines} 80.
others interested in his perspective. Additionally, it may be beneficial to look at the reasoning and conclusions presented here and consider them in light of other perspectives, especially those with empirical research and experimentation. In this way, one may be able to determine whether Willard's work warrants any modification or clarification in order to better represent an authentic Christian spirituality as well as an authentic picture of the human person and how that person is capable of functioning within that spirituality. A second body of knowledge is necessary, then, to accomplish these things, and it is to that body of knowledge that this thesis turns.
Chapter 4
The Affective Neuropsychology
of Antonio Damasio and Jaak Panksepp

The field of neuroscience has become increasingly popular as well as increasingly possible in recent years, perhaps due in part to the invention of advanced scanning techniques that allow for more detailed analysis of neural activity in the brain. Whereas in the past, studies were limited to examination of the brain postmortem, through dangerous and somewhat rough surgical techniques, or via reading of electromagnetic patterns in rough areas around the scalp, fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), PET (positron emission tomography), and other 3D scanning techniques allow for a more accurate view of what is happening in the brain in real-time. With this and various other techniques, scientists are building increasing information on the correlation of brain activity with human functioning.

However, there is an enormous amount of brain functioning that goes on in a human person, and neuroscientists must specialize in a particular aspect of the brain or behaviour. Cognition has been a principal field, which has perhaps reduced emotion to a secondary or even tertiary concern, since psychological studies have tended to view living beings as primarily behavioural and potentially mental creatures only. Behaviour was seen as a stimulus-response mechanism, and an understanding of the means of transforming one into the other was considered largely unnecessary. This has changed somewhat in recent years, however. Neural studies of emotion have been increasing, perhaps due to an inability to comprehend

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Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 10.
certain behavioural issues from a purely stimulus-response perspective, a growing awareness of emotion's crucial role in behaviour and consciousness, and the surfacing of a more holistic view of human nature.

Three of the major researchers in affective neuroscience have been Joseph LeDoux, Antonio Damasio, and Jaak Panksepp. Their research is extensive and cannot be fully encompassed here, though an overview will be provided that will hopefully give a perspective of the crucial role that emotion plays in human life and behaviour. The goal, here, is to describe the theories and conclusions of the neuropsychological research that may have a bearing on Willard's conception of emotion at a broad level, without elaborating on details that may be unnecessary for theological analysis.

1 The Nature of Emotion

The previous chapter left off with an acknowledgement that Willard did not provide an exact definition of or detailing of the nature of emotion. This chapter begins with Damasio's confession that neuroscience runs into a similar issue. The field has yet to determine exactly

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582 Ibid., 11.
583 Ibid., 4.
584 E.g., Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 303.
585 Joseph LeDoux is a neuroscientist and professor of science at New York University whose work is primarily focused on the biology of emotion and memory, specializing in anxiety and fear. He also is Director of the Emotional Brain Institute in New York.

Antonio Damasio is professor of neuroscience at the University of Southern California and the Salk Institute and, along with his wife, Hanna Damasio, heads the Brain and Creativity Institute, which researches emotion, memory, and decision-making.

Jaak Panksepp is a psychologist and neuroscientist at Washington State University and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Bowling Green State University. He is best known for his research on laughter in animals, which ties into his foundational interest in affective neuroscience, the neurological basis of emotion.
what feelings are.\textsuperscript{586}

That is not to say that there are not multiple theories on the matter. Psychologists have speculated on the nature of emotion for quite some time, most significantly going back to William James' theory, which flipped common sense on its head. Although mentioned previously in this thesis, the current matter warrants a renewed examination in greater detail. James argued that a stimulus, such as sighting of a threatening bear, results in behaviours and bodily changes, including muscular tension and running away. One's awareness of these somatic responses to a stimulus results in the experience of emotion.\textsuperscript{587} In more technical terms, where common sense argues that interpretation of a stimulus produced emotions, which in turn results in a bodily response, James suggested that interpretation of a stimulus produces a bodily response, which then is experienced as emotions.\textsuperscript{588} Various other schemes for explaining the nature of emotion have been suggested,\textsuperscript{589} though none seem to loom as large as James' idea, perhaps because of its counter-intuitive shape and perhaps because of the difficulty that many scientists have had in discounting it. One set of neuroscientists described the theory simply as “hard to disprove”,\textsuperscript{590} and LeDoux likewise argued that there is greater support for some version of James' theory than there is against it.\textsuperscript{591}


\textsuperscript{587} William James, “What is An Emotion?” \textit{Mind}, 9, no. 34 (Apr. 1884), 189-90.

\textsuperscript{588} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 33.

\textsuperscript{589} E.g., the Cannon-Bard and Papez theories. See Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 56-8.


\textsuperscript{591} LeDoux, 290-5.
Panksepp, however, disagrees with James' view. He contends that the experience of behaviour or somatic state resulting in emotion requires conscious reading of the body, making emotion a function of consciousness or awareness. This would imply that only those creatures bearing mental consciousness would be capable of experiencing emotions, but animals of varying levels of sophistication act as if they experience emotion, and parallel portions of animal brains and human brains are active in response to those experiences. That is, even creatures that display no mental consciousness experience the same neural states as human beings do when those human persons experience emotion, which implies that these non-conscious creatures likewise experience emotion. Thus, emotion cannot be merely a matter of conscious reading of a somatic state.

That is not to say that Panksepp entirely discounts the possibility that interpretation of somatic states results in emotional experience. He acknowledges that neural reading of the state of the body does act as emotional stimuli, but he does not avow that this reading is necessary or equivalent to emotion. Instead, he proposes an inter-dynamic model wherein a stimulus results in an interpretation, characteristic somatic state, and emotional response, all of which may affect one another and, in turn, feed back to create additional stimuli, interpretations, emotional states, and somatic responses. The fact, however, that he distinguishes between somatic state and emotional response implies that while the former may affect the latter, they are not equivalent. Instead, Panksepp seems to situate emotion in


593 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 300.

594 Ibid.

595 Ibid., 33.
the brain alone. That is, the neural response to interpretation of an emotionally relevant stimulus within the brain is emotion, and the characteristic somatic response will always accompany it, but is a different phenomenon, one whose feedback cannot be ignored in analyzing emotional processes, but still distinct from them.

Panksepp's interpretation of the James-Lange theory, however, is very particular. Modern interpretations of the theory do not necessarily require a behavioural response, but only the tendency toward a behaviour. That tendency may be a somatic response, but not necessarily a behavioural one. Some researchers posit that the body may change state to make an action more likely without necessitating it, a somatic phenomenon that they distinguish from behaviour. Additionally, Panksepp interprets the theory as requiring conscious awareness of behaviour, but few other scientists do similarly. Many interpretations of the theory require neural readings of somatic state, but not necessarily conscious ones. Panksepp's primary objections to the theory seem to be based on a narrow interpretation of it, while many others are content with slightly modified versions of it.

Both LeDoux and Damasio are among those satisfied with the general shape of the James-Lange theory. Without the body, there can be no emotional experience, argues LeDoux, because emotion only occurs upon sensing the state of the body. Damasio goes so far as to suggest that mind in all its capacities, including thought, perception, and emotion, cannot

596 Ibid., 27.
597 Ibid., 57.
598 LeDoux, 50.
599 E.g., George, et al., S59.
600 LeDoux, 295, 298.
function properly without some sense of the body. He even refers to the primary means of emotion as “body loops” because a stimulus is read by the brain, which causes motor signals to activate a body response. That body response is then read by different centres of the brain. Thus, signals must run from stimulus through body to brain, which activates body and then is interpreted by the brain in a loop. Such loops can even be hijacked after a fashion by manually generating body states associated with emotion, even without awareness. Movement of facial muscles, for example, that are associated with happiness or sadness tend to produce those emotions in subjects, even if those subjects are unaware of the significance of the movements or meaning of the expression being generated. The brain's reading of a body state results in emotion, even if that body state is artificially generated. Some isolated neuroscientific accidents have also shown a link between electrical stimulation of neural sites on the brain stem associated with motor control and the experience of intense emotion. When particular nodes were stimulated in motor areas, patients felt powerful and uncontrollable emotions that were, at times, highly uncharacteristic and unrelated to their immediately prior states. That stimulation of motor areas resulted in emotion implies a connection between movement and emotional experience. Finally, Damasio discusses patients suffering from locked in syndrome, a condition wherein patients are conscious, but suffering from complete paralysis of voluntary muscles except the eyes. Such patients do not, he observes, exhibit the

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601 Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 191-4. Damasio bases this statement on the observation that those who are unable to experience all aspects of the body lose all capacities of mind. This is not to be confused with those who suffer from paralysis, as such individuals lack motor and sensory interaction but still maintain visceral sensitivity. The brain continues monitoring signals from organs and hormones, which retains a level of somatic experience, if partial.

602 Damasio, *Descartes Error*, 173.


level of panic that one might expect from such an experience. When one imagines such a condition, it carries with it a level of anxiety and anguish that those with the condition do not report during or afterwards. The lack of motor control resulting in diminished, though not extinguished, emotion implies a correlation between the two. There is a significant neurological evidence that emotion is directly correlated with the movement and state of the body.

Damasio specifies an exception to this, however, and LeDoux concurs that his theory is quite possible. While the primary means of emotion is active reading of somatic state, Damasio proposes a secondary means that he refers to as “as if loops”. One of the primary functions of higher cortical areas of the brain is to run what Nancey Murphy and Warren Brown refer to as “off line simulations”. That is, the brain simulates as if it were acting or experiencing in a particular fashion without such action or experience happening. One essentially imagines, for example, that one is walking or seeing a favourite painting without moving or having the painting in view. Whether one acts or only simulates the action, the same neural patterns activate in the brain. Simulations involving emotion Damasio calls as if loops because the brain reads neural signals as if the body were in a particular state, resulting in the equivalent emotion. Such as if loops are faster than body loops, on a microsecond scale, and replace

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606 LeDoux, 295.


608 Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 155-6. This simulation of a somatic state resulting in emotion is
the need for the movement of the body into particular states. However, he posits a few caveats regarding such simulations. First, in order for an as if loop to occur, the person must have experienced the body in the equivalent state in the past. The mind cannot simulate that which it has never experienced directly. Second, emotions stemming from as if loops are less powerful than those from body loops. This implies that emotions from as if loops will be overpowered or dwarfed when a body loop is simultaneously producing its own emotion. One may be able to imagine, intentionally or not, being happy in the midst of grief, but the body's state of sadness will be experienced as stronger than the mind's simulation of a bodily state matching happiness. Panksepp seems to advocate the possibility of as if loops in arguing that higher cortical areas of the brain may read lower, emotionally-related circuits, though he also denies experimental evidence of it.

Other than as if loops, however, the body and emotions seem to be intimately tied. Different emotions are associated with different somatic states as well as different systems and patterns of activity in the brain. For this reason, many neuroscientists resist the idea that one can study emotions as a whole or that a single, unifying region or limbic system is associated with emotion. LeDoux notes the brain is heavily interconnected and that damage to areas that were once considered part of the limbic system frequently result in interference with

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610 Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 156.

611 Ibid. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*, 121.

processes that are generally considered unrelated to emotion. Emotions are correlated with a number of different locations and systems within the brain, and this suggests, likewise, that emotions can only be studied as a single concept at a very broad scope. Detailed studies of emotions must therefore be conducted separately from one another due to their separate processes, systems, and dynamics. Panksepp's work corroborates this with his separation of different emotions such as SEEKING, FEAR, CARE, etc. and their corresponding neural pathways, which, while interconnected, are distinct, using separate pathways, neurotransmitter chemicals, etc.

The limits of each separate category or system of emotion, however, is not agreed upon in scientific circles. Many theoreticians have attempted to describe a list of primary emotions on which all other emotions would depend. Secondary emotions would then be a combination of primary emotions of those emotions that depend on higher cognitive functions in concert with primary emotions. Jealousy, for example, might be a combination of anger and fear or may be anger in the context of the awareness of particular social dynamics. In either case, a list of primary emotions is necessary, but no definitive list has been determined. Paul Ekman is one of various researchers who have crafted a list based on anthropological studies of facial expressions across cultures. Other researchers such as Robert Plutchik have built

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613 LeDoux, 101.
614 Ibid., 106.
615 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 53. Panksepp capitalizes the names of individual emotional systems and their corresponding experiences in order to demonstrate their relation to but distinction from more familiar emotions. For example, FEAR is highly related to the common sense emotion of fear, though it carries particular dynamics and specifics that show it to be different from a non-technical understanding, such as its differentiation from PANIC.
lists based on action tendencies. Panksepp, as already noted, has opted for a neurological approach, specifying basic neurological systems that result in specific emotions.\(^{617}\) Each list contains a varying number of elements ranging from two (positive and negative) to ten or more, though most lists have certain constants. Almost every listing includes anger, fear, and some variant of sadness or a disconnection-reaction.\(^{618}\) Happiness is also common, though Panksepp does not specify a happiness system, instead arguing that positive emotion may arise out of multiple systems, all with differing textures,\(^{619}\) and Ekman is unable to explain the dynamics behind the multitude of types of positive experience that all produce identical facial expressions, suggesting that there may or may not be multiple variants of positivity.\(^{620}\) Panksepp even notes that there is dissent among those using his categorization due to the ambiguity of what counts as emotion and what should be considered a homoeostatic drive and leaves the door open for additional neural systems to be discovered.\(^{621}\) Clearly additional research from multiple fields will be necessary to delineate specifically what primary emotions there may be as well as how to distinguish them from other action tendencies. For this writing's purposes, however, emotions, while distinct, can be understood as single type of phenomena. The level of detail necessary for considering them separately will be left for neuroscientific texts.

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\(^{617}\) LeDoux, 113.

\(^{618}\) Ibid.

\(^{619}\) The major systems Panksepp notes result in positive affect are SEEKING (Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 144ff.), CARE (Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 246ff.), and PLAY (Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 280ff.), though certainly LUST and even ANGER or global activation of the sympathetic nervous system may result in positive feelings that could be considered happiness.


That emotions are confused with other action tendencies suggests part of their purpose, which is, in part, to motivate one toward particular actions or behaviour. James Ashbrook & Carol Albright, forerunners in uniting theology with neuroscience, call emotions motivators and one of the major impetuses that cause one to move. Panksepp begins his major work with the argument that emotions are, by definition, neurological phenomena that are influential in motivating behaviour. Certain stimuli seem even to be hard-wired into the brain genetically to produce particular emotions and action responses, such as odours that result in fear and self-protective behaviour or stimuli extremely large in comparison to oneself resulting in awe and passivity and attention. Emotions seem designed to produce action.

The means of determining the appropriate action are likewise coded into the emotion itself. Every emotion comes with a particular valence, either positive or negative, which is why some, such as Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg, have noted that emotions are the primary valuation system of the brain. Whether or not something is good or bad and whether or not one should move toward or away from it depends on what emotions are evoked by the particular stimulus. That which carries negative value or emotional valence


624 Ibid., 18-9.


results in a narrowing of attention and focus on the self and present moment, while those
carrying a positive valence result in a broadening of attention, plan or move into the future,
and engagement in pro-social behaviour.\textsuperscript{628} There is no such thing as a neutral emotion, and
therefore all emotion contributes to the generation of value, and all valuation, potentially
beyond instinctive response, requires at least some hint of emotion.\textsuperscript{629}

Brad Strawn and Warren Brown suggest a correlative purpose to emotion, which is to provide
information. This is implicit in the emotional systems being the means of identifying the
value of a stimulus, but because humans are capable of awareness and self-reflection,
emotions may also, then, provide information regarding the relationship between oneself and
the current environment.\textsuperscript{630} One may evaluate whether or not one's relationship is positive or
negative and what emotion is experienced thereby determine what changes may be
warranted. Appropriate actions may be planned in response to the determined relationship
and the elements of the environment that result in the character of that relationship. Positive
elements may be sought more fervently or continued while negative elements may be
eliminated or avoided.

\textsuperscript{628} G. Michael Leffel, “Putting on Virtue: A Motivation-based Virtue Ethics of Caring for Practical
Theology,” in \textit{Wesleyan Theology and Social Science: The Dance of Practical Divinity and Discovery}, ed. M.
Kathryn Armistead, Brad D. Strawn, and Ronald W. Wright (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars
Publishing, 2010), 145.

\textsuperscript{629} Some psychologists, particularly those following James’ theory, would argue that valuation occurs
automatically at low levels of the brain in response to a stimulus. For example, a sudden startle results in
leaping backward, thereby demonstrating that the brain has already valued the initial stimulus as bad or
dangerous, and emotion would only be present in the perception of the bodily changes that result. Panksepp and
especially Damasio would reason that emotion does not require perception of bodily changes, and therefore the
changes themselves are sufficient for both emotion and valuation. Refer to the following section for more on
Damasio’s definition of emotion versus perception of emotion and the connection between emotion and somatic
state.

\textsuperscript{630} Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, \textit{The Physical Nature of the Christian Life: Neuroscience,
From a neurological perspective, emotion seems to be “a complex collection of chemical and neural responses forming a pattern” that are the result of the detection of a correlated stimulus and resulting in a temporary change of body state. Whether that somatic change is a result of emotion or whether it is the emotion is uncertain, though it is universally agreed that somatic change and emotion cannot be separated.

2 Emotion and Thought

Damasio actually proposed an additional criterion to his definition of emotion that has to do with the manner in which thinking occurs. For Damasio, any emotional state will inevitably result in a change, not necessarily in the content of thought, but in its style and efficiency. More positive emotions match with quicker and optimistic thinking that brings together ideas. On the other hand, fearful emotions correlate with fast but narrow thinking, while depressive emotions are correlated with slower thought processes. In this view, not only is emotion dependent upon the body, but also dependent upon the mind. This demonstrates the necessity of some discussion of the interplay of thought and emotion.

Some neuroscientists argue that emotion and thought or cognition should not be understood as distinct because the brain is designed to integrate all processes into a coherent whole. In this view, one should not talk about emotion or thought or perception, but only of experience. Practically, notes Panksepp, this is accurate, but it neglects the fact that for integration to

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631 Damasio, *Spinoza*, 53.
632 Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 146-7.
occur, there must be separate processes to bring together, and each of those separate processes occurs in different, though admittedly interconnected, systems of the brain, and that each of those separate systems produces a different phenomenon.\(^{634}\) Emotion is primarily associated with sub-cortical regions of the brain, while thought is mostly associated with higher, cortical regions. They are highly interdependent, particularly, says Damasio, cognition relying on neural systems and processes that correlate with emotion\(^{635}\) and both evoking one another,\(^{636}\) but they are still distinct from neuroanatomical, -chemical, and -dynamic perspectives.

Having finalized the matter of their distinctiveness, the issue of their interplay remains. Many have noted the neural connectivity of regions associated with both phenomena, and the fact that there are more connections, both in terms of neurons as well as neurochemical pathways, travelling from the emotionally-related areas of the brain to the cognitive areas than there are travelling in the reverse direction is repeatedly noted.\(^ {637}\) This suggests that emotion has more opportunity and capacity to influence thought than thought has to influence emotion. One's feelings, then, will sway thoughts more than vice-versa. So powerful is this effect of emotion that memory\(^{638}\) and even perception\(^{639}\) will change, depending upon one's emotional state. The very objects upon which one is able to think will to some extent differ from one

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\(^{634}\) Ibid. LeDoux agrees: LeDoux, 69.

\(^{635}\) Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 128.

\(^{636}\) Damasio, *Spinoza*, 71.


\(^{639}\) Andrew B. Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 79.
emotional state to another. Particularly strong emotions, Panksepp observes, will also
dysarouse higher cortical areas, implying that the more one feels, the less one is able to
think and will act and reason solely on an emotional basis. Negative emotions are particularly
prone to this phenomenon, as evidence shows that anger disrupts processing in the frontal
lobes, and fear results in the release of cortisol, a hormone whose presence in the brain
impedes cognition and, if prolonged, can damage brain tissue, killing neurons in the frontal
cortex. Positive emotions are not immune to this phenomenon, however, as high arousal of
Panksepp's SEEKING system is associated with a confusion between correlation and
causation and the production of confirmation bias. Clearly, emotion sways thinking quite
strongly, potentially extinguishing it in moments of extreme arousal.

Still, thought does affect emotion. While more neurons travel from limbic to cognitive area,
cognitive areas do have pathways leading back to limbic regions. This implies, and has been
verified experimentally, that cognitive responses to emotion have the capacity to amplify or
dampen the magnitude of emotional experience. Many can surely attest to the experience
of worrisome thoughts aggravating fear or positive thoughts reducing one's anger. LeDoux
admits that the cerebral cortex does act to some extent like Plato's charioteer, keeping wild

that anger's reduction of cognitive processes often results in the inability to recognize one's own anger or
irrationality. That is, the angrier someone gets, the more that person cannot think clearly or realize he or she is
angry.
642 LeDoux, 132-3.
643 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 161.
644 LeDoux, 50-1.
emotions under control, though the reality seems to be that the emotional horses have the raw power to overwhelm the thinking charioteer, even if they do not always exert it.

Thought's ability to affect emotion, however, requires that thought be evoked, and stimuli that evoke emotion in the brain do not necessarily evoke thought directly or may evoke emotion and motor response before thought can occur. LeDoux has demonstrated that some fear-related behaviours in rats can be conditioned such that there is no processing in the cortex. Many pathways are likely hard-wired this way naturally. Human brains are similar enough in structure to other mammalian brains that this suggests a parallel in human processing. Emotion and behaviour can occur without any activity in thought-producing regions of the brain. Thoughts may be evoked later, the emotions and behaviours themselves acting as the stimuli that evoke cognition, but the emotion-producing stimulus does not directly result in thought. The charioteer cannot control what he does not notice.

This leads to the conclusion that emotion is not necessarily related to conscious awareness. Jonathan Edwards implied such a possibility in his treatise on emotion, *Religious Affections*. He differentiated between taste and judgement, both being a process of determining of the value of something, but while judgement requires rational analysis, taste does not. Both

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645 Ibid., 80.

646 Jonathan Haidt proposes an amendment to Plato's metaphor: instead of a charioteer leading horses, he offers a rider on the back of an elephant. He argues that elephants are smarter than horses and also more powerful. Thus, emotions actually have a high level of logic to them, but they are completely capable of ignoring or being little affected by the thinking rider's directions when aroused. See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 53-4.

647 LeDoux, 158.

require the affections, that is emotion, but only the one requires awareness or focus. Modern
science confirms his idea of emotional valuation being both conscious and unconscious as
will be discussed shortly.

Panksepp points to the processing channels of various emotional systems in the brain and
notes that such channels have shorter and faster paths and therefore activate more quickly
than attentional networks. This implies, then, that an initial emotional response begins before
consciousness can even receive and process the information that an emotionally relevant
stimulus has been detected or that emotions have been asserted.\(^649\) LeDoux expands on this,
describing two channels specifically for fear processing. One interprets stimuli crudely but
quickly and produces an emotional response quite rapidly by travelling through only sub-
cortical regions. The other more slowly travels through both sub-cortical and cortical areas,
producing a more accurate interpretation of stimuli, but only after the sub-cortical regions
have already begun to initiate a reaction.\(^650\) The brain potentially interprets emotional stimuli
twice: once beneath consciousness and a second time in attentional areas.

Not all emotional stimuli result in the activation of the slower processing channel, resulting
in the fact that one may have feelings without any conscious awareness of the stimuli that
causd them.\(^651\) If only the sub-cortical pathway interprets a stimulus, conscious awareness
will have to infer from other information what caused the emotional response, assuming that
one is aware of having an emotional response at all. Not every stimulus could be processed
by the attentional networks because there is simply too much information to attend to.

\(^{649}\) Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 33.

\(^{650}\) LeDoux, 163-5.

\(^{651}\) Ibid., 298-9.
Working memory, which seems to form a large basis for consciousness, seems to work in a linear fashion, operating on only a few pieces of information at a time, one operation leading to the next, while sub-cortical areas work in parallel, operating on numerous pieces of information simultaneously and disconnected from one another. Most information must be processed in these parallel areas rather than in working memory due to its limited capacity, meaning that most of the brain's processing, including that of the emotions, may never be accessible to conscious awareness.\textsuperscript{652}

Certain neurological disorders such as blindsightedness and prosapagnosia give evidence of these separate processing systems. In the one, conscious processing of visual stimuli is damaged, such that one cannot consciously see, but visual stimuli that are emotionally relevant, such as frightening images, still result in an emotional response. A person with blindsightedness will react as if he or she saw the stimulus without being able to identify it. Prosopagnosia is similar, though it is a conscious inability to interpret faces. A person with such a disorder, while capable of seeing, cannot recognize a person through facial recognition. However, she or he will still have an appropriate emotional response to the face, even if they cannot identify why.\textsuperscript{653} Emotions occur for such individuals without consciousness being necessary.

This distinction between conscious and unconscious emotional processing is particularly significant in matters of memory. One can have emotional memories that are not at all

\textsuperscript{652} Ibid., 280.

\textsuperscript{653} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 307.
connected to the conscious mind or explicit memories that can be brought to mind.\textsuperscript{654} One can feel about something without remembering it consciously. Moreover, explicit memories can be forgotten while still resulting in emotional responses.\textsuperscript{655} A forgotten event may still result in feelings about it or about stimuli similar to it. Conscious memories may not even be formed for particularly stressful and prolonged emotional stimuli due to their effect on the hippocampus and amygdala. The first, which serves as a central memory processing hub can be damaged by long-term stress, resulting in a failure for conscious memories to be formed.\textsuperscript{656} The functioning of the second, however, which is critical for various emotional functions including fear, anger, and sexual drive, is enhanced during stress, potentially resulting in extreme patterned responses to the stressful stimuli.\textsuperscript{657} No conscious memory is formed, but emotional responses to similar circumstances are enhanced. All of this gives clear demonstration of the possibility of emotion acting entirely unconsciously.

That is not to say that emotion must happen unconsciously, as any normal individual must surely be aware, but it could occur with or without awareness. For this reason, some neuroscientists have created a distinction between the emotional processes that function beneath awareness, resulting in or being synonymous with somatic changes, and the experience of having emotions. Among those scientists is Damasio, who reserves the term, emotions, specifically for the former process, while for the latter he reserves the term, emotions.

\textsuperscript{654} Hogue, 66.  
\textsuperscript{655} LeDoux, 203.  
\textsuperscript{656} Ibid., 242.  
\textsuperscript{657} Ibid., 245.
feelings. Emotions are a two-step process where a stimulus is interpreted and a correlated somatic change is made, including automatic facial expressions, if only briefly; changes in posture; alteration of visceral tension and position, etc. Feelings, however, require additional steps. After the somatic changes are made, the brain is then able to read the body's new state, which produces conscious experience of the emotions, that is, feelings. Feelings require emotions, but emotions do not require feelings.

LeDoux presents the simple explanation, already implied, that feelings are the inclusion of emotions in working memory. That is, when one has an emotion, the body changes state, and that new somatic state is brought into consciousness by operating on it in working memory. “I am experiencing a change in my somatic and visceral state,” becomes an idea, though not so explicitly stated. Panksepp disagrees, pointing to the behaviour of frightened lab rats. He argues that these rats do not possess sufficient working memory to manipulate such ideas, but they still demonstrate some level of awareness of their fear. Many disagree with Panksepp's diagnosis of awareness, but he also notes that when human beings have particular areas of their brains are stimulated artificially, they report having emotional experiences. Rats possess equivalent structures in their own brains, suggesting that they may,

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658 Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, xv-xvi, 133-4, 139. LeDoux uses the same nomenclature. See LeDoux, 125.

659 Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*, 109-10. The style of neural processing changes here as well, as noted previously, though Damasio generally focuses on the body's involvement. For simplicity, this thesis will follow his practice, with the understanding that the two are concurrent in his schema.

660 Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 149.

661 LeDoux, 282, 297.

662 Jaak Panksepp, “The ‘Dynamic Unconscious’ May be Experienced: Can We Discuss Unconscious Emotions When There Are no Adequate Measures of Affective Change?” *Neuropsychoanalysis* 13, no. 1: 53.
too, have similar experiences.\textsuperscript{663} Panksepp's theory leads to a differentiation between cognitive consciousness, where one is able to think about oneself, and affective consciousness, where one would have a feel of oneself.\textsuperscript{664} The possibility of an affective consciousness may easily allow for gradation of consciousness and feeling where one may range from being unaware to somewhat aware to very aware of an emotion in a way that is more flexible than LeDoux's working memory theory. However, whether or not Panksepp's two forms of consciousness are accurate is indeterminate at this time, and too fine of a distinction between types of consciousness is more than is necessary for the purposes here. Whether feelings may be differentiated from emotions through the operation of working memory or the activation of an affective consciousness, both provide means for their distinction.

Damasio, however, argues that feelings cannot merely be readings of the state of the body by either means. Rather, feelings must be comparisons of a mapping of the body to known states. Brain scans of those experiencing different feelings reveal activation of somatic sensory areas in the brain, with different feelings matching different patterns.\textsuperscript{665} Those different patterns, he posits, are surface-level depictions of maps of the body. Feelings, then, require the brain to create a neural map of the body, which is then transformed into a mental image of that mapping.\textsuperscript{666} This mapping mechanism gives a means by which Damasio's as-if loops may be explained. The brain perceives a stimulus and may either respond with

\textsuperscript{663} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{665} Damasio, \textit{Spinoza}, 98-100.
\textsuperscript{666} Ibid., 110.
commands to generate a somatic state or generate a neural map of that somatic state without asserting motor control of the body. In either case, that mapping is then read to generate the associated feeling.\(^{667}\)

A curious possibility is created with this theory of somatic mapping, which is that neural maps may not accurately reflect the state of the body.\(^{668}\) In fact, Damasio argues that these maps may have been included in the brain for the very purpose of fooling itself and creating false feeling states. There are a number of circumstances where it may not be in the best interests of a person for one's feeling state to match one's actual bodily state. False mappings would allow, for example, for the creation of body maps that did not include injuries or pain in emergencies, thus greatly diminishing the feeling of pain when it is necessary to take action, or the generation of somatic maps that mirror the physical states of others in order to generate empathic feelings.\(^{669}\) Some neurotransmitters are already known to alter such maps such as endogenous opioids, and various artificial chemicals such as analgesics work similarly.\(^{670}\)

Feelings, then, are neural mappings of the body's emotional state, read by the brain in conscious awareness. One might argue: to what end? Damasio suggests that without feelings, one is limited to purely analytical analysis of future scenarios, which precludes the possibility

\(^{667}\) Ibid., 110. LeDoux argued that conscious feelings were impossible without bodily feedback, but did note that Damasio's as-if loops presented a literal loop-hole to this process. LeDoux, 298. The somatic mapping theory presents a means of incorporating both direct body-loops and as-if loops into a coherent neural feeling process.

\(^{668}\) Ibid., 112.

\(^{669}\) Ibid., 114-6.

\(^{670}\) Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*, 121.
of placing any valuation on those scenarios. Feelings, then, allow one to actively plan for and seek out life-sustaining or otherwise positive stimuli while eschewing destructive and negative ones.\textsuperscript{671} With only emotions and not feelings, one could only evaluate the present moment. This future evaluative process leads to a major aspect of Damasio's theorizing.

3 Emotion and Volition

Damasio's major contribution to neuropsychology has largely to do with the connection between emotion and volition, but before detailing that work, a few foundational matters need to be established, particularly the neurobiological character of the will.

Neuroscientists have been, up to this point, unable to identify a single structure or location within the brain that is the origin of the will.\textsuperscript{672} There does not seem to be, despite various efforts to uncover one, a particular nexus of tissue that makes choices. The frontal cortex is highly involved in the process of deliberate and intentional decision-making, but there has been no success in identifying a location within it that specifically originates volition. When scanning the brains of individuals making choices, the frontal cortex is quite active, but given that it receives signal inputs from nearly the entirety of the rest of the brain, one could conclude, first, that volition may originate from outside of the frontal cortex, and second, that any volitional process likely integrates neural information of all kinds – sensory, motor,

\textsuperscript{671} Damasio, \textit{Spinoza}, 178.

emotional, perceptual, cognitive, etc. D'Aquili and Newberg specifically identify the attentional association area as being the nexus of executive planning and sensory data processing and suggest that this may make it the seat of volition, but this is only a theory and one with no empirical experimentation to support it thus far. It may be that this integrative process results in choice, but scientists have been unable to verify it.

Another foundational matter is the deconstruction of ties between thought and volition. This is not to say that the two have nothing to do with one another. For intentional decision-making the two are surely related, but the common-sense perspective is that one thinks about a choice, and when one determines through analysis the best or proper choice, one then takes action. Here, thought results in volition, but experiments have brought this common-sense process into question. Justin Barrett is one of many who has observed that reflective beliefs may not necessarily correlate with relevant behaviours. That is, persons act differently than they claim to. One could simply argue that one could change one's mind or lie to produce this dichotomy, and this may indeed be true. However, persons with neural lesions leading to a condition called perseveration seem to be stuck repeating behaviours. This is true even if they know that they ought to stop those behaviours or engage in a different behaviour. They know what to do, but they cannot turn that knowledge into a choice and merely continue doing what they have been doing. Persons with other neurological damage have related issues where they can identify positive choice, but will choose randomly, even to their

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673 Ibid.
674 D'Aquili and Newberg, 37.
675 Justin L. Barrett, Why Would Anyone Believe in God? (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 8.
676 LeDoux, 249.
own confusion. Temple Grandin, who regularly speaks on autism, describes some autistic individuals as feeling like they are two selves: a thinking self and an acting self, as if these were two, separate and disconnected persons inside the same body. The thinking self may observe the acting self, yet have no control over it and may consider it “weird”, failing to understand or approve of its actions. Thought and volition are not always directly related.

Split-brain patients, whose cortical hemispheres have been separated, typically as a means of controlling extreme seizures, present a related circumstance where they can be given information that primes them to choose in a particular fashion, but in a way that is only accessible to one hemisphere. When the other hemisphere is given the opportunity to explain the choice, it can confidently assert entirely incorrect reasons. In such cases, the right hand may know what the left hand is doing, but it does not know why and instead creates its own explanation based on available information. Medically normal persons behave similarly, providing confident justifications for choices that may be entirely ungrounded in reality, as evidenced by women instructed to choose from identical stockings. When asked why they chose, they gave arguments for why one was better than the others despite their lack of differentiation. People's reasoning and choosing were disconnected. Thought and


679 LeDoux, 31.

680 Ibid., 32.
reasoning seems in such cases to be used to justify decisions rather than generate them. Further, some experiments seem to show electrical activity in the brain that suggest subconscious generation of impulse a few milliseconds before a decision is made, implying that it is not conscious thought that leads to volition, but something in unconscious parts of the mind and brain. Likewise, Haidt asked individuals to make analytical and moral choices while engaged in heavy cognitive activities. They were unable to make wise analytical choices, but were successful at moral reasoning, implying that moral judgement and decision-making do not necessarily have to engage thought. Something other than thought is the primary mover in a decision-making process in the brain.

Haidt's experiments also bring up an additional consideration, which is the potential distinction between domains of reasoning. Damasio has identified the ventro-medial areas of the prefrontal cortex as being associated with socially-related decision-making, while lateral areas are correlated with analytical decision-making. Choosing something personal or relational activates different neural paths from choosing something purely logical or abstract. Brain damage to only one of these areas can lead to faulty decision-making in only one kind of reasoning and decision-making. Depending on the location of damage, a

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682 Newberg, 237.

683 Haidt, 36.

684 Damasio, Descartes' Error, 183.

685 Dan Ariely argues for a similar phenomenon in distinguishing between social and market domains. In one, the goal is the creation and preservation of community and social bonds, while the other is related to monetary and personal gain. Different values and motivations are used in each. See Dan Ariely, Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions (London: Harper, 2009), 68.
person could potentially reason quite well, yet choose in socially destructive ways or fail to think clearly while still acting in relationally positive and constructive manners. 686 Haidt implicates another structure in the brain, the insula, in some types of non-abstract reasoning such as those having to do with cleanliness and purity and with moral judgement. 687 Decision-making seems to be handled by different areas of the brain depending on the type, whether abstract or social.

To further define a matter to be considered later, it should be noted that moral choices seem to be handled by the brain as a subset of social decisions. Damasio directly refers to ethical behaviours as a subset of social behaviours, 688 and Haidt defines moral systems as ones regulating self-interest and social cooperation. 689 When testing individuals with damage to the social decision-making areas, their moral choices were likewise compromised and became haphazard, and Haidt's experiments, as already noted, suggested that moral judgements did not require abstract reasoning. Morality, then, is not an abstract volitional matter as far as the brain is concerned.

All of the discussion of the disconnection of thought from decision-making leads naturally to the question of what capacity it is in the brain that does sequentially lead to volition. Damasio asserts emotion to be the missing piece. He initially based this theory on the observation that individuals with damage to the ventro-medial frontal cortex not only

686 E.g., Damasio's patient, “Elliot” showed superior knowledge of moral, social, and analytical truths and reasoning, but could not consistently choose socially appropriate options. Damasio, Descartes' Error, 49.

687 Haidt, 59-60.

688 Damasio, Spinoza, 160.

689 Haidt, 270.
suffered from impaired ability to make coherent decisions in a social domain, but also from a seeming reduction in affect. They displayed little emotion, save for extreme circumstances.\textsuperscript{690} Specifically, such individuals seemed unable to access the emotional component of imagined scenarios of any kind, whether projections of future potentials, considerations of personally distant ideas, or fantasies of the present moment.\textsuperscript{691} Murphy and Brown's off-line simulations of future potentials in the brain would result in no emotional valuation for these individuals, and there would therefore be no means of determining whether any potential choice was good or bad.

Multiple others concur with this theory. LeDoux suggests that the orbital cortex may integrate signals from emotionally related regions of the brain with working memory to link emotion and volition.\textsuperscript{692} Haidt likewise argues that emotions are a necessary part of information processing and provide the central determinant of social action,\textsuperscript{693} and Panksepp bases much of his work on the assumption that this is the case.\textsuperscript{694} Panksepp also implies that his emotional SEEKING system is largely responsible for motivations and behaviour. An inability to access the SEEKING system could produce an inability to choose or erratic

\textsuperscript{690} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 53-4.

\textsuperscript{691} Ibid., 218.

\textsuperscript{692} LeDoux, 278. This theory does not explain, however, why thoughts, which are likewise manipulated in working memory do not necessarily result in volition. The activity of non-conscious areas of the brain immediately prior to a decision also calls into question the need for working memory in volitional processes. LeDoux's integration of working memory may be unnecessary, though his intent here is to begin with the idea that emotion is necessary for volition and seeking to explain why. His potential errors here do not negate the initial premise.

\textsuperscript{693} Haidt, 45. See also G. Michael Leffel, “‘Putting on Virtue’: A Motivation-based Virtue Ethics of Caring for Practical Theology,” in \textit{Wesleyan Theology and Social Science: The Dance of Practical Divinity and Discovery}, ed. M. Kathryn Armistead, Brad D. Strawn, and Ronald W. Wright (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 145.

\textsuperscript{694} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 14.
Other evidence supports the idea. For example, vervet monkeys given drugs that enhanced the operation of the brain's serotonin systems were more successful in making choices that led to pro-social behaviour and personal social standing. The serotonin system's correlation with positive emotion and mood stability suggests a link between positive emotions and positive decision-making. From a less scientific perspective, one could also note marketing efforts in industrialized cultures, whose concerted efforts are to sway the emotions of individuals so that their choices are likewise moved. Damasio points specifically to such efforts as applied to elections and jury selection and calls them an entire industry of “perfectly monstrous machinery”. Politicians and marketers rely on the causal link between emotion and volition.

Ethics and morality, therefore, being part of social decision-making, are dependent upon the emotions, not only for the execution, but also in the development. Those born lacking or having lost quite early in life the ability to generate or process mentally generated emotional stimuli seem unable to develop socially appropriate skills and behaviour, including the execution and understanding of a moral code or ideas. For those who once had the ability, but lost it, the results take their own peculiar shape. For some, decision-making processes in moral and personal domains simply do not reach a conclusion. Such persons list positives

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695 Ibid., 52-3.


697 Damasio, Self Comes to Mind, 277.

698 Damasio, Spinoza, 153-4.
and negatives, without making a choice, until they are interrupted, even if such processes last for what seems like excessive spans of time. Others will choose in a seemingly random fashion with seemingly no recognition of negative or positive consequences. In either case, some of these individuals exhibit normal somatic responses to direct emotional stimuli, but those somatic responses do not seem to result in choices for positive stimuli or against negative. All exhibit abnormal or lacking somatic responses to stimuli that would have emotional consequences in imagined or future circumstances.

Those somatic responses just demonstrate again the tie between emotion and the body. That tie, in part, led Damasio to develop his theory of somatic markers. He proposed that any option in a decision-making process, whether conscious or unconscious, is marked by emotional tags. Particularly strong negatively marked options are discarded immediately while particularly strongly positively marked options are brought to the foreground as most likely to be chosen. Rather than a systematic and analytic examination of each option, most volitional processes involve a rapid discarding of “bad” options and narrowing down of “good” options based largely on these emotional tags. Those markers are somatic because of their location within the body. “Gut feelings” actually are emotions stored in the body that sway one toward or away from possibilities when choosing, though not all gut feelings are consciously experienced. Most occur too quickly to be noticed.

699 Damasio, Descartes' Error, 193-4.

700 Ibid., 172.

701 Adolphs, et al., 162-3.

702 Ibid., 160-1. See also Antioine Bechara, et al., “Failure to Respond Autonomically to Anticipated Future Outcomes Following Damage to Prefrontal Cortex.” Cerebral Cortex 6 (Mar/Apr 1996): 223.

703 Damasio, Descartes' Error, 173-4.
Tying together much that has been presented thus far, when a choice is to be made, the brain rapidly runs off-line simulations of potential outcomes of various options. Each option results in an emotional and somatic response, such as a brief tension in the stomach or tiny release of adrenaline, that marks the option's value as good or bad. Bad options are eliminated, and good options are ranked against one another using these markers. This process is used to determine the best option to enact.\footnote{Ibid., 199. See also P. S. Churchland, “Feeling Reasons,” in Neurobiology of Decision Making, ed. A. R Damasio, H. Damasio, and Y. Christen (New York: Springer: 1996), 189.} When the entire process occurs without accessing conscious awareness, choices will seem automatic. If facts and memories that are unavailable to conscious awareness are marked and weighed, choices will feel like intuition,\footnote{Damasio, Descartes’ Error, 188.} but even when everything seems to be available to conscious awareness, minute and potentially unnoticed emotions determine the path of the volitional process. The will rests on the body and the emotions.

Therefore, to truly be the most rational, Damasio suggests that one must give consideration to how emotions are being assigned and used in the process of making decisions. Once one knows this is occurring, one may be able to better attend to them and enhance the positive and desired emotional effects and diminish the negative and undesired.\footnote{Ibid., 246-7.} When one knows the more subtle effects, one has a better ability to work with them instead of merely being moved by them.
4 Emotion and the Self

Another correlation that arose in multiple studies and theories is the connection between emotions and the self. Damasio began his first work with the assertion that feelings form the foundation of the soul or the self,\textsuperscript{707} which is perhaps a bold statement, but not one without evidence to support it. The nature of the self is contested hotly in neurological and philosophical circles, and everything to this point remains only a theory, but both Damasio and Panksepp suggest parallel theories that imply that the self is a result of affective dynamics.

In Panksepp's research, he considered the behaviour of decorticated animals and persons, those who, for various reasons, have been born without the cerebrum, which is the upper layer and most complex portion of the brain, or had it removed. He noted that such persons and animals, despite lacking the capacity to think, plan, or demonstrate any complex behaviours, still exhibited coherent action patterns.\textsuperscript{708} Their behaviour was neither random nor disjointed. Their behaviour was interpreted as a manifestation of a self, which was apparently coherent and therefore did not depend upon higher cortical or complex neurological processes. Split-brain patients suggest something similar. Many point to the fact that split-brain patients do demonstrate separate thought processes when each hemisphere is given the opportunity to communicate or perceive in an isolated fashion. However, Panksepp points out that only the cognitive interpretation of events are altered. The remainder of the individual's character and personality remain singular. That is, they do not seem to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{707} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, xvi.
\item \textsuperscript{708} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 308.
\end{itemize}
demonstrate more than one emotion or intention.\(^7^0^9\) This again suggests that there is a coherent self beneath cognitive processes.

On the other hand, while cognitive processes do not seem to affect the self, both emotional and sensory-motor input can modify it. One's character and sense of being can be altered by lower-level neural processes.\(^7^1^0\) For these reasons, Panksepp suggests that affective processes are the fountainhead of the self, or in his technical terms, the Simple Ego Life-Form (SELF). All cognitive and sensory processes must take into account the existence of the SELF, but the reverse is not the case.\(^7^1^1\)

Damasio offers that this foundational self is dependent upon background feelings.\(^7^1^2\) Background feelings are persistent somatic states that form the foundation for emotions, but are not themselves emotions. They last longer than emotions, though of less duration than moods, and have a general feeling shape to them, but they do not require emotional stimuli for activation. Rather, they are dependent upon past stimuli and the blending of subtle environmental stimuli. He offers examples such as enthusiasm and discouragement.\(^7^1^3\) These background feelings, along with feedback signals from both the brain and body, he posits, are used by the brain to construct the self.

In addition, Damasio points to emotional and somatic markers as the means that the brain

\(^7^0^9\) Ibid., 307-8.

\(^7^1^0\) Ibid., 309.

\(^7^1^1\) Ibid.

\(^7^1^2\) Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 151.

\(^7^1^3\) Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*, 125.
uses to differentiate between self and non-self.\textsuperscript{714} The brain can determine what is self versus not-the-self by the modifications that it can make to the body.\textsuperscript{715} That which responds to neural commands is accepted as part of the self, and that which does not, even if connected to other parts of the self, is dismissed. For Damasio, the body and emotions clearly are the basis by which self is formed.

A few others may add consenting voices to this. Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson notes that positive feeling, particularly love, can cause one's sense of self to expand and encompass the object of that love at a psychological level. One's self is significantly affected by positive affect.\textsuperscript{716} Conversely, Michelle Shiota, Dachter Keltner, and Amanda Mossman observe that feelings of awe tend to disconnect one from oneself. There is a loss of self-focus, not only in a cognitive sense, but also such that there is a sense of one's self being lost or diminished.\textsuperscript{717} Both of these examples demonstrate the powerful effect that emotion has on the self, supporting the hypothesis that affect forms the ground of self.

If the self is created from the basis of emotional and somatic experience, this implies that it is also a dynamically generated phenomenon rather than a static one. Self is not an ontological reality, but a dynamic one, constantly being re-created and modified.\textsuperscript{718} As the viscera change, so does that self. Theologian David Hogue uses this idea in part to define the soul

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotemark[714]\textsuperscript{714} Ibid., 9.
\footnotemark[715]\textsuperscript{715} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 230.
\footnotemark[716]\textsuperscript{716} Barbara L. Fredrickson, \textit{Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Feel, Think, Do, and Become} (New York: Hudson Street Press, 2013), 46.
\footnotemark[718]\textsuperscript{718} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 226ff.
\end{footnotesize}
itself as a process that is constantly in flux. Self and soul are not substances, but rather the result of dynamic processes of mind, emotion, and, presumably, body, given its interconnection with emotion.\textsuperscript{719}

\section{5 Regulation and Alteration of Emotion}

If one's thoughts, choices, and very sense of self are all dependent upon emotion, a serious question to be asked would be whether there is any means of bringing them under control. First, it must be acknowledged again that the cerebral cortex is not completely removed from its charioteer role of reining in emotion. The mind does have influence, if not as significant as common sense seems to posit. Cognition does regulate emotions, particularly in mildly dampening the extremes. Intense cortical activity does suppress lower-level affective systems to a limited extent,\textsuperscript{720} or it can act as a feedback loop to engender simulated stimuli, thereby amplifying affective activity.\textsuperscript{721} However, three caveats must be remembered. First, the suppression effect is limited due to the lower level of connectivity from cortical to limbic areas.\textsuperscript{722} Second, emotional pathways are divided, and the path that traverses only through limbic areas is shorter and therefore faster than the path that leads to cortical regions.\textsuperscript{723} This being the case, emotionally salient stimuli will always produce an affective and somatic effect before the frontal cortex, and therefore conscious mind, will notice it. An at least brief

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{719} Hogue, 77.
\textsuperscript{721} LeDoux, 50-1.
\textsuperscript{722} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 319.
\textsuperscript{723} LeDoux, 163-5; Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 33.
\end{flushright}
instant of emotion will happen before the mind can suppress it.\textsuperscript{724} Third, moderate to strong feelings can seem to be suppressed, and a partial somatic dampening can occur such that a person’s external carriage and facial expression may denote no emotional response after cortical repression, but some emotionally-related systems will still remain active.\textsuperscript{725} A person may appear and even believe that the emotions are gone, but neural, somatic, and visceral systems are still generating them. The emotions will remain, all of which suggests the limited capacity for the mind and frontal cortex to directly regulate emotions.

However, more careful applications of mental processes may be of significant use in emotional regulation. Newberg’s work on meditation demonstrates a noticeable strengthening of the anterior cingulate cortex, a portion of the brain that bridges the cortical and limbic regions and is in part capable of calming the amygdala and other emotionally-related systems.\textsuperscript{726} While the major effect is not immediate, meditative practice over long periods of time gives the mental charioteer increasing ability to hold the reins of the emotions. There is even a minor effect in the immediate moment, as implied by the intensity of activity in the frontal cortex\textsuperscript{727} as well as a lessening of activity in limbic areas\textsuperscript{728} not only during but for a period of time after intense focus on a single object or goal, suggesting that meditation and

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\textsuperscript{724} Paul Ekman has relied on this phenomenon in his explanation of microexpressions, which are facial expressions that occur for a fraction of a second before being suppressed by higher cortical systems. For those particularly attentive, emotions cannot be hidden from them, as the faster sub-cortical system will generate a somatic, facial response that can be perceived despite its brief duration. See Paul Ekman, “Lie Catching and Microexpressions,” in \textit{The Philosophy of Deception}, ed. Clancy W. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 118-135.

\textsuperscript{725} Damasio, \textit{Self Comes to Mind}, 125.


\textsuperscript{727} Ibid., 27-8.

\textsuperscript{728} Ibid., 49.
\end{flushright}
focus can help even without long-term exercise, though the effect is less for only immediate practice.

In the end, however, cognitive efforts to change or regulate emotional patterns are limited in their feasibility due to the disproportionate number of neural connections running from cognitive to affective regions of the brain. Therefore, the majority of efforts to regulate emotions should be directed at changes to the emotional systems themselves, if possible. Panksepp notes that neural systems for emotion are strengthened by use and weakened through disuse, suggesting that emotions act much like muscles. Consistent engagement with positively correlated emotional stimuli will habituate one toward experience of positive emotions while consistent engagement with negative stimuli will habituate one toward negative experience. Conversely, avoidance of positively correlated stimuli will make it more difficult to have positive experiences, and avoidance of negative stimuli will make it increasingly difficult to experience negative emotions. The application of high-level off-line simulations can likely enhance this effect, as such simulations can generate imagined stimuli or create feedback during experienced stimuli such that those stimuli are consistently kept in mind to continue acting as stimuli or even being changed or perceived slightly differently to act as new stimuli. A pleasant odour, for example, may be savoured or lead to remembrances of other pleasant experiences, in a small way exercising the endorphin and dopamine systems of the brain to strengthen the capacity to experience pleasurable emotions more easily.

This is not only true in general, but also with respect to stimulus-response patterns. The

\[ \text{footnote text: Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 17.} \]
neurological adage goes, “[neurons] that fire together, wire together.”

Thus, each time a pattern of neurons is activated, it becomes more easily activated in the future as the neurons that became active previously become more apt to be activated again. Habits are developed in the brain, in the case of emotions, linking particular stimuli with automatic and habituated responses. This could be positive, for instance connecting the sight of someone in trouble to a feeling of compassion, or negative, turning, perhaps, the sound of a saxophone into an automatic angry emotional response.

If patterns can be written once, then it stands to reason that they can be rewritten. The brain is pliable enough that one can, with effort and intention, choose different neural patterns of “wired” neurons. Initially frightening stimuli may be repeatedly met without a threat, generating less emotionally charged circuits to form in the brain. One may also, perhaps, intentionally simulate other emotional stimuli to link to an initial stimulus and change the corresponding response. One may intentionally recall a treasured memory in response to the aforementioned saxophone, linking the two and generating a positive emotional response instead of the previous anger. New emotional stimulus-response patterns can be formed in the brain through alternative experience.

However, experiments suggest that while this method over the long run is quite powerful, the initial neural patterns in the limbic areas of the brain are not eliminated. Once the cells wire together, they do not un-wire. Two things are instead occurring: first, alternative neural

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730 LeDoux, 214.

circuits are being formed that fire more easily than the previous\textsuperscript{732} and, second, the frontal cortex inhibits the follow-through of those initial patterns that would turn initial emotional response into behavioural and mental activity.\textsuperscript{733} That the initial patterns remain but under cortical inhibition means that the initial emotional response may still occur, if only momentarily. The saxophone may yet cause a millisecond of anger before being calmed. Additionally, reactivation of the original emotional pattern takes little effort. Should the saxophone be paired with an irritating sensation, the original angry response can return at its original strength.

Some emotions are also inhibited through the activation of other emotional systems. Because primary emotions are evoked through different neurological systems, multiple emotions can occur simultaneously. Anger and pleasure or fear and grief are quite possible simultaneously. However, some affective systems seem to inhibit the activation of others. Panksepp notes that FEAR, PANIC, and ANGER all inhibit, for example, the PLAY system.\textsuperscript{734} One will struggle to experience some kinds of joy in the presence of negative emotional stimuli. Some emotions can be regulated, therefore, by the intentional activation of other, more inhibitory emotions.

D'Aquili and Newberg describe a regulating effect of ritual and rhythmic behaviour on emotion. Such activity reduces aggressive behaviour and promotes the development of

\textsuperscript{732} LeDoux, 145-6.
\textsuperscript{733} Ibid., 250-1.
\textsuperscript{734} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 18.
positive social emotions between participants.\textsuperscript{735} Particularly powerful ritual experiences may, they suggest, break down barriers between self and other at a psychological level, resulting in pleasurable emotions and a sense of profound unity within the group.\textsuperscript{736} Anger, fear, grief, and other negative emotions may be diminished through participation in ritual, while social emotions may be enhanced.\textsuperscript{737}

Rhythmic behaviours also seem to have a direct connection to emotions, likely due to emotion's dependence on the body. Rocking distressed infants eases their emotions, potentially because their breathing begins to resonate with that of the motion,\textsuperscript{738} and many meditative practices include attention to rhythmic incantations, breathing, or motions, activating the parasympathetic nervous system and reducing emotional intensity.\textsuperscript{739} Rhythmic patterns in music, Panksepp observes, may tap into the PLAY system of the brain, engendering joyous emotion and a rush of energy.\textsuperscript{740} Affect can be regulated through rhythm of both perception and motor activity.

Another means of modulating emotion may be through substitution of one activity, emotion,

\textsuperscript{735} D'Aquili and Newberg, 90-1.

\textsuperscript{736} Ibid., 106.

\textsuperscript{737} The rituals that individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) may also be for this purpose of easing negative emotions. This may be why SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) drugs, which modulate emotions and ease anxiety, are known to reduce OCD behaviour; the rituals are no longer necessary when anxiety is lessened. See Kyle A. B. Lapidus and Andrew R. Gilbert, "Treatment of Pediatric OCD." \textit{Child \& Adolescent Psychopharmacology News} 15, no. 5 (10, 2010): 6.

\textsuperscript{738} "Why does rocking soothe crying babies?" \textit{Canadian Medical Association Journal} 140, no. 11 (June 1, 1989): 1338.

\textsuperscript{739} D'Aquili and Newberg, 24-5.

or experience for another, at least in the short-term. Building desires increasingly activate
Panksepp's SEEKING system, but behaviours to release that energy may be inappropriate or
unavailable in given circumstances. One simply may not be able to satisfy one's hunger, for
example, in some settings. The SEEKING system, however, does not seem to have an object
directly. Other systems that activate the system may have objects, but not the drive to move
toward the object. Because of this, the seeking and procurement of any object may be
sufficient to temporarily satisfy and regulate this emotional drive.  
If one cannot meet one
desire, such as food or sexual gratification, one can seek and obtain a different one, such as
investigation of a curiosity or PLAYful activity. This may be effective only temporarily,
however, due to the fact that the initial stimulus that activated the SEEKING system may
remain. One may feel satisfied reading a novel to displace hunger, but the low blood-sugar
levels will reactivate the SEEKING system soon after. Panksepp also notes that the
endogenous opioid system of the brain seems to be used generally to modulate pleasurable
emotions, which suggests that pleasurable tastes or other sensations will partially activate
other positive systems such as those responding to social connection. One kind of pleasant
experience, such as pleasing aromas, may, for a short time, act as a partial substitute for
another experience, such as social interactivity.  
When a particular emotion or object of
emotion is inappropriate or unavailable directly, an alternative may be substituted for a time.

There are two final means of regulating emotions and changing emotional patterns that are
worth noting. The first is simply social interaction. Ashbrook noted that any time neural
networks are being reworked, relational interaction with a neutral or caring other enhances

741 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 161.

742 Ibid., 264.
the process.\textsuperscript{743} The presence of another seems to act as a sort of catalyst for changing how one thinks and feels. This may make sense when considering the nature of affective systems. The activation of the GRIEF system, which occurs through the experience of social disconnection, can interfere with other affective and cognitive systems. Persons find it difficult to be happy or think clearly when they are severely lonely or panicked. Therefore, the presence of a caring other can mitigate this system and allow other systems to be more active, which implies that they may be more apt to change. Panksepp even defines love as, in part, “the neurochemically based positive feeling that negates [grief, loneliness, and panic],”\textsuperscript{744} which makes love part of the condition in which the brain optimally functions. Human beings are hard-wired to love and be social, and their brains therefore function most effectively in social environments.\textsuperscript{745}

The final means of regulating emotions is simply through the process of self-awareness. LeDoux observes that emotions are more reactive when persons are not aware of the stimulus that activated the emotions or even not aware of the feelings themselves.\textsuperscript{746} Therefore, when one does not realize one is experiencing an emotion or cannot identify its source, that emotion may have stronger influence on the one's thought and behaviour. People out of the habit of recognizing their feelings states may be less reactive and better able to control their feelings and behaviour if they begin to pay attention to their emotions and potentially to their bodies, as somatic states are so intimately tied to those emotions. Additionally, awareness of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{743} Ashbrook and Albright, 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{744} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 263.
\item \textsuperscript{745} Ashbrook and Albright, 8. See also Panksepp's separation of emotions into basic and social types: Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, xiii.
\item \textsuperscript{746} LeDoux, 59.
\end{itemize}
one's emotional state provides information that may be used to plan and choose in emotionally beneficial ways. Of course, LeDoux also notes that emotional responses that have become classically conditioned are not affected by self-awareness.\(^{747}\) Self-awareness is limited in its ability to modulate emotions directly, though even in this case, one may, after taking notice of the emotion, be able to intentionally pair the response with other stimuli, as previously discussed, so as to generate new neural patterns. This awareness of emotion, Damasio suggests, is part of emotional maturity, though he adds to it the ability to differentiate between awareness of the stimulus and awareness of the internal emotional processes that are evoked by it. Once one recognizes that they are two, separate things, one can begin to carefully consider what emotional stimuli are most beneficial and intentionally seek them out so as to maximize positive affect.\(^{748}\)

No single method of emotional regulation will be sufficient for every situation or every possible emotional state in which a person could find him or herself. Cognitive dampening may be the only viable option in some immediate circumstances, despite its meagre success. Rhythmic activity such as slow, repetitive movements and efforts to substitute or replace one emotion for another may also act as short-term regulators in immediate need where there is slightly more space. Longer-term exercises such as meditative practices and participation in ritual can be helpful in providing structure and gradual change that can lead to more effective regulation through cognitive control later on, but all practices, whether short or long-term, need to be grounded in a lifestyle of social connection and self-awareness. A combination of all of these in their appropriate place and measure can mitigate the volatility of the horses and

\(^{747}\) Ibid., 173.

\(^{748}\) Damasio, *Spinoza*, 275.
give the charioteer more influence over them.

With this neuropsychological research and perspective on emotion, there is now the potential of returning to Willard's work and determining in what ways it could be enhanced or clarified as well as in what ways some alteration may be warranted. An integration of this scientific perspective with the theological and spiritual may produce a more robust synthesis that reflects the human person more completely.
Chapter 5
A Re-Examination of Willard's Theology
In Light of Affective Neuropsychology

In his book, *Principles of Neurotheology*, Andrew Newberg proposed a series of precepts that should guide any integration of neuroscience and theology. Among them is an assumption that grounds all that follows in this chapter: the brain limits the manner in which one thinks, and presumably also how one perceives and feels, which thus sets boundaries on how a person is able to experience and express one’s spirituality.\(^7\) The research that LeDoux, Damasio, and Panksepp have completed, as presented in the previous chapter, provide some of those limitations of the brain and lead to a re-evaluation of Willard's schema for human emotion as well as the manner in which one develops positively as a feeling, spiritual being.

Before considering the details, it is beneficial to consider the opposing perspectives out of which Willard and these neuroscientists work. As already discussed, Willard begins from the standpoint of philosophical dualism, in which the human person exists in two parts: a physical component and an immaterial, spiritual component. The parts are so intimately intertwined that they cannot be separated, and that which occurs in one has immediate effects upon the other. LeDoux and Damasio, on the other hand, work out of a monist perspective, where there is no spiritual aspect of a person. All things that are often spiritually defined, such as mind and character, are manifestations of the dynamics of complex, physical systems with feedback and feedforward loops. Panksepp works almost exclusively in the material

\(^{7}\) Newberg, 89.
domain and implies a monist stance, but he makes efforts to allow for dualist conceptions, pointing to information flow, such as data through software, as suggestive of “semiphysical” processes that can have definitive effects on physical material. He therefore allows for variations of dualism as concrete as Willard's and others that involve semiphysical dynamics as generated and housed by physical constructs.

Given the context of the major figures and the issues under discussion, dualism and monism must be here briefly examined, though the purpose of this thesis is not to debate them. Numerous others have organized arguments and research for either perspective, and there is yet no universal conclusion on the matter. That Willard and Damasio, Panksepp, and LeDoux differ in this fundamental question explains certain aspects of the disparity of their views, but the fact that the question is not definitively answered and the difference in perspective on it need not preclude an examination of either body of material in light of the other. Many from both theological and neuroscientific fields have concluded that both provide valuable insight into the nature of the human person. D'Aquili and Newberg summarize the general perspective of both that everything that a human person does or thinks is correlated to activity in the brain, and damage to the brain can result in inability to enact or

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751 Ibid., 336ff.

752 Ibid., 336.


754 Ibid.
experience capacities. Therefore, if there is an immaterial aspect to the human person, that aspect utilizes the brain in order to modulate the body and interact with the physical world.\textsuperscript{755} That is, while it is ontologically indeterminate whether or not human beings are dual and there is thus an immaterial aspect to them, much can be considered from a functionally monist perspective. If there is an immaterial aspect to the person, it manifests through the material in all or nearly all matters relevant to ordinary life.

Despite his dualist perspective, many of Willard's statements could be interpreted to be in agreement with this functional monism. He argues, “we do not have any knowledge or experience that is totally free from involvement with our bodies;”\textsuperscript{756} and, “If salvation is to affect our lives, it can do so only by affecting our bodies.”\textsuperscript{757} Much of his argumentation in \textit{The Spirit of the Disciplines} is an attempt to demonstrate the dichotomy that many Christians have created between the spiritual and physical, which has made spiritual matters disconnected from material. His recommendation of disciplines, therefore, is largely bodily and an attempt to point the reader toward making changes to the physical with the assumption that it will result in changes to the spiritual. He also acknowledged that mental states are correlated with brain states,\textsuperscript{758} which does not imply necessarily that one could completely comprehend the spiritual by examining the physical, but it does imply that spiritual dynamics in a human person result in neurological dynamics. The examination of

\textsuperscript{755} D'Aquili and Newberg, 45.

\textsuperscript{756} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 82.

\textsuperscript{757} Ibid., 31.

those neurological dynamics, therefore, will provide a window to the soul. The material aspect of the person, in Willard's view, was intimately tied to the immaterial in both moving and being moved. If nothing the physical does can fail to affect the spiritual, and the spiritual is modulated through the physical, then the physical can be said to determine limits and boundaries out of which the spiritual may operate. The material aspect limits and defines many possibilities for human persons, and it is those limitations and possibilities with which both Willard, to a great extent, and this thesis are concerned.

1 Categories of Emotion

To begin considering Willard's thought in light of the neuropsychological work shown, it is worth noting that both Willard and Panksepp organized emotions into particular categories. However, Willard provided no basis for his categorization. He notes that some emotions, such as contempt and hope, are forms of or are intertwined with others, making them secondary or tertiary emotions, but those which he does not indicate to be descended from others could be crafted into an extensive list, including love, pleasure, anger, fear, joy, peace, envy, jealousy, faith, desire, loneliness, etc. While scientists have not come to agree upon a list of primary emotions, most, or likely all, have provided a basis for those they include in their classification.

Additionally, some elements of Willard's listing are not emotions only. Love is a quality of life and an exercise of will, yet still it is found among his listing of emotions. Faith he

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\[760\] Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, V.
also lists among emotions in one location, but he discusses it as specifically distinct from emotion elsewhere. A means of disentangling these issues may provide clarity to how emotion functions in his anthropology.

To that end, this thesis proposes Panksepp's primary emotional scheme as a foundation on which to examine Willard's thought for two reasons. First, its basis in neurological research matches the neuropsychological perspective of this examination, and second, Panksepp provided slightly modified nomenclature in capitalization, which allows for the continued use of vernacular when discussing emotions at a less detailed level, but also allows for specificity when necessary. Willard's work need not be entirely modified in this way, replacing instances of loneliness with PANIC, for example, but still provides a means of more carefully analyzing fundamental emotional movements. All of this comes with the understanding that alternative systems may be equally viable, given the current state of the research, and that Panksepp himself did not see his system as closed. Therefore, other systems or a modification of Panksepp's may be suitable as well.

With this in mind, certain emotions that Willard discussed may be almost directly correlated with Panksepp's primary systems. They are desire as SEEKING, fear as FEAR, anger as RAGE, and loneliness as PANIC. Each of the emotions is certainly more intricate and

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761 Willard, *Knowing Christ*, 83.
763 Ibid., 129.
765 Such as those noted in the previous chapter. See pp. 180-1.
involved than merely manifestations of these neurological systems, but they may be derived from the activation of the corresponding systems almost solely. Other emotions Willard seemed to consider primary can be understood as mixtures of neurological systems. Love might be understood as the activation of numerous systems including SEEKING, the will for the good of another; PLAY, the joyous interaction of persons; and CARE, again seeking another's good; while typically deactivating others such as FEAR, PANIC, and RAGE. Jealousy and envy might likewise be understood as a mixture of RAGE and SEEKING. Finally, some of Willard's emotions are expressions of Panksepp's systems, though only in concert with cognitive operations. Hope, for example, would be a secondary manifestation of SEEKING that requires the engagement of thought, projecting the satisfaction of that SEEKING into the future, and faith might be a blend of social emotions (CARE, PANIC, and PLAY) as directed toward God in concert with cognitive, symbolic representations of God. Finally, some emotions may require nuance and distinction. For example, Panksepp correlated joy with PLAY, but Willard correlated it with laughter and “hilarity”, though he also discussed it in ways that characterized moods and lifestyles rather than simple emotions. Therefore, joy might at times correlate with PLAY, but at times is connected to a more complex phenomenon that involves both emotional and cognitive systems, as well as

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767 It should be noted that Willard explicitly denied that love and desire, here understood as the principal manifestation of the SEEKING system, were synonymous. Willard differentiated between the two by arguing that desire sought the good of the self while love sought the good of the other. See Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 52. However, the act of seeking is included in both definitions, requiring that both involve desire or the SEEKING system. In the first circumstance, Willard seemed to be referring to desire uncoupled from certain other dynamics, particularly social attachment.

768 These systems could be activated in particular manners, however. FEAR, for example, could be activated during experience of fear for the loved other, PANIC might be active during thoughts of an other for whom there is social attachment, and RAGE might be activated by one's desire for a loved other's good being impinged upon. The deactivation of these systems is not, therefore, to be equated with love.

769 Willard, Conspiracy, 230.
habituated somatic and neural states that are characterized by satisfaction and trust. Joy, therefore, must be understood differently depending on Willard's context.

Given these correlations, discussions that follow may freely reference both Panksepp's neuro-emotional systems as well as Willard's more familiar nomenclature, depending on the necessity of the immediate matter being examined.

2 Mind, Body, Emotion, and Feeling

A first issue to be considered is that of how emotion is related to conscious and unconscious processing. Willard acknowledged the existence of an unconsciousness, primarily as manifested and determined by habituated states of the body, which he interprets as the biblical concept of the flesh.\(^{770}\) For something to occur unconsciously means that the body is doing what it has done in the past and is now ready to do in similar circumstances. This is easy to make sense of for unconscious behaviour and, to some extent, volition, though it may be somewhat counter-intuitive for unconscious thoughts and emotions, as these phenomena appear more constricted to the mind. Willard even situates them in the mind in his explicit anthropology.\(^{771}\)

However, Willard includes the brain and its functioning as part of the body and distinct from the self and the other faculties.\(^{772}\) He also acknowledges that brain states correlate with


\(^{772}\) Black, 93.
mental events, and that mental events result in the activation of neural tissue. He affirms that the brain is a crucial part of how emotions, intellect, and will manifest, despite being insufficient for explaining them entirely, that is, the brain is necessary for these faculties to be expressed in the material world and in the material body, but the brain alone cannot explain their existence. From these ideas, it is not a difficult leap, though not one that Willard explicitly made, to posit that neurons in the brain may activate in particular fashions by habit, rather than intention, and that these are equivalent to the neural activations correlated with mental events. Because what happens in the material aspect of the person affects the immaterial, then neural activity that is correlated with thoughts and emotions actually does produce thoughts and emotions without being intended or potentially experienced in awareness. Despite the immaterial mind being, in Willard's thought, the originator of thought and feeling, the body, specifically the brain, may produce in this fashion unconscious thoughts and, as particularly relevant to this thesis, emotions. To summarize, neurons in the physical brain may activate through habit or causal response to stimuli apart from mental intention, but result in mental, including emotional, events outside of awareness.

This analysis offers a solution to the uncertainty that remained in chapter three regarding the location of emotion, whether in mind or body. Willard's work offers emotions as contained in the immaterial mind in some writings, but in the body in others, with no attempt to reconcile the disparity. Here, however, is an explanation for emotion being located in both mind and

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773 Ibid., 92.

774 O'Connor.

775 Willard did not seem to explicitly state this, though he assumed it, given various emphases that he made. It is especially visible in his assertion that character, which is centred in the immaterial aspect of the person (see Willard, Conspiracy, 75), can be changed through proper conditioning of the body (e.g., Willard, Disciplines, 31).
body. The mind is one originator of emotion, but the body may originate emotion as well by
the automatic and habituated activation of neural patterns correlated with emotional
experience or states. The brain, which is material and therefore part of the body, responds to
circumstances in ways that the immaterial aspect of the person has “farmed out” to it, thereby
allowing emotions to arise without the immaterial mind being involved, at least at first.

However, the neuropsychological research suggests that this is not sufficient to explicate all
that is occurring. This explanation assumes that emotional responses are initially generated
by the mind and only through habit can they be taken up by the creation of neural patterns.
Such an argument would imply that one may experience an emotion only once one has
consciously encountered an experience and responded to it emotionally at a previous time. It
also assumes that emotion is something that one initially chooses because, as Willard made
the point, the body stores habits that have been delivered to it through repeated volition.776
The research, however, suggests that emotions are not chosen. Even Willard seemed to admit
to this point when he called anger an automatic response.777 Emotions initially occur prior to
consciousness being aware of them and, in that few millisecond space during which signals
travel to and are processed by the cerebral cortex, are unable to be controlled or suppressed
intentionally.778 Even when mental events provide the stimuli that result in emotional
response, the emotion begins in this pre-conscious fashion.779 Moreover, scientists have
identified certain instinctive emotional responses that seem to be hard-wired into the brain.

776 Willard, Renovation, 35.
777 Willard, Conspiracy, 147-8.
778 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 33.
779 Damasio, Descartes' Error, 212-4.
Particular stimuli, such as heights and snakes, automatically result in a phobic response, for example.\textsuperscript{780} It may be that the body does generate emotions that have been patterned through mental processes, but habituated pattern creation does not appear to be the primary or only means.

The fact that emotions begin out of consciousness returns the issue to the dichotomy between conscious and unconscious emotion. Damasio, as described in the previous chapter,\textsuperscript{781} offers specific terminology for unconscious emotion, for which he reserves the term, emotion. For conscious experience of emotion, he instead uses the term, feelings. This dichotomy actually matches with Willard's concentration and the way in which he discussed the faculty, seeming to prefer using feelings over emotions. The word, feelings, appears more often in his writing, with emotions many times being referenced only as an alternative for feelings.\textsuperscript{782} His philosophical interests in phenomenology and its concentration on the explication of consciousness\textsuperscript{783} might naturally lend itself toward looking more at conscious feelings than unconscious emotions, though it is, perhaps, merely coincidental that his writing manifests this way, as he did not seem to make the same explicit dichotomy that Damasio does.

Regardless, the dichotomy offers a useful way of examining issues within his thought.

Feelings, using Damasio's terminology, are only possible when grounded on emotion. Conscious awareness of a phenomenon suggests that the phenomenon exists regardless of awareness of it. Therefore, unconscious emotions form the foundation on which feelings

\textsuperscript{780} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 18-9; Hogue, 36.
\textsuperscript{781} See pp. 190-1.
\textsuperscript{782} E.g., Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 30.
\textsuperscript{783} Willard, “Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Phenomenology.”
must exist. This conclusion provides a viable answer for the question of whether emotions are located in the mind or body. The answer is both, with the dichotomy of feelings and emotions providing the means of separating each into their respective locales. If one contends, as Willard seemed to, that conscious experience is a manifestation of the immaterial mind, then feelings, being part of consciousness, are located within the mind. Emotions, on the other hand, occurring outside of conscious processing, are located in the body. Feelings, however, are mostly, if not entirely, dependent on the emotions generated by the body. After emotions begin somatically, the mind may experience them through feelings.

Because Willard focused on feeling rather than emotion, however, his writing contains a seeming overemphasis on feelings or at least lack of acknowledgement of the effects of emotion, regardless of whether or not it is in awareness. Feelings have the capacity to potentially affect conscious thought and volition, but emotions have ramifications for not only affecting conscious thought and volition, but also unconscious processes and actions. Everything that Willard posited regarding feelings are true as well of emotion, only hidden from one's awareness. One might not only, for example, have conscious desires that motivate one, but also unconscious desires that impel one in a particular direction. He acknowledged that most of what a person does is not carried out intentionally and occurs frequently without awareness, but this was mostly, if not entirely, restricted to behaviour and activity. If the body, as suggested above, generates not only automatic and unintentional actions, then it also generates automatic and unintentional emotion, and, by the previous assertion, most of it occurs without awareness. Most emotions do not become feelings, but if those emotions have the same ramifications on one's thoughts, actions, character, and spiritual formation as

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784 Willard, Renovation, 17.
Willard proposed for feelings, then they, too, must be attended to and undergo formation in the same or similar manner. Willard's prescriptions for feelings should also be applied to emotion.

Given that Willard's primary prescription for feelings was to change their habituated patterns, such that negative feelings were diminished and positive feelings were strengthened,\textsuperscript{785} this ought to be true of unconscious emotion as well. One must not merely attend to what one is aware of feeling, but one must also attend to the emotions that one may not be feeling so that those emotional habits and patterns are changed. Not only ought one to seek to experience different feelings, but to also respond with different emotions, whether or not they manifest themselves consciously. The manner in which this must be accomplished through Willard's spirituality will be considered in greater detail below.

### 3 Emotion, Will, and Behaviour

One of the tensions left unresolved from the analysis of Willard's affective psychology is the relationship between emotion and volition. To reiterate briefly, he asserted that emotion is the means by which value is added to objects, thoughts, and ideas, thereby providing the will with a means of choosing between potential actions.\textsuperscript{786} However, he also asserted that the will maintains its own preferences and values,\textsuperscript{787} implying that emotions need not supply such to it, and that, in order to attain maturity, a person must be able to choose to do what one

\textsuperscript{785} Ibid., 119.

\textsuperscript{786} Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 80.

\textsuperscript{787} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 57.
does not “feel like” doing.\textsuperscript{788} It cannot be the case that volition both requires emotion to sort potentials while simultaneously not requiring it and functioning such that a mature individual must be able to disregard emotion when choosing.

Part of Willard's argument arose out of his perception that “ruined” individuals, which comprise most of contemporary American culture, are driven primarily by the body and emotion rather than by thought and spirit.\textsuperscript{789} People largely have only their feelings, both emotional and sensual, as guideposts for determining what is good or bad. Any time they are faced with a choice, they go with what they feel like doing, even if it is to their own harm or the harm of others. This he understood as a lack of self-control, which suggested that the will was not being employed.\textsuperscript{790} In such cases, the will, then, is understood as a faculty that is employed for the purpose of resisting impulse from both emotion and bodily drive in order to choose an action without regard to emotion, typically determined by thought and the will of God.\textsuperscript{791} He needed a means of resisting feelings, and the faculty of will is a seemingly natural choice.

However, this need for a means of resisting feelings puts will into a place that contradicts his more explicit characterizations of it. Furthermore, the neuropsychological evidence suggests that this reasoning is untenable. Damasio's research implies that the act of choice depends on emotion rather than working against it. Without emotion, personal, moral, and social choices

\textsuperscript{788} Ibid., 127.

\textsuperscript{789} Ibid., 126-7; Willard, “Political Involvement”, 82.

\textsuperscript{790} Willard, Renovation, 127.

\textsuperscript{791} Ibid., 41.
cannot be made or are made erratically.\textsuperscript{792}

The neuropsychological research, for the most part, seems to be more consistent with Willard's more explicit depiction of emotion's relationship to volition, which is that of a valuation system. Recall that d'Aquili and Newberg equate emotion with the value-operator of the brain, tagging stimuli with positive or negative valence.\textsuperscript{793} Panksepp likewise argues that all human beings bear values that are defined by their emotional systems as determined and affected by biological, social, and genetic realities.\textsuperscript{794} Emotions provide “various types of natural internal values” that “play a key role in the causal chain of events that control ... actions”.\textsuperscript{795} Damasio theorizes that the body tags all potential choices with a somatic marker that identifies the value of that option, providing a means of sorting through those potentials in order to select the most positive.\textsuperscript{796} All of these point to emotion as a means of generating value.

However, research implies that value may be generated in other fashions in addition to emotion. First, value is generated by cognitive and symbolic representation. One can identify something as good purely through symbolic association, as evidenced by individuals whose ventro-medial cortices suffered damage. Many of these individuals were able to identify

\textsuperscript{792} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 172, 193.

\textsuperscript{793} D'Aquili and Newberg, 52, 56.

\textsuperscript{794} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 303.

\textsuperscript{795} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{796} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 173-4.
something as worth pursuing or avoiding, despite having no emotional response to them. The difference is that such individuals were not always able to make immediate choices based on those symbolic associations. At times, they would state what was good, yet still not choose it, confusing even themselves. Symbolic valuation seems to be at least partially disconnected from volition in long-term scenarios.

Another means of value generation may or may not be considered emotion, depending on how one understands and defines the term. Somatic responses to stimuli are automatic, and they suggest an inherent valuation. One may instinctively shrink from danger or grow attentive to sexual stimuli, the former inherently flagging danger as negative and the latter sexual stimuli as positive. Therefore, the body has an instinctive and inherent valuation system occurring, but the question is whether or not that bodily valuation process is emotion. For James, the somatic evaluation and response process was not emotion because emotion only came upon the later neural reading of those responses, but Panksepp, on the other hand, asserted that that automatic evaluation was part of, but not the whole of emotion, as emotion requires both somatic and neural response. Damasio understands the somatic response as the emotion itself, as the brain interprets a stimuli, and that process requires

797 E.g., Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 192-3, 211, 214-5.
798 Bechara, et al., 1293.
799 The issue is somewhat unclear in short-term scenarios, as patients with cortical damage did generally choose what was good in the short term, though this is likely due to an immediately preceding stimulus that resulted in emotional valuation rather than symbolic valuation. See Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 217.
800 This symbolic valuation conflicting with volition is somewhat paralleled in the most common interpretation of Paul’s struggle in Romans 7. What Paul knew and desired to do, he did not do, but what he did not consciously want to do is the action he took. The apostle illustrated the principal two millennia ago.
801 Ibid., 33.
valuation, but it inevitably results in a somatic change. Without that interpretive valuation, there would be no somatic change, and as he defined the somatic change as emotion, then the valuation and emotion are causally linked and potentially inseparable. Neuropsychology therefore proposes emotion; symbolic valuation, though not necessarily with volitional potential; and the possibility of pre-emotive neural interpretive valuation as three different means of generating value.

To reiterate Willard's understanding of emotion and value, Black saw Willard's view of emotions as generating an attractive or repulsive potentiality, specifically with respect to thoughts. His manner of explanation that thoughts and feelings were highly intertwined implies that attraction and repulsion cannot occur with thoughts alone, but require emotion. These attractive and repulsive potentials suggest the generation of value. That which is good draws one, and that which is bad repels one. Therefore, emotion is required for value-generation. More directly, Willard connected emotion and valuation in *The Divine Conspiracy* explicitly, arguing, quite similarly to Damasio, that emotion provides value to options, out of which one is then capable of making a choice and taking action.

At the same time, some of Willard's writing could be interpreted to suggest that the will may bear its own capacity for valuation. He stated that for a person to become spiritually mature,

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802 Damasio, *Spinoza*, 53.
803 Black, 103-4.
804 Ibid., 104.
his or her will ought to be oriented toward what is good and that it can be inclined in particular directions, even to the point of being unable to be turned away. Taken as written, it suggests that the will has a means of being turned toward a particular value. Compounding the conflict, there remains his argument that one should be able to choose to act against how one feels, an especially problematic statement when taken in conjunction with his point that the will is dependent upon thought and emotion.

The question is essentially whether or not the will can have an orientation or system of valuation on its own, apart from emotion. Willard's writing seems to clearly say so, though if that is true, then one might wonder if emotion has any purpose at all. If emotions are generators of value that enable volition, as he himself indicated, but the will also bears its own value system and inclination, then volition is enabled by itself, and there is little or no need for emotions. Perhaps Willard would have been more comfortable with such an anthropology, as he frequently decried its role in and effects on American culture. The possibility exists that the will and emotions both provide an orientation toward action such that one strengthens the other or precedes the other chronologically, though Willard never detailed such a conjoint system or the dynamics of how it would function.

Scientifically, the neurological evidence, to this point, does not support a valuation system other than those already described. The body has an inherent valuation system, and it may become habituated in particular ways, generating attractive and repulsive impulses in

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806 Willard, *Beyond Pornography*.


808 Ibid., 142.

809 E.g., Willard, *Renovation*, 53.
response to stimuli, and in this manner, Willard's “embodied will” may possess an orientation, but deliberative volition does not seem to. It requires emotion, at least in social, moral, and personal domains, meaning that there is no way to directly choose against one's emotions, despite Willard's insistence that one must do so.\footnote{This does not necessarily cause volition to become slave to emotion, thereby eliminating free-will, as will be discussed shortly.}

If one considers the dichotomy of emotions and feelings or the possibility of multiple, conflicting feelings, however, there may be a means of reconciling his idea. If one is only capable of choosing based on the valences provided by emotions, then one may be quite capable of not doing what one feels like if one instead is responding to an alternate emotion or group of emotions whose overall valence differs from the one in question. One might choose against one's conscious feelings, instead responding to unconscious emotions that bear a more urgent marker. Those emotions need not be unconscious, necessarily, but must be opposed to the more apparent or obvious feelings. Using one of Willard's favourite examples, one might want ice cream, but not choose to eat it because the desire to lose weight or fast may be stronger, regardless of whether or not those stronger desires are immediately available as feelings. The feelings correlated with not eating the ice cream conflict with those correlated with eating it, and one chooses, based on one set of feelings or the other. The will's independence from emotion seems to be an impossibility.

### 3.1 The Operation of Will and Emotion

That the will requires emotions as a valuation system elicits the question of how it functions with them. When discussing it, Willard went into little detail as to its manner of operation.
One is left with the understanding that it “originates” events that are generated solely by the working of the spirit,\(^{811}\) considers and weighs options,\(^{812}\) and potentially has an orientation, but this is no explanation of its working beyond this. Given the will's dependence on emotion, it cannot originate anything solely on its own. It must choose, in some manner, from among those impulses that are offered by desire and other emotion. The originator is, therefore, emotion, but the spirit has the task of somehow determining which is expressed. The task of weighing options also can be rejected due to emotion's role, as the weighting process is automatically accomplished through emotion's value tags.\(^{813}\) Willard's conceptualization, therefore, must be somewhat modified to the following: the will chooses from emotional impulses what to manifest as thought or action, potentially has some say in weighing potential possibilities to actualize, and possesses some means of being oriented toward or away from potentials. What follows are three potential means of detailing the will's function and relationship to emotion and choice.

Like Willard, neither Damasio nor Panksepp give intricate detail of how volition functions. Both clearly describe its dependence on emotion but go no further to depict what exactly occurs with those emotional valences. LeDoux identifies the attentional network in the frontal lobe as having a distinct role in decision-making, though that exact role is not articulated.\(^{814}\) Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull, who rely heavily on a modified version of Panksepp's affective schema, do point out that some evidence suggests that, from a

\(^{811}\) Ibid., 33.

\(^{812}\) Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”.

\(^{813}\) One functional possibility described below, however, may provide a means of maintaining this aspect of will.

\(^{814}\) LeDoux, 277.
neurological standpoint, the will appears to be inhibitory. That is, the frontal lobes suppress emotionally driven impulses that would otherwise manifest as action. In this way, one chooses by suppressing those impulse options that are unwanted, leaving the willed potential to manifest behaviourally.

This conceptualization fits reasonably well with Willard's depiction of the will, as it has been modified above. Potential options are taken from emotions and desires, potentially through the linking action of the orbital cortex, and either are allowed by the will to be expressed or are suppressed. Willard's acknowledgement that the will is finite and unable to contradict desire directly, is easily integrable by proposing that the will has a limited ability to suppress impulse, and desires or emotions that are too strong will overcome any attempt by the will to suppress them. This also reconciles well with the observation that the frontal cortex does have the ability to somewhat suppress the reactions of emotional impulse. The weighing of options is unclear here, though it could be explained through loops of emotional impulses being presented, suppressed, and then surfacing again. This suppression and resurfacing could imply greater significance or weight to the potential, thereby signalling to the will to allow its manifestation. Finally, because the will is expressed through neural excitation in the frontal cortices, a particular orientation could manifest itself through the creation of neural patterns and ruts that are more easily activated. Neurons that fire together,

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816 LeDoux, 278.

817 Willard, “Warfare”, 82.

818 LeDoux, 80.
wire together, says the old neurobiological maxim,\(^{819}\) and therefore once the will expresses itself in a particular manner, it is more likely to express itself in the same manner again later. That is, once an impulse is suppressed, or potentially when an impulse is allowed to manifest, it becomes more easily suppressed again in the future. The will becomes oriented or habituated toward repeating that same pattern due to its expression through the body.

A question worth considering, then, is what happens when individuals, as Willard suggested is true of much of American culture, allow feelings alone to determine the path of the will.\(^{820}\) It must be noted again that because emotions have the same effects on a person's behaviour as feelings, he is effectively referring to emotions determining the will's aim. Allowance of emotion to determine the will's function, if the will is a suppressive force, may imply that the will simply does not suppress very much. Whatever emotional impulses are most strong or prominent in a given moment will automatically become enacted as behaviour. Either the will is not engaged here or is lazily engaged with no weighing process, merely choosing the most dominant emotion and suppressing all else.

One difficulty with this articulation of the will is that it can eliminate free-will. This may arise when one considers the impetus for exercise of that suppressive action. As already implied, the will may be activated through neural patterning and habit. However, if a habit has not already been laid, one might ask what else, then, evoked the urge to suppress the emotional impulse. Previously, Willard's conflict between volition being dependent upon emotion and the ability for one to not do what one feels like was reconciled by noting that

\(^{819}\) Ibid., 214.

\(^{820}\) Willard, Renovation, 126.
one might choose against one set of feelings due to the relative strength of a different set of emotions. The choice was still dependent upon emotion, but those emotions were not the most evident or the ones to which the person attended at the time. In the case of the suppressive theory of volition, this would indicate that the will suppressed one emotional impulse due to a different emotional impulse to suppress the first. It could be, then, that volition is merely a suppressive act and not one that includes any element of choice, one emotion automatically causing the will to suppress another. Such a possibility precludes free-will as individuals would then be merely responsive to their emotions and the stimuli that evoke them. Alternatively, there may be some element of choice happening such that the spirit has the ability to choose whether or not to suppress an impulse, so long as that impulse is not beyond the capacity of the will to overcome it.

In addition to this suppressive operation of the will, there is a possibility for the operation of the will and its relationship to emotion in a more classical fashion. In this possibility, the will watches over all emotions that are occurring and chooses which ones to enact as behaviour. In this fashion, again, the will is dependent upon emotion because the will can only choose to enact something towards which one has positive emotions, particularly desire. Willard noted that the willing process is complex due to the underlying knot of thoughts and emotions on which it rests, so it may appear as if one chooses something one does not desire, but it is quite possible that thought processes simulating potential future outcomes can predict a potential outcome for which one does have positive desires. One may want a later outcome of something one doesn't immediately want, and the desire attached to that later outcome carries more emotional weight than the desire to avoid the immediate choice. Therefore, one chooses

\footnote{Ibid., 147.}
what one doesn't want in order to get what one does want later.

If one goes along with Willard's anthropology, this possibility causes the will to be a generally conscious faculty, its unconscious aspects having been delegated to the body via habituation, but one with some access to or at least responsiveness to unconscious emotion. One's choices do depend on unconscious emotional factors, implying that these unexperienced emotions are moving the will in some fashion. Willard to some extent acknowledged this when noting that persons may do things for reasons that they do not themselves understand. He was specifically pointing to self-deceit in the discussion cited here, though the same could be argued simply for emotions that had not arisen into awareness. People do not understand why they do what they do because they are not aware of all the emotions that are driving them to act. The will, therefore, while conscious, sorts through options and intentionally chooses using feelings of which it has awareness, but also makes those choices because of the influence of emotions of which it has no awareness.

Willard's depiction also explains the will as having the capacity for weighing options, which in this scheme is a necessary part of monitoring feelings and determining which to choose. Each option is considered, taking into consideration its emotional valence, before selecting one or more to enact. The capacity to be oriented may be explained, as in the previous scenario, as occurring due to neurological habits and patterns being formed, out of which the will manifests in the brain, but there may also be a more spiritual, immaterial factor happening here wherein the heart will become more drawn in some fashion to certain options or kinds of options. It consistently places greater weight on certain kinds of choices, making

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822 Ibid., 147-8.
them more often and making it more difficult to not choose them in the future.

In the previous scheme, the will could be quite inactive, only making choices when necessary to suppress an impulse. Here, however, the will may be constantly active, making frequent evaluations of potentials and choosing which to enact, a picture that matches well with Willard's argument that an individual cannot be without a will.823 The will may here be constantly evaluating, even if it doesn't necessarily choose an option to perform. That doesn't necessarily imply that will is required for every action that occurs. Action may occur, first of all, due to habituation or biological impulse, but it may also be that action occurs because emotional impulses are strong enough to turn into action regardless of an individual's will. A person may not be able to resist an urge or keep a thought out of his or her head. This implies that there is a sort of threshold of choice out of which the heart may work. If emotions or desires are stronger than the threshold, then the impulses are acted upon regardless of volition. On the other hand, if desires are too weak, then the will has no capacity to choose them; they cannot turn into behaviour.

This displays Willard's concept, once again, of the finitude of the will.824 He argued that it cannot directly confront desire825 because, if this framework is correct, desires in such cases are too strong for it, but conversely, the will cannot, despite Willard's seeming assertion otherwise, push one to do something that one has little or no desire for. There is only a range out of which the will may work. Most everyday desires fall into that range, thereby allowing the spirit to reasonably select from a number of potentials, but many also fall outside of it and

823 Ibid., 156.

824 Ibid., 57, 143, and others.

825 Ibid., 118.
automatically become thought or behaviour or are discarded as non-options.

This also may lead to a depiction of what would happen should one allow the will to be dominated by feelings and emotion. This could occur when the threshold of volition has been reduced such that emotions consistently surpass it and are made into action, bypassing the will. Alternatively, emotion may dominate the will because the will abdicates its choosing function. This leaves the strongest emotional impulse to manifest with implied consent. Here, no effort is expended on willing anything, but everything passes through without attention. A third possibility is that the will must choose when options are in the threshold, but instead of abdicating choice, it abdicates the weighing function. In such a case, the strongest desire is chosen automatically because the no effort is spent weighing or considering the options. One becomes ruled by feelings here because the dominant feeling is always left to determine action.

As in the previous scheme where will was purely suppressive, will and desire are here clearly distinguished, as Willard advocated. Desire is the initial impetus for action, and many times it becomes action, but the will has the potential for choosing from among desires that have relatively similar strengths. In order of processing, desire, as well as other emotions, arise first, and volition comes after, operating on those desires. Willard's contention that conflating desire and will is problematic is seen distinctly in this potential scheme, as mistaking desire for will would result in no attempt being made to choose from among desires, leaving a person entirely driven by impulse rather than through considered weighing of potentials.

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826 Ibid., 154.
A significant issue with this potential depiction of volition is that there is no neurological evidence for it. Many attempts have been made to isolate a specific choosing function in the brain, but nothing has been thus far discovered.\textsuperscript{827} The frontal lobes are the logical place for such a choosing function to be located,\textsuperscript{828} and deliberate decision-making does use the frontal cortex as part of the neural pathway,\textsuperscript{829} but this could be evidence of activity of the attentional networks and working memory just as much as the operation of choice, and while specific sites for those functions have been determined, a choosing site remains uncertain, causing this scheme to be questionable, though by no means impossible, as it may simply yet to have been found.

A final potential scheme for the operation of will and emotion begins with a variation on one aspect of the previous, that being the automatic enacting of the most dominant emotional impulse. Willard was adamant about the possibility of being ruled by feelings, and in this scheme, that is not merely a possibility, but a given. One will do whatever one most feels like doing. The function of will, then, is not to choose at the endpoint of desire and emotion, as in the previous possibility, but to influence desire and emotion as it occurs. Volition is here the process of strengthening or weakening emotionally-relevant possibilities such that their valence is strong enough to be chosen or weak enough to be rejected. Rather than a fixed point where the process briefly stops for the will to weigh options, the willing heart works on emotions as they happen, subtly altering their emotional valence without introducing a break in the proceedings.


\textsuperscript{828} D'Aquili and Newberg, 37.

\textsuperscript{829} Fuster, 51.
The aspect of the will's orientation is most easily explained in this potential operation. It could be in this scenario that the will is oriented toward or away from particular options by the simple fact that emotions themselves are habitual and patterned, and if the will has only a finite ability to influence those emotions, then the feeling patterns make up the tendency toward particular choices. The will is not so much oriented as the emotions are, and the will has only a limited ability to change this.

Willard's capacity for choice in the will can be explained by noting the spirit's influencing of one emotion while leaving another as it is. As in the previous setup, the will watches over emotions and desires, though here as they occur rather than at the moment of enacting, pressing on some and leaving others alone such that the chosen impulses are made more likely to surface behaviourally.

Finally, the weighing process is somewhat more difficult to take into consideration, given the more fluid character of this possibility. Weighing options implies a sort of pause to consider the different potentials, and there is no pause in this scenario. Volition occurs in real time with emotional stimuli and response. However, one possibility is that of the brain's simulating capacity is engaged to predict potential emotions and desires, and the weighing process occurs during these simulations. When emotions that match simulated scenarios occur, the will then may influence them, having expected them and been prepared to move them toward action. A lack of knowledge of oneself or circumstantial surprises, then, would complicate this process significantly, as simulated potentials would be incorrect, leaving the will little or no time to react to the immediacy of the emotions.

It is also easy to see what happens, if this is the correct operation, when one allows emotion
to dominate the will. Because the will here is only an influencer of emotions, desires, and impulses, such impulses automatically express themselves as action. The dominant or emotion with the strongest valence would continue to be acted upon whether or not the will has introduced any influence on it. If emotion dominates the will, it is perhaps because the will only weakly influences the emotional valence of potential choices. The automaticity of this process, however, makes it difficult to reconcile with Willard's argument that one cannot be without will.\textsuperscript{830} He intended that one had to choose in some fashion, but this scenario could imply that one need never choose and merely allow emotion to determine one's course. This issue makes this third possibility more tenuous than the previous two.

Additionally, like the previous scenario, there is no neuroscientific evidence for the process as suggested here. Moreover, if the will influences emotions as they occur, then the will would seem to be operating beneath the frontal cortex where the emotions are generated, which seems to contradict what little evidence there is of volitional processes in the brain,\textsuperscript{831} though there is also some evidence to suggest that choices occur prior to conscious realization of them,\textsuperscript{832} which might imply that true volition does occur along with emotional processing, as this option suggests.

While there is insufficient neurological or philosophical evidence to determine which, if any, of these three potentials explains the operation of the will and its relationship to emotion, what is clear is that volition is a faculty of the human person that cannot work without

\textsuperscript{830} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{831} D'Aquili and Newberg, 37; Fuster, 51. Ingvar also notes that reduced activity in the frontal cortex correlates with lack of will, suggesting this location as the seat of volition. Ingvar, 120.

\textsuperscript{832} Newberg, 237.
emotion. All choices are made, based on one's feelings and emotions, both conscious and non-, and no choice can be made without a corresponding desire for something that that choice may potentially result in. Theological contexts are not unfamiliar with this connection, as both Jonathan Edwards\textsuperscript{833} and John Wesley\textsuperscript{834} equated the will with the affections, a step certainly beyond what Willard advocated, but one that captures the interconnectivity of the two faculties. Desire and will may be separate, but they are intertwined tightly, one standing on the shoulders of the other.

4 Emotion and Thought

While Willard divorced will and emotion, he certainly acknowledged their inter-dependence, though not with the clarity expressed above. However, Willard also argued that will only functioned with thought as well as emotion,\textsuperscript{835} but also seemed to imply that a large amount of feeling and very little thought was the norm for American culture.\textsuperscript{836} Thought, according to Willard, is intended to set the direction for one's behaviour,\textsuperscript{837} but most people's actual lives are run via feelings, rather than thought. At the same time, Willard also stated that thoughts and feelings never occur independently,\textsuperscript{838} though there may be some nuance here to


\textsuperscript{835} Willard, *Renovation*, 142, 147.

\textsuperscript{836} Ibid., 97; Willard, *Knowing Christ*, 82.

\textsuperscript{837} Willard, *Conspiracy*, 324.

\textsuperscript{838} Willard, *Renovation*, 33.
consider. The context for this statement was that of feelings being caused by thoughts and occurring in the mind, which for Willard is primarily, if not exclusively, a conscious processor. While not explicitly stating so, he seemed to be discussing feelings in this context only as conscious experiences in response to cognitive events, which, returning to Damasio's dichotomy, would make them feelings only and not emotions. This leaves open the possibility of emotions occurring without thoughts, which the neuroscientific data supports, given emotional reactions occurring prior to neural processing in cortical areas, but it does not leave open the possibility of thoughts occurring without emotion. Ashbrook and Albright argue that all thoughts that rely on data from multiple areas in the brain, which would likely include most or all, must travel through limbic, that is, emotion-generating areas, which would then “tag” them with some emotional valence. On the other hand, Damasio's patients with damaged ventro-medial cortices certainly displayed thoughts without any emotional content, though this does not necessarily confirm that thought may occur apart from emotion in neurally healthy individuals. Given the significant inter-connectivity of the brain, it is likely that in a normal brain, all thoughts will carry some level of emotional valence, even if small, insignificant, or outside of awareness.

A question to consider before examining further, however, is the actual character of thought, first in Willard's philosophy and then in a neuropsychological context. Willard defined thought explicitly in *Renovation of the Heart* as anything that falls under the category of conscious awareness, which includes perceptions, beliefs, memories, imagination, and

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839 LeDoux, 163-5.

840 Ashbrook and Albright, 73.

841 E.g., Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 192-3.
rational analysis.\footnote{Willard, Renovation, 96.} One of his categories of thought was images, however, which he acknowledged has the capacity to govern or influence people apart from conscious awareness.\footnote{Ibid., 97.} This calls into question whether or not thought is restricted only to consciousness. In the same chapter, he also noted, “‘Unconscious’ thoughts and images are ... still thoughts or images,” which acknowledges that thoughts outside of consciousness are possible, though he may have been allowing for the possibility of unconscious thoughts here without advocating for them completely.\footnote{Ibid., 115.} If he is allowing for them, however, this still contradicts the original definition. While Willard expressly delineated thought as conscious awareness, he discussed it in ways that often seemed to exceed the boundaries of this definition.

Elsewhere in “The Absurdity of Thinking in Language”, he defined thought in a more technical manner, indicating it to be an intentional state of a person that relates to some object, but does not require perception of or interaction with that object, a “t-state”, as well as the flow of such internal states.\footnote{Willard, “Absurdity”.} Here, again, he indicated intentionality, implying some level of consciousness, which seems to be significant for his understanding. Elsewhere, however, he noted that what a person thinks is “very much a matter of what [one allows oneself] to think.”\footnote{Willard, Renovation, 142.} That “very much” suggests that there is some manner in which what one thinks is not determined by one's allowances or intentions, which again opens the possibility
of unintentional and unconscious thoughts. While Willard resisted the idea of unintentional and unconscious thoughts, he could not completely escape them.

In the article above, Willard was seeking to emphasize that thought did not have to involve symbols. Instead, imaginative perception makes up the majority of thinking processes. His concluding point was that because one cannot act upon a symbol, then one cannot think with them, concluding that one cannot think in a language or, consequently, in symbols. To be clear, that does not imply that symbols had no part in thought. He acknowledged that those symbols pointed to mental objects that could be acted upon, which makes them powerful parts of the thinking process, but one cannot restrict oneself to thinking only in symbols. Thought functions, to Willard's mind, on perceptions, feelings, and imagined realities to which symbols may or may not be attached.

This more technical definition, with some modification, connects with some already implied conceptions of thinking from a neuropsychological standpoint. This thesis has already discussed the concept of simulating experiences through the activation of neural processes without somatic expression or experience that would correspond to those processes. This seems to be a major component of thinking, the experience of phenomena from an imagined or otherwise internal-only state. One might think about moving an arm or seeing a person by activating neural processes that match the experience of those circumstances without the arm moving or the person being present. This aspect of thinking, then, matches with Willard's imaginative perception.

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847 Willard, “Absurdity”.

With regards to symbols, none of the aforementioned neuroscientists have discussed their relationship to thought explicitly, likely due to their concentration on other areas of neuroscience, but psychologist Daniel Stern does avow that the capacity to represent reality in symbolic terms is a major developmental step. Through language and symbolic systems, one develops the capacity to interact with representations of reality in addition to interacting with reality directly. These symbols, then, allow for the sharing of experiences and generation of meaning in dense, abstract, and complicated ways.

The manipulation and flow of imaginative perceptions and the symbols that point to them seem to be common facets in both Willard's philosophy and neuropsychological research. The main difference between the two seems to be whether or not unconscious thoughts are a possibility. Willard's thought here seems somewhat conflicting, but the neuropsychological material is less so. Damasio's work implies that unconscious perceptions and simulations are constantly occurring beneath awareness during the process of decision-making as potentials are evoked to determine their emotional valence. The somatic marker process implies that images are being brought into some kind of focus, even if awareness does not detect them. Willard's t-states being internal states related to an object without external interaction with that object, then somatic markers are testing t-states unconsciously. Thought, this concludes, does not require conscious awareness. This supports the previously proposed theory above that habituated neural patterns in the brain may produce thoughts that are outside of intention.


\[\textit{850} \text{ Ibid., 172.}\]
or awareness.\textsuperscript{851}

This brings the matter back to the question of thought's relationship to emotion, but the matter may largely already be understood from the context given above. If thought is an imaginative perception or simulation of experience, then one may perceive or simulate an emotion. A thought itself may incorporate emotion, as Willard himself acknowledged when articulating that symbols may point to feelings.\textsuperscript{852} Moreover, simulated experiences may carry with them particular emotional states. This is necessary for the somatic marker hypothesis to be feasible, but it is also clearly felt by anyone who has imagined pleasant or unpleasant things. The imagined face of a loved one cannot help but evoke love, desire, or other happy emotions, while the thought of a dangerous spider is likely to carry some hint of fear for most. The uncontrollable nature of those emotions also preclude the possibility of completely stripping them from the imagined experience. As the brain uses the same circuitry in visual imagination as it does for visual perception,\textsuperscript{853} the neural pattern that evokes emotion will occur for both circumstances.

The role of symbols, according to Willard's structure, is to point to simulated perceptions, which would then evoke emotional states, though Willard also discussed the role of ideas in thinking, which may be relevant here. Ideas are general conceptualizations about reality that are disconnected from concrete objects or circumstances. Some examples he offered are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{851} See p. 222.
  \item \textsuperscript{852} Willard, “Absurdity”.
\end{itemize}
freedom, education, and “the American Dream”. They are symbols, of a sort, that carry meaning and link together other thoughts and, especially, emotions. Because these conceptualizations are not connected to specific objects, they cannot be directly perceived or simulated by the brain, but they group together other thoughts and feelings, which are then experienced, consciously or not. Some symbols, then, evoke the same process as simulations, generating emotions without intention. While a person may not be able to visualize what cancer looks or feels like, it still may evoke fear because the idea, a symbolic representation of reality rather than reality itself, is causally linked in the brain to an emotional response. Thought and emotion are not found apart from one another because thoughts inevitably evoke some level of emotional response, even if exceedingly mild.

This suggests that thoughts result in emotion, but it does not address the converse. Willard did not seem to advocate the possibility of emotion leading to thought directly, but there is neuropsychological evidence for it. Panksepp, for example, articulates that when the SEEKING system is active, one's thought process is influenced toward confirmation bias, which is the discarding of information contradictory to a desired potential and emphasis of information supportive of it. Desire, therefore, tends to elicit thoughts about a desired potential and the flow of thoughts that maintain that desire. If this is true of SEEKING systems, then it is likely for other emotional systems as well. One can imagine FEAR influencing thoughts about the object of one's fear or RAGE evoking thoughts about the object of one's anger or the righting of a wrong. Emotions directly influence thoughts.

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854 Willard, Renovation, 97.

855 See pp. 141-2.

856 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 161.
Willard strongly advocated for thought and emotion working in concert, or at least that thought would not be neglected such that emotion would be left to influence behaviour apart from it. Recall that Willard declared irrationality, a lack of thought, to be a vice. Damasio's somatic markers imply that thoughts are regularly, if not consistently, occurring beneath awareness, so emotion does not typically occur in the complete absence of thought, though it may occur in the absence of the awareness of thought, which may be more consistent with Willard's intent. He was calling for individuals to bring thoughts into conscious awareness rather than allowing them to run automatically. To bring thoughts into consciousness, then, is to imaginatively perceive potential scenarios in conscious awareness so as to consider the value of each scenario or to consciously link symbols to meaning in chains that will likewise result in potential scenarios or, most likely, some combination of the two. To think carefully, then, is to project a large number of potentials and symbols or to project those potentials further into the future and such that they generate further branching potentials to consider. Another possibility is to follow causal chains of symbols and meanings to their various ends, though this is a form of projecting of potentials, merely in an abstract form. Willard's advocacy of thought working in concert with emotion is therefore a matter of discovering the emotional valence of potential results of causal chains of symbols and meanings or of potential real-world events and experiences. The converse of this, failing to think carefully, is to follow such potentials only briefly to test more immediate emotions or emotions only from the results of a small set of potential outcomes. The mind does not simulate what may happen long-term or for all likely outcomes.

4.1 Thought, Emotion, and Will

This chapter has so far discussed the order of operation of thought to emotion, emotion to thought, and emotion to volition. It is worth considering, at the close of this section, the order of thought to volition and the manner in which emotion affects that order. Willard strongly advocated for the application of thought in the process of applying the will. One must think carefully about the plans one must make over the long-term and the choices one makes more immediately in order to be a responsible person.\textsuperscript{858} Conversely, he asserted that what one thinks about is largely a matter of what one chooses to think about.\textsuperscript{859} Together, these imply that volition and thought may be causally linked in either direction. One wills what one thinks, and what one thinks results in choosing. However, the neuropsychological evidence calls this into question. This is not to say that one's thoughts have no bearing on the will or that the will has no influence on what one thinks about. It is rather that the issue is more complicated than this presents.

The will acts only in response, as given above, to habit or somato-emotional impulses. Those individuals lacking emotional connection to imaginative perceptions in Damasio's research could think clearly, but those thoughts could not connect to action. This implies that thought can only influence volition through the emotions that those thoughts generate. It cannot influence the will directly. The order of operations here must run from thought to emotion to volition, without skipping this crucial, intermediate faculty.

The potentially perplexing issue that this presents is how to explain those circumstances

\textsuperscript{858} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{859} Willard, Renovation, 142.
wherein an individual clearly states to him or herself or others the thought process behind making a particular choice. There are two explanations for this circumstance. First, that emotion must be present in order for volition to act does not negate thought's involvement in the process. One's thoughts, however, as already noted, inevitably carry emotional salience to them, save for those circumstances involving damage to key neural regions. A careful thought process will lead to a positive emotion, and that emotion generates an impulse that the will may choose. Thought may be heavily involved in a volitional process, but it can only generate emotion, which then in turn may generate volition.

The second possibility is that the thought process that explains a choice was actually generated after the choice rather than before. A number of experiments have demonstrated that reasons given for choices may not be accurate, even when a person is certain of them, as discussed in the previous chapter. In such circumstances, unconscious thoughts and emotions lead to a particular choice, at times leaving conscious awareness out of the process or only partially involved. Afterwards, when the conscious mind is called upon to determine the reason the choice was made, it must create an explanation based upon a reconstruction of circumstances based upon information that was available to it. More simply, it must use elements from memory to explain, but, first, memory in general is notoriously faulty, and, second, working memory is too small and functions wrongly to hold and manipulate all potential information being perceived. This second fact means that consciousness may not have had access to the relevant information. Despite these faults and lacks, an explanation is

860 See p. 195.
861 Hogue, 55.
862 LeDoux, 280.
often still generated.

Jonathan Haidt posits that the explanation in moral circumstances, though experiments have shown that explanations are generated post-volition in non-moral circumstances as well, is generated not mainly for the purpose of accurate reporting, but more in order to maintain coherence of one's identity and cultural worldview and to manage social status.\(^{863}\) It is possible that the actual cause for a choice might conflict with one's self-narrative or cause one's sense of self to conflict with cultural mores. To put forth such an explanation would lead to cognitive dissonance, which may activate FEAR or other negatively experienced emotions, and therefore is to be avoided. It is also possible that the actual explanation might cause relational harm or appear to do so, which could activate PANIC or FEAR and potentially negate CARE and PLAY, all of which results in negative emotional experiences and is likewise to be avoided. Therefore, the brain automatically asserts personally and socially protective explanations over causally accurate ones, and only in emotionally secure circumstances can those preferred explanations be set aside in preference for accuracy.

In the above circumstance of thought justifying one's choices, it may appear even to the individual that thought led to volition, but what may be happening is that emotion led to volition, which led to, though did not directly cause, further emotion, leading finally to thought. Thought could precede the sequence, meaning that the post-volition emotion is absent or carries less weight, though some weighing of the appropriateness of an explanation may be present in a significant ratio of circumstances.

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What this indicates is that Willard's causal linking of these three faculties must be slightly amended. Emotion may directly cause thought or volition; thought, however, may elicit emotion but not volition without emotion as an intermediary; and volition may result in thought but not emotion. This structure places emotion in a much stronger and important role than Willard conceived, which makes the formation of emotion of even greater significance than he described.

While there is undoubtedly the underlying theology to Willard's work, his main purpose in writing was to affect evangelicals' spirituality and Christian practice so that they would live in a manner consistent with Jesus' original intent for the gospel. The neurological integration accomplished thus far, then, can be further applied to this spirituality of transformation and discipline. This brings the discourse to its final chapter.
Chapter 6
A Revised Willardian Spirituality
and Further Implications of the Research

1 Emotion and Spiritual Development

For Willard, spiritual development was, at least in part, a matter of forming and transforming the various faculties of the human person such that the character of the individual becomes like that of Jesus.\(^{\text{864}}\) Thus, as emotions are a major human faculty, there is a manner in which he saw emotions as rightly experienced and expressed in any circumstance and ordered according to divine intention. He also pointed to tools and methods that individuals might use in order to move a person toward experiencing and utilizing the emotions rightly. This chapter considers his vision for right emotion and the tools he prescribed for evoking it in light of the neuropsychological research examined.

1.1 Heighten the Positive – Diminish the Negative

To reiterate from chapter three, Willard's general vision for emotion's ideal state was that positive emotions would be magnified and heightened, while negative emotions would be reduced. In general, this implies two things from a neurological standpoint: first, the strengthening of some systems and weakening of others and, second, the development of habits and neural patterns that typically result in positive emotions.

\(^{\text{864}}\) Willard, Renovation, 253.
Panksepp articulates the thought that neural systems related to emotion can be strengthened through use and weakened through disuse.\textsuperscript{865} The more a person experiences the activation of RAGE, the easier it will be for RAGE systems to be activated in the future, and the same is true of any system from FEAR to CARE to PANIC and PLAY, but conversely, a system that is rarely active will be more difficult than others to be stimulated in the future as well, though it is likely that a system cannot completely atrophy until it is unable to be activated. Even when neural patterns are weak, the linked neurons and their associated pathways in the brain will still remain, making it possible to activate them with sufficient cause and stimulation.

Most simply, then, positive emotions can be strengthened through consistent experience of them, and negative emotions may be weakened through lack of experience of them. One will become more loving as one loves, and one will experience peace more readily through consistent experience of peace. One will, on the other hand, be afraid or angry less readily when one experiences them less often. Given that emotions cannot be wilfully activated, part of a course of spiritual development, then, would be to regularly seek out circumstances that are likely to produce positive emotions and minimize negative ones,\textsuperscript{866} particularly social experiences, given the proportionally high number of emotional systems that are dedicated to social interaction.

There are, however, some caveats to this simple idea. The first, as Willard acknowledged, is that self-deception is possible and has the power to damage a spiritual formation process.\textsuperscript{867} An emotional system may be active, and emotion may even arise into conscious feelings, but

\textsuperscript{865} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 17.
\textsuperscript{866} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 123.
\textsuperscript{867} Willard, “Foreward” in \textit{I Told Me So}. 
a person has some capacity to deceive her or himself such that she or he denies experiencing the emotion at all. Conversely, one may also convince oneself that one truly is experiencing an emotion that is not present. Given the simulating ability of the brain, the claimed experience likely would activate the corresponding neural system to an extent, but it may not reflect the intended or believed level of activation. An emotion could be much weaker or stronger than a person admits. Therefore, care must be paid such that the circumstances truly do evoke the emotions expected and intended, activating positive neural systems.

On the heels of potential self-deception is the reality of lack of awareness. Many emotions never enter into awareness as feelings, as Damasio’s somatic markers imply. Therefore, one must entertain the possibility of emotions present that are strengthening negative systems without knowing it to be happening. Because consciousness is unable to process everything that occurs in a person, there is no means of being certain that no such negative systems are active, though focused attention to one's behaviour and somatic states that correspond to negative emotional states may be able to assist in lessening the potential for negative emotions occurring outside awareness.

Similar to the strengthening and weakening of emotional systems in general is the strengthening of neural pathways that link positive emotional responses to circumstances. Emotions are not free-flowing phenomena, but responses to stimuli. When a stimulus occurs, a specific emotional response occurs, potentially negative. That negative response may be replaced or supplemented by a positive response through various means. One may mimic somatic states, including facial expression, posture, and breathing, that reflect positive

\[868\] Willard, Renovation, 35.
experience or imagine positive circumstances or feelings, in either of these two cases simulating experiences that may evoke positive emotion. Positive emotions resulting from a chain of stimuli as described may generate neural pathways that link the circumstance to positive emotions in the future. That is, neural habits of positive emotion are linked to the initial stimulus.

It should be noted, however, that negative emotional responses may not be eliminated in this process. As LeDoux, again, points out, emotional extinction, the gradual reduction and elimination of emotional responses to stimuli, can be undone instantly through the re-pairing of a signal with its original negative stimulus. The brain does not eliminate the emotional memories and neural circuitry, but rather the frontal cortex inhibits the complete activation of those circuits. Should the original stimulus-response pattern recur, the frontal cortex allows the full activation of the emotional response pattern. Therefore, even when negative emotional habits are diminished, they are not eliminated in the brain and could resurface, given particular circumstances. A habit of angry response to offense may be gradually diminished, but the potential for it to return remains encoded in the brain.

For Willard, the purpose of this heightening of positive and diminishing of negative emotion was for individuals to have the capacity to act and choose differently. He knew that one's feelings strongly affect one's behaviour, though it appears he didn't know to the extent that this is true. For Willard, it seemed that the will possessed some limited capacity through self-

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870 LeDoux, 145-6.

871 Ibid., 251.
control to overcome desire and emotional impulse,\textsuperscript{872} but even with great self-control, most actions are automatic and therefore unable to be changed by conscious intent. Damasio's research and Panksepp's assumption of emotion's role in behaviour implies instead that even self-control is either habit or emotionally-driven impulse and that all behaviour carries one of these two origins. This makes his conclusion even more crucial, that so long as a person continues to feel the same, to experience the same emotions, said person would be unable to choose differently, meaning that his or her behaviour would remain the same. Most people, he argued, want and expect to continue feeling as they have always felt while not acting in the manner to which those feelings generally lead,\textsuperscript{873} but this cannot work. They must begin to feel differently.

Techniques like those mentioned above are helpful for feeling differently, but they were not sufficient in Willard's eyes. For one's emotions to truly become different, one must desire to feel differently and thereby take on a lifestyle that incorporates the above techniques and places one in situations where one will experience different stimuli, resulting in different feelings, particularly the avoidance of negative ones, such that they will diminish.\textsuperscript{874}

In some instances, Willard seemed to carry this diminishment of negative emotions to an extreme. He seemed wary of emotions in general, regularly noting the potential problems that have arisen from the overdependence on and inability to rein in emotion in the culture\textsuperscript{875} and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{872} Willard, Renovation, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{873} Ibid., 117-8.
\item \textsuperscript{874} Ibid., 119.
\item \textsuperscript{875} E.g., Willard, “Liberation Through Sensuality”, 141; Willard, Conspiracy, 221; Willard, Renovation, 126.
\end{itemize}
referencing the presence of certain emotions as evidence of spiritual immaturity and the failure of a church's programs. However, he most blatantly revealed his concern that powerful emotion of any kind may be detrimental when stating, “Those who are wise will ... never allow themselves... to get in a position where they feel too deeply about any human matter.”

While an excess of emotion may potentially be damaging, the extent of this statement carries troubling implications. First, Willard did not distinguish between positive and negative emotions here, which conflicts with other statements where he advocated for positive emotions being strengthened. One cannot both dampen all emotions and heighten positive ones. Second, as he acknowledged, emotion is the means by which objects and ideas are assigned value, but he also argued that morality and what is good must be valued. If one is not to feel too strongly, then one cannot strongly value morality or what is good. The two are mutually exclusive. Third, emotion is necessary for volition, as has been shown. To not have strong emotions hampers the process of choosing. There is nothing on which to base a decision, and so no decision is made, or decisions are made erratically, as Damasio's patients demonstrated.

A fourth implication may arise if one considers that Willard used the term, feeling, here, as


opposed to emotion. Such an observation might lead one to conclude that he meant that it may be wise to have strong emotions but not strong feelings, though this seems untenable as well. Given that emotion has equivalent effects on behaviour, regardless of awareness, then having emotions while not having strong feelings seems counter to his intent. Without awareness, the emotions would likely have a greater effect on behaviour rather than a lesser. Additionally, one might presume that the process of attaining emotions without feelings would require, in some cases, denial or repression. This raises the question of whether or not repression fits with Willard's intent, having seemed to state that it both is and is not wise and an appropriate means of being spiritually formed.\textsuperscript{880} LeDoux states that the frontal cortex is able to mollify emotional experience, but only to a limited extent.\textsuperscript{881} Given that some amount of emotion will likely remain active, then the suppression of this emotion can only occur through the prevention of it from entering awareness. What remains will merely be unconscious. Repression, then, amounts, at least in part, to denial or an unintentional ignorance of emotional experience. Willard saw self-deception as potentially destructive,\textsuperscript{882} and ignorance merely allows emotion to affect one without check. Therefore, suppression of emotion does not lead towards Willard's ideal.

Moreover, these four arguments demonstrate the difficulty in accepting Willard's concern that one not “feel too deeply about any human matter.” One cannot help but feel deeply about some matters such as morality and to respond to circumstances in love and joy. Further, volition becomes difficult in the absence of emotions, and the repression of those feelings is

\textsuperscript{880} See pp. 170-1.

\textsuperscript{881} LeDoux, 80.

\textsuperscript{882} Willard, “Forward” in I Told Me So.
detrimental to oneself and one's development. Willard's concern for emotion's negative
effects on a person and the culture are not without merit, but the solution cannot be to feel
less deeply about issues.

1.2 Specific Emotional Management

There are a few, specific emotions that Willard mentioned that ought to be enhanced or
reduced. Two related emotions that he discussed being increased more than once are joy and
happiness. He depicted Jesus and God as extremely happy beings, and noted that a failure
to engage in joyful and pleasurable bodily experiences may weaken one's ability to do right
over time as it sustains the life of the disciple of Jesus. He linked such emotions to
fellowship with others and a vision of God as good and sufficient.

Panksepp articulated certain details that contribute further to the means of increasing joy and
happiness. He discussed SEEKING as inherently pleasurable, as opposed to the satisfaction
of SEEKING, which is, counter-intuitively, less pleasurable from a neurological
standpoint, and the absence of it is correlated with depression, which is a lack of joy and

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884 Willard, Disciplines, 81.
885 Willard, Conspiracy, 290-1.
886 Willard, Disciplines, 187.
887 Ibid., 128. Looker, 199.
888 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 54.
889 Ibid., 53.
happiness. This implies that greater happiness would arise through a consistent desire that is satisfied enough to not produce RAGE, but maintained enough to produce the pleasure of expectation and hope, hope being another emotion that Willard advocated as needful of enhancing. Desire, then, should not be completely satisfied, but one should continually desire something more to maximize one's joy. There should always be some goal-directed behaviour occurring, particularly directed toward God.

Additionally, social bonding and interaction should minimize PANIC, which would certainly be associated with a loss of joy. Panksepp does not directly discuss a happiness function to social bonding, though he does articulate that the PANIC system is calmed externally through social interaction and neurologically through the release of endogenous opioids, which are associated with relief and pleasure. This suggests that the deactivation of PANIC through social interaction may result in a kind of happiness, as Willard suggested.

Moreover, Panksepp argues for a PLAY system of the brain, the feeling of which he articulated as being best described as joyous. He primarily associates it with physical “rough-and-tumble” interaction, but notes that the same systems are made active through other means including joking and verbal banter that lead to laughter and participation in

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890 Ibid., 189.
891 Willard, Hearing God, 209.
892 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 261.
893 Ibid.
894 Ibid., 280.
895 Ibid., 283.
music. Given Willard's description of the kingdom of heaven being characterized by “hilarity”, PLAY would seem to match at least part of what he was describing, suggesting that social interaction indeed does enhance happiness and joy, but playfulness may be especially significant.

Above all, however, the emotion Willard pointed to as most important for the spiritual life is love, though the reader must recall that Willard incorporated more than emotion into his understanding of the term. He defined love in multiple locations as the will to do good to another and made this orientation of the whole being, including will, emotion, and thought, as the fulfilment of the moral call of God. He also noted that caring is a fundamental character of love, which links readily to Panksepp's idea of CARE. CARE is the emotional system that creates nurturing and maternal impulses. It is mostly connected to parental relationships, though it is not restricted to them. If love does incorporate a measure of activation of the CARE system, then Willard seemed to be indicating that the moral call includes caring and nurturing feelings toward all people. Panksepp does not discuss in depth voluntary means of increasing CARE, focusing more on the neurotransmitters that are


897 Willard, Conspiracy, 290.


899 Willard, Knowing Christ Today, 83; Willard, Renovation, 130; Willard, Conspiracy, 87; Willard, “Faith, Hope, and Love”, 82.

900 Willard, Conspiracy, 130.

901 Ibid., 205.

902 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 246.
automatically generated in the brain during sexual and maternal circumstances, though he does imply that many of those neurotransmitters are activated in multiple kinds of positive social interactions, suggesting that social bonding may produce not only happiness and joy, but CARE and love as well. Therefore, social bonding generally results in the heightening of positive emotion overall.

As positive emotions are heightened, negative emotions must be reduced. The negative emotion that Willard seemed most concerned with was anger, which he identified as a principal root of evil. He acknowledged that the emotion is a spontaneous response to the frustration of the will and therefore is not itself evil, but he still was greatly concerned with the potential damage to which it could lead, particularly contempt for others, which is diametrically opposed to love, and malice, which is intent to harm another. He also noted that anger inevitably decreases one's spiritual strength, joy, and peace, making it detrimental to the positive emotions that ought to be bolstered. Panksepp confirms Willard's definition of anger, describing RAGE circuits in the brain activating in response to the failure to obtain or attain expectancies driven by SEEKING. When one does not get what one desires or expects, one becomes irritated and eventually angry.

Naturally, if anger is driven by frustrated SEEKING, then one solution is to ensure that all

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903 Ibid., 247-8.

904 Willard, Conspiracy, 147; Willard, Disciplines, 226.


906 Willard, Conspiracy, 147-8.

907 Dallas Willard, “Taking God's Keys: The Keys of the Kingdom Also Unlock the Joys of Your Calling,” Leadership 19, no. 4 (Fall 1998), 57.

908 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 189.
SEEKING impulses are satisfied, though this is hardly reasonable. One simply cannot have everything one wants all the time. Unfortunately, Panksepp discusses little about how one ought to deal with RAGE or how it may be diminished. Willard, however, wrote more than once on how to deal with anger effectively. He recommended, first, becoming aware of and acknowledging one's anger and its potential problematic consequences. He observed that churches rarely have open discussion on anger, despite its potential for evil. Consequently, he recommended that churches develop classes and discussions about anger, making it more openly discussed and directly addressed. He also advocated its inclusion on measures of the effectiveness of a church's programs and processes, suggesting that decreasing levels of anger within the church and its constituency would suggest effective disciple-making. However, it should be emphasized that Willard did not intend anger to be eliminated, but rather that it be dissipated and not lead to sinful behaviour. Anger ought to be expressed, he implied, but not held on to.

Willard spoke mostly about anger, but he acknowledged the problems that arise from fear as well, providing a small measure of detail on how to diminish its effect. Panksepp identifies FEAR as a response to anticipation of danger, and Willard agreed, also implying that

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909 Willard and Zander, 24.


911 Willard, “Political Involvement”, 77-8.

912 Panksepp, Affective Neuroscience, 206.

913 Willard, Disciplines, 226.
fear and anger often arise concurrently.\footnote{Ibid.} This correlation is supported by Panksepp's research, as he noted that, to the extent that FEAR, ANGER, or PANIC occur frequently in a person, the other two will also occur in similar measure, though not necessarily simultaneously as Willard avowed.\footnote{Kenneth L. Davis, Jaak Panksepp, and Larry Normansell, “The Affective Neuroscience Personality Scales: Normative Data and Implications,” \textit{Neuro-Psychoanalysis} 5, no. 1 (2003): 63. This research does not disallow the possibility of these negative emotions occurring simultaneously, but it does not offer support for it either.} Being a response to danger, the natural solution to reduce FEAR would be to minimize danger or to minimize the anticipation of it. Willard suggested this may be possible through a recognition of God as protector and provider,\footnote{Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 209; Dallas Willard, “Your Place in This World,” commencement address at Greenville College in May 2004, accessed September 30, 2013, http://dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=109.} though a mental acknowledgement of a fact requires LeDoux's “high-road” of emotional processing,\footnote{LeDoux, 163-5.} which implies that emotions will still be processed as previously by the faster neural channels that bypass the cerebral cortex. The alteration of the lower-road pathways to reduce fear would require consistent experience of safety in situations previously experienced as dangerous. Thus, one must not only recognize that God is a protector and provider, but one must also experience these things in order for the fear-memory and response to undergo extinction.\footnote{Ibid., 145. The reader should also recall that the original fear can be recalled and the extinction processes effectively erased upon the re-experience of threat in the situation.} Imaginative perception and mental simulation may provide some measure of this experience, but as Damasio notes, real, somatic experience will always prove stronger than mentally simulated experiences.\footnote{Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 156.} Presumably, one could also
experience safety in other manners, such as through community and the care of others, though Willard only acknowledges that provided by God.

Willard discussed loneliness almost exclusively in his initial book, *Hearing God*, an emotion that Panksepp correlates with PANIC. In this same emotional system, he also merged sadness and a particular fear-like response that manifests as a panic state. Sadness Willard also discussed only briefly, noting that it may be right and appropriate for some seasons, but that it should not be particularly characteristic of a person. If Panksepp is correct that these are all different manifestations of PANIC, which is triggered through emotional disconnection from others, then the means of diminishing it would be to foster social bonding. Willard particularly stressed social connection with God, though Panksepp points more to human social contact and bonding than divine.

One final note about the elevation of positive and diminishment of negative emotion concerns the possibility of emotions about emotions. Panksepp's definition of emotion posits that any part of an emotional process from stimulus to interpretation to response to consciousness can feed back in order to reinitiate the process. That is, an emotion may serve as the stimulus for another emotion. Likewise, LeDoux's conceptualization of feelings

923 Hayford and Willard, 19.
926 Ibid., 33.
as awareness of emotions being processed in working memory\textsuperscript{927} and thought as imaginative perception also presents the possibility of such mental events acting as emotionally-sensitive stimuli. All this suggests that one may have feelings about particular feelings, an idea that Willard did not dwell on, but at least implicitly acknowledged when noting that people highly value feelings.\textsuperscript{928} The valuation of something is largely an emotional process, which implies the existence of emotions about feelings. These emotions about emotions may explicate more of Willard's dichotomy between experience of an emotion and indulgence in it, as discussed in chapter 3.\textsuperscript{929} Should one experience an emotion, that may be the end, and the emotion may dissipate, but if one also has a positive emotion about that emotion, then one may seek to draw out the feeling and indulge in it, which, when the emotion is fear or anger, Willard posited, generally has destructive results.\textsuperscript{930} Positive emotions about negative feelings, therefore, should be diminished or eliminated through extinction and creating of new habits and neural mappings.

2 Emotions and Spiritual Disciplines

The means for spiritual and personal transformation about which Willard most wrote are spiritual disciplines, largely the classical disciplines discussed previously.\textsuperscript{931} These practices have various positive effects on the emotions. Specifically, he pointed to solitude and silence

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{927}LeDoux, 282.
\item \textsuperscript{928}Willard, “Political Involvement”, 82.
\item \textsuperscript{929}See pp. 148-9.
\item \textsuperscript{930}Willard, Conspiracy, 151-2, 209.
\item \textsuperscript{931}See pp. 165ff.
\end{itemize}
as playing crucial roles in one's spiritual state and development. Those roles may be understood in part by considering Newberg's research on the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). Willard's solitude, wherein one attempts to take as little action as possible, is a space for resisting acting on one's impulses. It may be that the act of not following through with SEEKING or other emotional impulses functions neurologically similarly to Newberg's meditative practices that likewise involve resisting impulse and not taking action.\textsuperscript{932} Solitude may be an extended form of mild to moderate meditation. Such practices have been correlated with strengthening the action of the ACC, thereby allowing one to more readily calm the activity of emotionally-related neural circuitry.\textsuperscript{933} Time spent in solitude as Willard prescribed it thereby increases the brain's ability to rein in the emotions and practice self-control, a critical virtue in Willard's vision of the restored soul.\textsuperscript{934} It reduces the intensity of many emotions and also builds both neural and bodily habits of not acting on those emotions immediately, but giving space for other processing to occur, such as the thought process that Willard also insisted be integrated into behaviour and choices.\textsuperscript{935}

Moreover, meditative practices both lower activity in emotionally relevant systems in the brain while heightening activity in the frontal cortices, a condition that is associated with serenity.\textsuperscript{936} This state of activity in the brain persists not only throughout the practice, but

\textsuperscript{932} Newberg and Waldman, 24.

\textsuperscript{933} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{934} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 127.

\textsuperscript{935} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 18-9.

\textsuperscript{936} Newberg and Waldman, 49.
afterward as well.\textsuperscript{937} Solitude, then, naturally produces a state of positive emotion, which Willard sought to heighten, and conditions the brain to form a habit of feeling at peace, making the emotion more readily felt in everyday life.

Panksepp's research reveals a surprising phenomenon that may compound this conditioning effect. When animals are given the opportunity to stimulate their own SEEKING system directly or receive the reward, they will opt for continued stimulation. Animals inevitably prefer the feeling of raw desire over the satisfaction of desire. He points to the excitement that dogs display when anticipating a walk exceeding the joy at actually taking the walk.\textsuperscript{938} Mammalian brains are wired such that desire is preferable to the satisfaction of desire. Solitude is in many respects a process of intentionally not satisfying immediate desires for a period of time, thereby strengthening one's capacity to resist reward and experience the positive emotion that comes from desire itself. Practitioners of this particular discipline may be able to experience more sustained positive, anticipatory emotion, thereby, again, heightening one's overall positive emotional state and capacity. Conversely, because RAGE responds to unfulfilled SEEKING, intentional denial of immediate desires through solitude may prolong one's capacity to experience SEEKING without activating the RAGE system, thereby diminishing the role of negative emotion on a person's ordinarily activities.

Solitude's companion, silence, may compound these effects for similar reasons, given its similarity in character to Willard's solitude and Newberg's meditative states. One, additional potential effect may be worth considering, however. Stern suggested that the development of

\textsuperscript{937} Ibid., 27-8.

\textsuperscript{938} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 147-8.
the verbal self, by which one begins to represent aspects of the world through symbols, has
the unavoidable consequence of separating reality into two versions: the actual world and the
symbolic representation of that world.\textsuperscript{939} One's experience of the world, others, and oneself
are all bifurcated. Because speech is almost completely symbolic, it may be that the cessation
of speech for a time may somewhat reduce the level of symbolic abstraction that one
experiences. The reduction of vocal speech may also lead to a lessening of symbolic thought
in general, further reducing abstraction. That reduced abstraction may then allow emotions
that had heretofore gone unnoticed to become more evident. Willard avowed that self-
deception could cause significant problems in the spiritual life, and part of self-deception
may occur through this splitting and abstracting of experience through symbolic
representation. Silence, then, may mitigate that abstracting and separating effect. Willard
suggested that people avoid silence in part because it brings certain anxiety-producing
aspects of reality to awareness.\textsuperscript{940} Engaging in silence may therefore have a reintegrating
effect, bringing together symbolic and concrete experience. Once in touch with experiences
of reality that one had been eschewing, they can potentially be integrated into one's
understanding of God, self, and others.\textsuperscript{941}

Willard's idea of meditation, while differing from that of Newberg, still bore the same quality
of singular focus, which requires resisting impulse, and thereby may carry equivalent effects
to solitude. Additionally, because Willard's idea of meditation was focused consideration of

\textsuperscript{939} Stern, 163.

\textsuperscript{940} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 163.

\textsuperscript{941} Ibid., 165.
aspects of God,\textsuperscript{942} it may strengthen neural pathways in the brain related to the qualities of
God on which one focuses. Newberg's research suggests that meditation on, for example, the
love of God, will make neural circuitry involved in compassion and empathy more efficient
and likely to fire.\textsuperscript{943} Meditation on God's love, therefore, essentially causes one to become
more loving and to experience more love and other positive emotions correlated with love.

The practice of prayer, though varying in its forms, may serve equivalent purposes to
meditation for the emotional life. The additional element over meditation in Willard's
understanding, was an intentional relational movement toward God. Therefore, as meditation
strengthens empathic and compassion pathways in the brain due to its attention to God's
nature and character, prayer may function in the same manner, though more directly. Rather
than focusing attention on God's character, it is assumed in the relational interactions, thereby
reducing the potential strengthening of those networks as compared to meditation, but instead
strengthening others such as the positive side of GRIEF and other social systems.

Other such ascetic disciplines have like contributions to emotional formation. Fasting may
act similarly in that it is an imposed resistance to impulse. In this case, however, there is
some variation due to the fact that hunger is a sensation more related to the maintenance of
somatic homeostasis rather than an emotional one, though Panksepp points out that such
distinctions are becoming increasingly indefensible.\textsuperscript{944} Willard also pointed out that fasting is
self-revealing, demonstrating how easily one gives in to one's desires or turns to anger in

\textsuperscript{942} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 177.

\textsuperscript{943} Newberg and Waldman, 53.

\textsuperscript{944} Panksepp, \textit{Affective Neuroscience}, 350 (note 17).
irritating circumstances, that is, how strong one may allow SEEKING drives to get before acting on them or how sensitive the RAGE system may be to stimuli. Frugality and chastity may serve equivalent functions, all directed toward resisting of emotional impulse and revelation of one's susceptibility to them. These more ascetic disciplines are generally given to decreasing the influence of short-term, passing emotions on behaviour, thereby strengthening one's capacity for reflection and response to longer-term emotions and complex potentials.

Other, more active disciplines have their own, specific effects on the emotions. Study, the gathering and analysis of knowledge, may have less impact on the emotions than one might expect, due to the fact that thought is not a direct input to decision-making processes, but rather a support to the emotions. Further, knowledge and reasoning is often applied to justify actions after they have been taken rather than to generate them, as noted above. Still, the practice of study may strengthen neural pathways for thought, which may result in more probable and prolonged use of thought, in order to generate a wider range of potentials out of which to generate emotions for decision-making processes, though this is merely speculation.

Worship and celebration, being quite similar in character, are likely to have congruent effects on the emotions. In both circumstances, there is intentional effort to stimulate positive emotions of happiness and gratitude, strengthening the neural systems that generate them and thereby making them more likely responses to stimuli. Because such practices often involve

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945 Willard, Disciplines. 166.
946 Willard describes worship as praise of God directly and celebration as praise and thanksgiving for God's actions, though in practice they are quite similar. See Willard, Disciplines, 177-9.
music, they are likely also activating the PLAY system of the brain, strengthening those specific pathways, evoking feelings of joy and strengthening relational bonds with God and with those participating together. Such activities are also ritualistic after a fashion, involving repeated refrains, often musical, and practised at regular intervals. Rituals, according to d'Aquili and Newberg, strengthen social bonds between participants and reduce aggression among them, likely heightening CARE and reducing RAGE and GRIEF potentials within the group.

Confession seems a discipline largely aimed at CARE and GRIEF systems. For the latter, it opens the possibility for social isolation through guilt to be relieved by the offering up of the source of guilt for acceptance. Acceptance by another person may reduce GRIEF and strengthen relational bonds and a general sense of belonging to the social group. It also offers the opportunity to be nurtured by a caring other, which is integral to the CARE system, strengthening its neural pathways and therefore making both the giving and receiving of CARE to be more probable experiences and behaviours in the future.

Many of these more active disciplines are connected to social dynamics and seem specifically intended to strengthen social bonds, which then have positive effects on emotional systems. This makes sense, given that Brown and Strawn aver that neural change

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948 D'Aquili and Newberg, 90-1.

949 Willard understood confession from a low liturgical and typically evangelical perspective. It is an informal but serious divulging of sinful or secret acts to one or more others that had no prescribed format or structure. He made no mention of corporate confession or any formal proclamations of absolution.
most strongly occurs through relationships and the change of inter-relational patterns. \(^{950}\) Happiness, joy, and a sense of belonging are all related to neural systems that are socially-related (GRIEF, PLAY, CARE), so it is natural that relational disciplines would be so crucial to the formation of positive emotions. Willard called his most hoped-for state of spiritual formation the “community of prayerful love”, \(^{951}\) perhaps because only within community and through disciplines practised in community could one experience positive emotions in their fullness, and only through such community could one's emotions change to reach God's ideal for them. Human beings are neurally wired to be social and, ideally, loving creations, worshipping, celebrating, playing, caring, and generally living together, and active disciplines function to enhance emotions and habits related to these natural human dynamics.

No discipline undertaken, whether classical or personally devised, can help but affect emotions because anything experienced can act as a stimulus. These intentionally imposed practices, then, will shape neural patterns of affective stimulus and response in particular directions, making the positive emotional systems for which Willard sought elevation to be more readily activated, revealing the negative emotions that may have been to that point unnoticed and thereby providing opportunity to create new stimulus-response patterns, and diminishing behavioural responsiveness to short-term and impulsive emotions such that deeper and more complex emotions may carry greater weight. Willard defined disciplines as activities undertaken in order to enable one to behave automatically in ways that might not be

\(^{950}\) Brown and Strawn, 91, 100.

\(^{951}\) Willard, Conspiracy, 215.
possible prior to such activities, but any action, as shown, is largely a direct result of habituation or emotionally-driven choice. Therefore, many choices cannot occur apart from emotion. Therefore, disciplines shape actions through shaping habit and through shaping emotion such that one not only acts as Jesus did, but also experiences his or her emotional life as if Jesus were living it. With the right emotions, right actions will inevitably follow.

This examination of the affective aspect of Willard's theological anthropology demonstrates that Willard's understanding has matched much of the neuroscientific research that has arisen in recent years, though some adjustments help his framework better reflect human functioning as currently understood. Not being a scientist or psychologist, it is reasonable that his categorization of emotions not be robust, so Panksepp's schema better helps to describe affectivity at a foundational level. While he sought to describe the relationship between emotion, will, and thought carefully, some change was warranted, particularly to reflect the role that emotion plays in decision-making and the manner in which thoughts depend on emotion for their influence on volition. Finally, the neuropsychological research provides a framework for Willard's plan for emotion and give further detail to it in order to better describe the way that emotions could achieve their described telos and provide additional detail regarding how the methods he already suggested transform them. This research provides additional clarity and depth of understanding to Willard's already meaningful framework and prescription for spiritual development and the Christian life within the evangelical tradition.

3 A Recapitulation of Willard's Spirituality

Willard's theology and spirituality were largely formed as correctives to what he understood to be the prevailing spirituality of American evangelicalism in his day. He believed that evangelicalism had come to act as if conversion were the only spiritual act of Christianity. Against this, Willard asserted that true Christianity required a living and active spirituality, one that did not end with conversion or justification, but required more of the believer.\(^{953}\) Jesus' dying words, “It is finished,” meant not that nothing further was necessary, but rather that Jesus' ultimate act had reached completion and the way was now open for his followers to take up their own proverbial crosses and follow him. That requires a change in lifestyle and way of being in the world that conversion alone cannot complete. Rather, a process of becoming something different is necessary,\(^{954}\) a process that occurs over time, affecting every aspect of the human person. While evangelicalism, according to Willard, has tended to focus on the power of the will and choosing to do what is righteous or to choose God at every moment, Willard saw these philosophies as untenable. The will, while crucial to this renewed and spiritual life, is not enough to bring about the changes necessary to do what is righteous and live like Christ.\(^{955}\) Each person's behaviour is determined not merely by the individual moment's action of the will, but by the influence of multiple aspects of the human person, including thoughts, emotions, bodily state, condition of the integrative soul, and social connections and interactions.\(^{956}\)


\(^{954}\)Ibid., 40.

\(^{955}\)Gangel, 158.

Affective neuropsychology has had much to say about this spirituality of the whole person. The will, in Willard's eye, sets the overall course and plan for one's life and therefore Christian spirituality, but the will is not merely influenced by emotion, but entirely dependent upon it. Willard pointed to a vision of the value of any developmental process being the first requirement of that process, including spiritual growth, which is inherent to an authentic Christian life. Nobody endeavours to become better at throwing a baseball, for example, without valuing some aspect of the goal. Value, however, is grounded largely in emotion, making positive emotion toward the object of one's vision required. If one feels indifferent or avoidant of the goal of sanctification, one will take no action to move toward it, and, similarly, if the positive emotion associated with the vision is mild in comparison to emotions related to alternative visions, then any intention toward fulfilling the one vision will be set aside in favour of the others. One must have positive emotions connected to the vision of the Christian life.

Additionally, Willard accused the people of American culture of being ruled by their feelings, largely including emotions, rather than by their wills, but science suggests that people have no such alternative. One's capacity to choose is grounded on one's emotions. Willard argued that people must change their emotions, which is true, but he also argued that they must act in defiance of them. Further, he stated that wise people will not allow themselves to feel too strongly. Such a prescription is not ultimately possible and potentially not wise, even if it were possible. One can only choose from among possibilities bearing emotional salience.

957 Black, 118.
958 Willard, Renovation, 83.
959 Ibid., 126.
Without emotion, the will has nothing upon which to act. More, the reduction of emotion potentially leads not to clear thinking, but to thinking without choice or conclusion or choice without basis.\textsuperscript{960} One must not feel less, but feel strongly about the right matters in holy ways.

Feelings about right matters lead directly into the issue of morality, which played a significant role in Willard's thought, particularly in his later works.\textsuperscript{961} To have feelings about right matters meant to have, in part, right feelings about moral issues. He was greatly concerned about the decreasing importance of moral truth in academia and in the overall culture, seeing moral ideas as being relegated to cultural opinion rather than objective reality.\textsuperscript{962} A spiritual life, for Willard, was not described only by a moral life, but could not be described without it. Morality is integral to spirituality. For morality to be developed, however, one's character needed to change.\textsuperscript{963} One could not be moral any more than one could be spiritual through mere act of will. One had to undergo a process by which one increasingly understood moral truth but then also became trained to choose moral acts automatically. The body needed to respond to circumstances without the input of mind or will, that is, unconsciously, in morally upright ways. While this could be understood as

\textsuperscript{960} Damasio, \textit{Descartes' Error}, 53-4.

\textsuperscript{961} Morality begins his major work, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy}, (see Willard, \textit{Conspiracy}, 1-5), but it does not focus on it directly, instead providing an explication of Christian life with the assumption that it is the moral life. His last solo writing, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, on the other hand, is devoted to describing the declining acceptance of moral truths as being binding and objective fact (see Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 81), and his final writing in conjunction with Gary Black, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy Continued}, is a treatise on the need for spiritual leaders to understand morality as objective and ground themselves and others in moral lives and thinking. (see Dallas Willard and Gary Black, Jr., \textit{The Divine Conspiracy Continued: Fulfilling God's Kingdom on Earth} (London: William Collins, 2014), 57.) His concern for the acceptance of moral thought and acceptance seemed to grow over time.

\textsuperscript{962} Willard, \textit{Knowing Christ Today}, 71.

\textsuperscript{963} Willard, \textit{Renovation}, 190.
impinging on free will, one must recall that Willard believed that choices spring not only from the will, but also from the body. For him, the will was partially free, but bore an orientation that gave boundaries and limitations to the choices one could potentially make. The body, however, is the source of most actions without the influence of the will because the will is finite and cannot be turned to every action or possible action a person makes. This suggests that part of the human person has a soft freedom and part of the human person is deterministic, depending on the circumstances.

All of this meant to Willard that persons became trained largely in love. Morality was not, for Willard, merely a matter of rules to be followed or a code of conduct. Morality was defined by the nature of love and the seeking of what is good for others. To act in a moral manner meant to act in such a way as to intend to bring about the good of persons involved in that action. As much as love was not, to Willard, only an emotion, it could not be described apart from its emotional basis and component. In fact, all truly loving acts must integrate some kernel of emotion toward the object of that love because, as Damasio’s work demonstrates in a moral domain, no act, save those taken merely from habit, can occur without an emotional basis. To truly be moral, then, means to not only take right actions, but to have right emotions. That is not to say that one must “feel like it”, as Willard argued against, because one may not be aware of, that is, may not feel one's emotions, but in order to act morally (or resist acting immorally), there must be underlying emotions out of which one chooses to act. Love and morality rest on a foundation of emotion.

964 Willard, “Political Involvement”, 87.
965 Willard, Renovation, 127.
Throughout the Christian life and the development of moral habits and emotions, Willard also emphasized that the individual is not alone. God is active in the person, and interaction with God and God's activity in the spiritual aspects of the person are both possible and necessary. While much of Willard's work seems focused on the responsibility of the human person, a feature reflecting his Wesleyan background and thought, he did not negate the responsibility of God, a responsibility that God consistently fulfilled out of great joy and love. Willard's intention was to encourage people to change their thought and behaviour, a factor that individuals had influence over, rather than to dwell overlong on God's activity, a factor over which individuals have significantly less influence. Still, because God ultimately enacts change in the spirit\textsuperscript{966} and because God is the principal source of goodness, the vision of which forms the foundation of a transformative process, the interaction between God and the person cannot be ignored. It is so critical to the Christian life that Willard made it the focus of his first book, which describes a process of becoming the kind of person that will recognize and relate with God consistently.

This relational interaction, however, depends on an emotional bond with God. Again, no endeavour will begin without valuation of the goal of the endeavour, so relating with God will only occur when one values and thereby experiences positive emotions toward that goal, and, even more in this case, toward God.\textsuperscript{967} One must come to love God, developing a social bond with God, suggesting the correlating of experience of God to the response of the PANIC system of the brain. God becomes an attachment or object of bonding. Without experience of God, one experiences loneliness, sadness, or grief in some measure, and the

\textsuperscript{966} Willard, Disciplines, 92.

\textsuperscript{967} Willard, Renovation, 86.
bond with God results in a resistance to fear and other potential sources of PANIC/grief due to the impact of the social bond and emotions related to God.\textsuperscript{968} A Christian ought to have active relationship with God, resulting in feelings toward God and resulting from that relationship, particularly ones that result in love and moral character and behaviour.

Finally, Willard was concerned with the tools for the process of becoming moral and relationally bonded to God, tools that he generally categorized as spiritual disciplines. Disciplines in his mind were necessary activities or choices that have some different potential results. First, they may habituate one to act in loving, spiritually healthy, and otherwise positive ways. Second, they may enable one to act in the future in a manner in which one is currently unable to act.\textsuperscript{969} Like the exercise of a muscle enabling one to lift larger loads, a discipline may allow one to choose more difficult options later. While disciplines are often specific to a person's need, aimed at changing particular habits and weaknesses of character, he also listed a number of disciplines that are warranted for any Christian life, including solitude, study, prayer, and worship.

These disciplines are means of bringing about not only new habituation, but new emotions and means of working with emotions, by which one may then choose righteousness. One gains increased impassibility to negative emotion or even positive emotion that may not warrant immediate response. One also strengthens socially related emotions toward God and others, increasing the capacity to love and choose for their good. While Willard did not acknowledge the ways disciplines affect the emotions, one would largely be unable to will

\textsuperscript{968} Willard, \textit{Hearing God}, 43.

\textsuperscript{969} Willard, \textit{Disciplines}, 5, 156.
differently apart from the emotions being changed. Therefore, such disciplines must have emotional effects, causing one to develop positive affect toward God, others, and holiness overall.

While much more could and has been said regarding Willard's spirituality, this summarizes his vision of the Christian life in the broadest strokes in such a way as to reflect the importance of the emotion dynamics examined in this thesis. Most of Willard's thought remains intact, though it was necessary to enhance emotion's influence on choice and morality to reflect what is becoming increasingly understood about its neurodynamics.

4 Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

This thesis contributes to the field in three principal ways. The first is a matter of the addition of scholarly research and thought regarding Dallas Willard, his theology, and his spirituality. To date, Black and Porter’s contributions are the only major examinations of Willard’s theological thought from a broad perspective. A somewhat larger number have contributed examinations of particular aspects of his work including Ten Elshof, Preston, and

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970 As noted previously, Gary Black (The Theology of Dallas Willard) and Steve Porter (“The Willardian Corpus”) are the most relevant secondary sources for this.

971 Ibid.


Issler, and a small number have utilized his thought in their own, related research. This thesis offers both a broad examination of his thought and the cultural trends leading to it in chapters one and two and an examination of a specific aspect of that thought in chapter three, thereby expanding what is currently a relatively small body of secondary analysis.

A second contribution is to the integration of neuroscientific research to practical or pastoral theology. A number of texts have been produced that integrate neuroscientific research with other aspects of theology, particularly the examination of the nature of religious phenomena such as mystical experience and *glossalalia*; the question of dualism versus monism; and the philosophical matter of free-will in what, from a materialist and neuroscientific standpoint, may appear to be a determinist system. The amount of research integrating these fields from a more practical standpoint is much smaller. This thesis not only contributes to this smaller body of work, but also demonstrates that the integration of


975 E.g., Keith A. Kettenring, “A Conceptual Integration of Human Participation Within Sanctification Using Ford's Personal Agency Beliefs” (Ph.D. diss., Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 2006); Troy E. Wathen, “Developing Intentional Engagement in Adolescents: Volitional and Metacognitive Strategies Use in the Classroom” (Ed.D. diss., Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 2010); Tara Lea Hornbæcker, “Reenvisioning Theological Education For Ministry as Spiritual Formation” (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003); and Larry Steven McDonald, “The Relationship Between Theology and Spirituality in the Writings of Alister E. Mcgrath” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003) provide a sampling.


977 E.g., Beauregard; Moreland; Green, and Eccles.

978 E.g., Murphy and Brown, Moreland.

979 See Hogue, Jeeves and Brown, Brown and Strawn, and potentially Ashbrook and Albright. Additional work could be included in d'Aquili and Newberg and Newberg and Waldman, though these are examined from a more religious studies context, as there is no explicit theology being considered, but rather more general religious phenomena.
neurological study into a specific theological framework is possible and productively adds to the discussion. The author hopes that adding to the body of knowledge utilizing this integrative process may encourage additional work in what appears to be a potentially valuable discipline.

The third goal is accomplished in chapters five and six, wherein the two previous goals are merged to accomplish the more specific task of analyzing Willard's theological anthropology and spirituality through an affective neuropsychological lens. There, the need for an alteration to Willard's understanding of the relationship between emotion and will was particularly significant, emphasizing the dependence of volition on emotional cues on which to act. Relationships between emotion and other basic faculties were also demonstrated. Related to this was a more careful explication of the manner in which Willard's most prescribed spiritual disciplines and practices affect the emotions in order to bring about the change in character and eventual moral orientation that he sought for spiritual maturity. While such practices surely have effects on other faculties, the critical role that emotions play in character and morality makes this an especially important dynamic to consider.

Further research could be warranted in various areas. Much could be added to the research on Willard's theology and spirituality. This thesis has illuminated a few instances of conflicts in Willard's writings that may be due to changing details in his theological understanding, but without, at this time, a depiction of that change, one can only theorize as if his thought were constant or speculate as to its evolution. An examination of the manner in which Willard's theology developed over time would provide a helpful structure for understanding his thought. For example, the central theme of his thought seemed to evolve, focusing in his early writing on the need for Christians to take an active role in their spiritual lives, but it
ended in such a way as to concentrate on the need for a common moral understanding and moral boundaries, emphasizing the need for Christian leaders to establish the authority of moral law and teach it such that it would spread throughout the culture. What precipitated this change and the manner in which it developed would be beneficial to understand.

Similarly, his understanding of the various faculties of the body and immaterial aspect of the person may have developed between *The Spirit of the Disciplines* and *Renovation of the Heart*, where it is a primary topic, but one that seems to have subtle differences from that prior writing, such as the locating of the emotions in mind or body. While this particular difference was reconciled here, the need for such a reconciliation remains unknown.

Further, this research has not found any protracted examination of Willard's ethics, despite the role that it increasingly played in his thought. Morality, as already noted, is woven throughout his writing, something that he expected to be present in his readers' minds and character, at least in a sort of natal form, if not fully matured through careful thought and discipline. Yet the origins, development, and structure of that morality are absent from any research. One might wonder how his ethics compare with various alternative structures in twentieth century evangelicalism and Protestantism as a whole.

So far as multi-disciplinary integrative work is concerned, there is a significant amount of research that could be accomplished. This writing restricted its scope to the thought of Dallas Willard, but neuropsychological ideas and research could be applied to many theological domains and minds, particularly those dealing with spiritual phenomena or practical and pastoral activity. While many have written on the effects of mystical and contemplative
prayer on neural systems, and some have considered the implications of that research, this has largely been from psychological or scientific perspectives. Comparatively less is written from a theological viewpoint, attempting to integrate the scientific research into systematic or other theological disciplines. Other research on neural dynamics such as that provided here by Panksepp, Damasio, LeDoux, and others, provides a broad basis for defining human nature and function that could be used as a basis for understanding, for example, the manner in which the brain processes theological ideas and experiences, including guilt, forgiveness, divinity, and human finitude, and how those processes limit and shape humanity's role in theological enterprise and Christian living. For a more specific example, assurance of salvation holds an important role in certain streams of Protestant spirituality, but there is, for instance, no research, so far as has been found by the author, on the manner in which neural structures are correlated with certitude and uncertainty that has been utilized by theological academia to delineate the development of assurance, a lack that could be used to support such a process in growing Christians.

Specifically with regards to Willard, there are still unanswered questions regarding the manner in which his recommended spiritual disciplines affect the brain and body from an empirical standpoint. This thesis has speculated on the effects, based on affective

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981 E.g., see Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle’s Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ashbrook; Ashbrook and Albright; and Hogue.

982 Randall, 18, 20.
neuroscience, but cognitive and somatic effects are still largely unknown, especially for some of the less “mystical” disciplines such as frugality, chastity, sacrifice, and celebration. There is much research on, for example, meditation in various forms from neurological or psychological perspectives, as already noted. There does not appear to be, however, a source summarizing the research known on the neural consequences of these disciplines in a theological context. This integrative endeavour could illuminate much about how such practices affect one's faith and connection with God and others.

As the body of scientific research on the nature of the human person continually expands, the theological academy must not disregard it. Neurological and psychological research is providing detail on human functioning and development that intersects with theological positions and viewpoints on the same. This is not limited to questions of dualism and monism, but has bearings, as has been demonstrated in one, particular instance here, on multiple aspects of theology. The work being done by Newberg, Hogue, and others is a promising entry into this process of merging relevant material from neuropsychology into religious studies and theology, though more is necessary to keep up with the growing body of knowledge being formed.

While some may feel the need to resist the encroachment of foreign disciplines into theological domain, as they bring with them foreign ideas and perspectives, much can be gleaned from them. The author of Proverbs 24:32 notes upon observing a crumbling wall, “Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction.” An observational, reflective, and perhaps scientific study of the world is advocated by scripture as a means of gaining instruction and wisdom. Greater understanding of the dynamics of creation and particularly of the human person may provide increasingly wise means of dealing with sin,
bringing about justice, and nurturing relationship with God both individually and socially.

The theological academy can hardly turn down such a prospect.
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