2015

Reason turned into sense: John Smith on spiritual sensation

Michaud, Derek

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/15615

Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

REASON TURNED INTO SENSE:
JOHN SMITH ON SPIRITUAL SENSATION

by

DEREK ANTHONY MICHAUD
B.A., University of Maine, 1999
M.A., Bangor Theological Seminary, 2001
S.T.M., Boston University School of Theology, 2003

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2015
Approved by

First Reader
Ray L. Hart, Ph.D.
Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion

Second Reader
Garth W. Green, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology
McGill University

Third Reader
Douglas Hedley, Ph.D.
Reader in Hermeneutics and Metaphysics, Fellow of Clare College
Cambridge University

Fourth Reader
Boyd T. Coolman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Theology
Boston College
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like every other dissertation, this one simply could not have come about without the help, support, and inspiration of many people. I have been blessed to have the sort of advisors that allow one the freedom to explore an idea wherever it may lead. John H. Berthrong has steered me through the maze of paperwork and offered consistent good counsel as I apprenticed in the guild of academe. My first reader, Ray Hart, stepped in to the project when Garth Green had the good fortune to move to McGill University. Boyd Coolman’s expertise in the history of theology, and the systematic approaches to the spiritual senses in particular, has served as a constant example. Douglas Hedley has been as gracious and generous as our mutual heroes from seventeenth century Cambridge. Those who would speak of “Cambridge Platonism” in the past tense are sorely mistaken. I have benefited from each and all of them immensely.

When I first came to Boston University for graduate study in theology I was primarily interested in constructive and comparative theology. At Bangor Theological Seminary under the guidance of the late Oscar E. Remick, I learned the Tillichian “correlational” approach to such matters and fully expected to make my mark in that capacity for the Ph.D. While preparing for the broadly
historical comprehensive exams in the doctoral program however I happened to find a course on the “History of Christian Thought” led by Garth Green. In this course, texts I had known as disparately “philosophical,” “church historical,” or “theological” came into focus as constituting a single world of thought. In short, I was exposed to the “Christian Tradition” in the truest sense of that phrase.

Origen, Augustine, and Bonaventure especially spoke clearly of the attempt to unify the worlds of faith and reason that contemporary Protestant theology too often rejoices to see divorced. Above all I was delighted to see that they and many others in the Christian past had done so in ways that give justice to the way it feels to be a practicing Christian. It feels like we can “taste and see” the divine, and there were figures of obvious genius, fully aware of the scandal of the mere notion of “spiritual senses” saying that not only do the pious think and feel this way, they are (or can be) justified in so doing, *Fides quaerens intellectum*.

While I came to the academic study of the spiritual senses under the guidance of Garth Green during a course in the history of Christian thought at Boston University, the reason this neglected notion immediately resonated with me stems from other, earlier, influences. My fraternal grandfather, Wilbert Michaud, was an example of the sort of Franciscan spirituality that so nurtured
the spiritual senses tradition in the medieval period. My great-grand-mother, Alice McDougal, too lived a spirituality that was deeply indebted to this tradition, although for her it was simply “mere Christianity.” My maternal grandmother, Dawn Butler, was less overtly “religious” in the contemporary sense but so obviously “spiritual” that it makes perfect sense, in light of my research now, that she saw the Divine in and through the natural world. My first mentor in theology and philosophy, Oscar E. Remick, displayed this supersensible piety too, but to it he added the realization that one can – must – come to understand what one believes as well. Finally, the great beauty and the wealth of metaphor offered in the language of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the classic Anglican hymns of the Episcopal Church have helped open my eyes to see the spiritual senses in theological discourse. In fact, the piety of my tradition makes me expect the spiritual senses in any authentic theology.

I came to know the Cambridge Platonists largely by chance. While I was vaguely aware of them as a “minor” movement in early modern British philosophy and theology I did not come to appreciate them until, quite by accident, I picked up a newly published anthology of their writings at the Paulist Press stand in the publishers exhibit hall at the annual meeting of the American
Academy of Religion in 2005. I immediately gravitated toward the selections from John Smith, for in his writing I saw clearly the stamp of the spiritual senses tradition that I was then just coming to know and love. The deeply rational, tolerant, very Anglican, moderation I found in the Cambridge Platonists became something of an obsession. My interest in these seventeenth century figures only increased when I met one of the editors of Cambridge Platonist Spirituality, Charles Taliaferro when he came to speak at Boston University.

As I began to do formal research on the Cambridge Platonists I kept coming across the name of Douglas Hedley, the mentor of the other editor of my by then well-worn copy of Cambridge Platonist Spirituality, Alison Teply. In the fall of 2008 I was off to Cambridge for the first of two research trips during which I wrote a paper on Smith and Origen that I read at the AAR in Chicago in 2008 just before Barack Obama was first elected President. It was at that annual meeting that I met Dr. Hedley who agreed to be an outside reader for this project.

Many others have offered helpful guidance for my research, sometimes in the form of information, but more often in the form of encouragement. I wish to thank Ingrid Anderson, James Bryson, Sarah Coakley, Norman Faramelli, Sarah
Fredericks, Paul Gavrilyuk, Torrance Kirby, Catherine Hudak Klancer, Marla Marcum, Mark McInroy, Michelle Michaud, Robert Neville, Jessica Sargent, David Trobrisch, Wesley Wildman, the Society and Fellowship of Saint John the Evangelist. My students at Boston University, Middlesex Community College, and the University of Southern Maine have been important dialogue partners too, though they probably do not realize it. A miniature poodle named Buddy helped in his own way too, though he definitely does not realize it.

I was fortunate to earn two short-term travel grants from the Humanities Foundation as well as a grant from the Office of the Dean of the School of Theology at Boston University to fund research trips to Cambridge University in 2008 and 2009. Without this support my project would simply not have been possible.

I gratefully acknowledge the permission of Dr. John Saveson to cite from, and make a research copy of, his unpublished “Some Aspects of the Thought and Style of John Smith the Cambridge Platonist,” (PhD thesis, Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge University, 1956).

Portions of chapter four were presented at the “Eastern Orthodoxy and the Spiritual Senses,” joint session of the Mysticism and Eastern Orthodox

Much of chapter seven was originally presented as “John Smith’s Lasting Influence: The Transatlantic Reception of a ‘Living Library’,” at the Revisioning Cambridge Platonism: Workshop 3: Reception and Influence, symposium held at Clare College, Cambridge University, 1 June 2013. Many thanks to David Leech, Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton for their invitation, organization and gracious hosting for this event.

The assistance of the past librarian of Queens’ College, Cambridge, Karen Begg, was instrumental for my work with the books left to the College by John Smith in 2008 and 2009. More recently the current librarian Dr Tim Eggington has been very encouraging and his postings of materials related to Smith online have been very helpful for research on the American side of the Atlantic. Many thanks to the staff of the Manuscript Reading Room at the University Library at
Cambridge University too. Their professionalism made what could have been tedious work a joy.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Terry and Lori Michaud. Dad and Mom, you’re the reason why I do what I love.

*Feast of All Saints 2014*
ABSTRACT

John Smith (1618-1652), the 17th century Cambridge Platonist, employed the traditional language of the spiritual senses of the soul to develop an early modern theological aesthetic central to his religious epistemology and thus to his philosophy of religion and systematic theology. Smith’s place in this tradition has been under-appreciated by scholars working on the Cambridge Platonists and the spiritual senses. However, as a Christian Platonist, Smith advocated intellectual intuition of Divine Goodness as the key to theological knowledge and spiritual practice. Furthermore, Smith’s theory of prophecy rests on the reception of sensible images in the imagination. In order to demonstrate this the dissertation first presents an interpretive summary of the spiritual senses tradition and proposes a functional typology that registers three uses of non-corporeal perception throughout the history of Christian theology: (1) accounts
of the origin and methods of theological knowledge, (2) descriptions of spirituality, and (3) attempts to systematically present or defend Christian theology. Additionally, Smith’s historical and intellectual context in early seventeenth century England is discussed with particular attention to how his education prepared him to contribute to the mystical tradition of the spiritual senses of the soul. Through a close reading of his extant writings it is shown that Smith’s theories of theological knowledge, method, and prophecy rest on his development of the spiritual senses tradition, combining intellectual intuition and imaginative perception. Likewise, the role of spiritual aesthetics in Smith’s prescriptive account of Christian piety is presented. Here the spiritual senses are both means and reward in the spiritual life through the process of deification (theosis). Moreover, it is shown how Smith’s theology forms a coherent system with intellectual intuition informing natural theology and revelation being supplemented by spiritual perception via the imagination. The central uniting feature therefore is the spiritual perception of theological truth. Finally, the dissertation closes with a summary of Smith’s various uses of the spiritual senses and proposes future research on his influence upon later figures including
Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and suggests future constructive work inspired by Smith’s combination of reason and experience in religion.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................ iv
Abstract ................................................................................................................... xi
Chapter 1: Introduction ......................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Statement of the Problem ............................................................................ 1
  1.2 Structure of the Dissertation ..................................................................... 24
Part I ....................................................................................................................... 26
Chapter 2: The Spiritual Senses Tradition ........................................................ 26
  2.1 The ‘Spiritual Senses’: The Contours of a Paradox ................................ 27
  2.2 Diversity in Language, Use and Meaning .............................................. 39
  2.3 The Spiritual Senses Tradition .................................................................. 56
  2.4 Modern Theological Interpretations of the Spiritual Senses .............. 61
  2.5 Non-theological Approaches .................................................................. 80
  2.6 Toward a Functional Approach to the Spiritual Senses Tradition ...... 85
  2.7 The Functional Typology of the Spiritual Senses Tradition .............. 94
  2.8 Conclusion ............................................................................................. 102
Chapter 3: Smith in Context ............................................................................. 104
  3.1 Why Smith? ............................................................................................. 104
  3.2 Into New Worlds ...................................................................................... 108
  3.2.1 Geographical Discovery ....................................................................... 111
  3.2.2 Scientific Discovery ............................................................................ 115
  3.3 Between the Times: .................................................................................. 125
Scholastic and Modern Learning in Smith’s Cambridge........................... 125
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Degrees of Prophecy</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Prophecy Proper</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4 Mosaic Prophecy</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5 Hagiographi and the Bath Kol</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The “True Way,” Prophecy and the Spiritual Senses</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Spiritual Sense and Spirituality</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Purification and Theological Understanding</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Preparation for Prophecy</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Spirituality and Exegesis</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 The “True Way” as a Spiritual Path</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 The Practice of the Christian Religion</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Smith’s Practical Christianity</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.1 Justification</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.2 Sanctification</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.3 Eschatology</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 The Spiritual Senses and Making Sense of Spirituality</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Sense, System, and Apologetics</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Smith’s Natural Theology</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 Superstition</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2 Atheism</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2.1 Epicureanism</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2.2 The Spiritual Effects of Atheism</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2.3 Materialist Naturalism</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3 The Immortal Soul</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.3.1 Arguments against the Epicureans .................................................. 332
6.1.3.2 Platonic Arguments ........................................................................... 344
6.1.3.3 Other Difficulties ................................................................................ 350
6.1.4 The Existence and Nature of God ....................................................... 355
6.1.4.1 The Argument from Self-Reflection ................................................. 356
6.1.4.2 The Argument from Morality ........................................................... 361
6.2 The Unity of Natural & Revealed Theology............................................. 363

Chapter 7: Conclusion ....................................................................................... 366
7.1 Smith’s ‘Spiritual Senses’ ........................................................................ 366
7.1.1 Source & Method ................................................................................... 368
7.1.2 Spirituality .............................................................................................. 370
7.1.3 System ..................................................................................................... 371
7.2 The Legacy of a Living Library .............................................................. 373
7.2.1 Immediate Reception ............................................................................ 374
7.2.2 Eighteenth Century Reception ............................................................ 382
7.2.3 Nineteenth Century Reception ............................................................ 396
7.2.4 Twentieth Century Reception & Beyond ........................................... 400
7.3 Directions for the Future ......................................................................... 407

Appendix ............................................................................................................. 412

The Contents of the Complete Editions of the Select Discourses .......... 412

Works Cited ........................................................................................................ 416
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When Reason once is raised by the mighty force of the Divine Spirit into a converse with God, it is turn’d into Sense: That which before was onely Faith well built upon sure Principles, (for such our Science may be) now becomes Vision.¹

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This dissertation rectifies a serious gap in the current understanding of the theology of the Cambridge Platonist John Smith (1618-52).² For Smith, theological knowledge was primarily the product of personal experience. Studies of the Cambridge Platonists in general and Smith in particular all agree that he used language derived from the physical senses to discuss this experience.³ For example, John Tulloch’s classic treatment of Rational Theology and Christian

---

² For biography see chapter three below.

Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century (1874), which established the basic understanding of the “Cambridge Platonists” for scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notes that for Smith the origin “of divine truth is a vital sense or faculty within us which lays hold of its appropriate objects.” Likewise, the most recent anthology of selections from the Cambridge Platonists assembled by Charles Taliaferro and Alison J. Teply for the Classics of Western Spirituality Series (2004) remarks that for Smith “the ‘inward sweetness and deliciousness’ in divine truth cannot be relished” without the purification of the soul. However, neither Tulloch nor Taliaferro and Teply make any reference to the spiritual senses tradition. In this, they are not alone, as scholars have been nearly silent on the fact that in using the language of sensation to describe theological understanding, Smith was following a centuries old Christian tradition. Scholars have typically been content to note Smith’s appeals to

---

4 John Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874; Reprint, Elibron Classics, 2005), 2: 141. Tulloch’s authority has been dominate in the study of the Cambridge Platonists until fairly recently, though he can still be profitably read.

5 Taliaferro and Teply, Cambridge Platonist Spirituality, 30.

6 Commentators typically note that Smith’s sources included Plotinus and Alexandrian Christian theologians in addition to other ancient philosophers such as Cicero, Epicurus, Lucretius, Aristotle, and of course Plato, but they tend to ignore the way he follows a longer Christian Platonist tradition that continued through the early modern period to today. Brad
spiritual sensation as an element in his theological method and have not
explained the implications of the concept for his theology more generally.7

More recently, this trend has begun to change as scholars of the spiritual
senses have worked collaboratively on their theme as developed by a wide
variety of authors. With the publication of The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in
Western Christianity in 2012, the place of Smith within this tradition has finally
been explicitly acknowledged alongside Origen, Bonaventure, and Balthasar.8

However, this acknowledgment has been limited to an exploration, already

---

Walton (Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation and Heart Religion [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002]) mentions Smith as continuing a tradition of “heart language” within Puritan theology (and important antecedents in the history of Christian thought including Augustine and St. Bernard) with similarities to the spiritual senses tradition but with more emphasis on the will than the intellect and thus more emphasis on personal piety than theological knowledge. Still, his is the only study I am aware of that connects Smith to the medieval spiritual senses tradition.

7 The literature on John Smith (see n. 3 p. 1 above) typically discusses his use of sensible metaphors for theological knowledge but does not ascribe to him a formal “doctrine of spiritual sense” in keeping with a long Christian tradition (patristic through medieval and early modern) nor does it explicate this concept in its full significance for Smith’s theology. This silence in the literature is puzzling, especially since all agree that Smith employs this language. It is likely that the reason for this has to do with the backgrounds and training of scholars working on the Cambridge Platonists, who tend to belong to the analytic school of philosophy and/or explicitly Protestant theology. Since much twentieth century work on the spiritual senses has been done by continental Roman Catholics, it may be that those with eyes to see this traditional theme in Smith simply have not been looking until very recently.

common in specialized studies of John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, of his influence upon these better known eighteenth century figures.\(^9\)

In this regard, philosopher William J. Wainwright has, rightly, made much of the role of intellectual intuition in the theological method of Smith, but at the expense of an appreciation for the place the spiritual senses occupy in his theology more generally.\(^{10}\) While it is true that Smith speaks metaphorically of intellection as having a sensible character in his first *Discourse* (typically, "intellectual touch" or "vision"), he also appeals to "spiritual senses" on a closer analogy with the physical senses in the imagination.\(^{11}\)

---


\(^{10}\) Wainwright suggests that the intellectual intuition that Smith speaks of constitutes his understanding of “spiritual sense” but ignores the role of the imagination in prophecy as well as the consistent appeal to multiply sensory modalities in Smith’s descriptions of the spiritual life.

\(^{11}\) In this way, Smith offers an important counter-point for those accounts of spiritual sense that would stress either the metaphorical or the analogical use of the language of physical sense. While Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar have argued for one or the other, Smith employs both, albeit with a preference for the affect laden intellect over a physical and spiritual sensorium. See Karl Rahner, "The Spiritual Senses According to Origen," in *Theological Investigations*, 16 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 81-103, and "The Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in the Middle Ages," in *Theological Investigations*, 16 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 104-134, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, 1; *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982). This helps to account for the relative paucity of references in
R. J. Scott too has recently mentioned, in passing, that Smith had “confidence” in “the spiritual senses” in the context of a discussion of his theory of prophecy, but his study ignores the role of the spiritual senses in other aspects of Smith’s theology, above all methodology and the process of appropriating knowledge of the divine, or what amounts to the same thing for Smith, living the Christian life.12

Thus, Smith’s theory of spiritual sensation has yet to be adequately understood in relation to the history and development of the Christian doctrine of the spiritual senses of the soul (an intellectual faculty or faculties for the sensation of non-physical, spiritual reality), or in its specific form and function within his theology.13 This dissertation therefore argues that the spiritual senses

---


13 “Doctrine” is an important, but controverted, word in the context of this dissertation. Many (if not most) theologians have understood the “spiritual senses” to refer to a single doctrine, representing a single faculty or set of faculties. As will become clear below, I do not subscribe to this monistic view. There is no single “doctrine of the spiritual senses” in the Christian tradition (for my argument to this effect see chapter two). More importantly, neither is there a single faculty intended by this general term when applied to authors such as Smith. He does not have a
represents a complex and sophisticated tradition in Christian thought that played a central role in the theology of John Smith.

Furthermore, like the loosely affiliated “school” to which he belongs, Smith is well known today for embracing tolerant liberal views on religion during the period of the English Civil War (1642-52) as well as advocating a strong notion of the ultimate harmony of reason and religion.14 Indeed, it is this single doctrine of the spiritual senses in the strict meaning of that phrase. Rather, he employs several different varieties of “spiritual sense” in order to address a series of theological problems (see chapters four, five, and six). In this, I read Smith as recapitulating the tradition (see chapter two). Those looking for insight into what the “spiritual senses” really are (e.g., are they sensible, imaginative, or intellective? Are they one or many? Single or separate physical and spiritual sensoria? Etc.) will not find their answer with Smith or a historical investigation of Christian uses of spiritual perception in general. Such work remains to be done in a constructive mode.

14 Members of the group often argued against such notable figures as Gassendi, Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes on the grounds that their “materialism” leads to atheism (either in the sense that there is no God distinct from the world or that there is nothing for such a God to do) and is therefore wrong and immoral (God and the Good being practically indistinguishable). The Cambridge Platonists (especially More and Cudworth) tried to maintain an atomistic physics and a spirit/matter dualism that they thought was the doctrine of the ancient “theologians” such as Moses and Plato (Sarah Hutton, “Cambridge Platonists,” in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ed. Edward N. Zalta, last updated Nov 11, 2013, accessed 18 May 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2001/entries/cambridge-platonists/). The work of Cudworth illustrates nicely the group’s contention that the universe is suffused with Reason and that not even the Divine Will (Puritans) or the will of the monarch (Hobbes) can “overpower” Reason. Indeed, God acts reasonably for the Cambridge Platonists rather than according to an arbitrary will. In this sense, even God is constrained by Reason, but since the Divine Logos is God this constraint is self-imposed and amounts to a priority of the Divine Nature over the Divine Will (contra Scotus, etc.).
harmony that fuels their tolerance.\textsuperscript{15} Although the Cambridge Platonists (principally, B. Whichcote 1609-83, P. Sterry 1613-72, H. More 1614-87, R. Cudworth 1617-88, John Smith, and N. Culverwell 1618?-51)\textsuperscript{16} have long been recognized as vaguely “mystical” it has gone largely unnoticed that an important source for the mystical character of their theology was the ancient Christian doctrine of the spiritual senses.\textsuperscript{17} The situation is especially noteworthy in the


\textsuperscript{16} There is little consensus on which figures should be called “Cambridge Platonists.” Generally, lists of members of the group include all those with identifiable connections to Whichcote. Some scholars object to including such Oxford thinkers as Norris or independent scholars like Anthony Ashley Cooper the third earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) in the group despite the influence of earlier Cambridge men on their thought. Until recently, women such as Anne Conway (1630-79) and Damaris (Cudworth) Masham (1658-1708) were not considered “Cambridge Platonists” in any meaningful sense. While the term usually refers to figures sharing a basically Neoplatonic worldview (though never exclusively so) during the 17th to early 18th centuries some use the descriptor for later thinkers. For the purposes of this project, the descriptor matters less than the fact that figures associated with the name in the seventeenth-century share an affinity for spiritual sensibility with Smith. Those figures such as Whichcote, Cudworth, Sterry, More, Culverwell, and Worthington are particularly important for this dissertation in that they provide additional context and exposition for concepts Smith treats only briefly.

\textsuperscript{17} John C. English (“John Wesley’s Indebtedness to John Norris,” \textit{Church History} 60, no. 1 [1991]: 55-69) makes explicit reference to a “Cambridge Platonist” (John Norris) holding a sophisticated and traditional doctrine of the spiritual senses. On this theme in Norris see Eugene
case of Smith since his reliance on this traditional account of theological knowledge is more prominent and developed than other members of the group. Thus, the failure of the scholarly literature to provide a detailed assessment of Smith’s spiritual senses reflects a more general failure in the academic understanding of theological aesthetics.

The most general definition of the “spiritual senses” in the Western Christian context comes from Coolman who says that the doctrine, in all of its manifestations, “posits the existence of certain capacities or operations within the

Derek Taylor, “Samuel Richardson’s ‘Clarissa’ (1747-1748) and ‘the Famous Mr. Norris, of Bemerton’” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2000), ch. 1. George Andrew Panichas (The Greek Spirit and the Mysticism of Henry More [Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School, 1956]) comes close to making such a claim for Henry More but does not do so explicitly. Most scholars who have been sensitive to the mystical, experiential aspects of the Cambridge Platonists’ thought have written about aspects of the spiritual senses but have not acknowledged the specific tradition being drawn on. Only D. W. Dockrill (“The Fathers and the Theology of the Cambridge Platonists,” Studia Patristica 17 [1982]: 427-33), Aharon Lichtenstein (Henry More: The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962]) and C. A. Patrides (The Cambridge Platonists) along with Panichas take seriously the fact that the Cambridge Platonists were reviving a mode of theology that dates back to the Greek Fathers but which did not end with them. However, even they do not make note of the way in which Western Christian speculation throughout the medieval period developed these themes in ways that are significant for the Cambridge Platonists. Walton (Jonathan Edwards) has made a case for the role of spiritual sensation in the theology of Jonathan Edwards as an expression of earlier Puritan thinking about the “religion of the heart,” but this affective component is partial and misleading with respect to Smith. Smith’s relationship to his Puritan contemporaries is therefore an important element in the task of contextualizing his reception of the ancient doctrine of the spiritual senses. Smith’s development of this concept more closely resembles the work of Catholic medieval theologians in its emphasis on knowledge mediated via spiritual apprehension. Spiritual sensation plays an important role in personal piety and the religious life for Smith, as it does for other Puritans, but unlike them Smith thinks that this faculty also provides theoretical knowledge where other Puritans typically reserve that to Scripture.
spiritual dimension of the person for the perception (in the widest sense of the
term) of divine realities . . . which is in some way analogous to that of the
physical senses.”18 Adherents affirm a continuum of knowledge or an
“intellectual system” treating the physical world through physical sensation
(sensible or natural theology), the mental or spiritual world through spiritual or
inner sense (symbolic theology), and God through speculative or mystical
theology.19 In its most basic formulation the doctrine affirms the existence of a
faculty or faculties of perception that are directed toward non-physical reality
and which reveal to the mind something of its character (i.e., not just that it is but
something of what it is too).

The most widely recognized treatments of the Christian doctrine of the
spiritual senses took place in patristic and medieval theology from the third
through approximately the 15th centuries CE.20 It is usually assumed that the

18 Boyd Taylor Coolman, Knowing God by Experience: The Spiritual Senses in the Theology of

19 On the specifically Cambridge Platonist use of “intellectual system” see Ralph
Cudworth’s The True Intellectual System of the Universe.

20 M. Canévet, "Sens spirituel,” in Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et
histoire, ed. Marcel Viller (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), 14: 599-617; Aimé Solignac, "Oculus," in Viller,
According to Origen," and "The Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in the Middle Ages."
doctrine ceased to be a serious intellectual principle around the time of the 16th-century Reformations. At that time, Christian theology in the West began to be based more firmly on authority than reason, even when the two were not seen as necessarily in conflict with each other. Subsequently, this form of theological aesthetics remained significant for “spirituality” and poetry but the academic, systematic, and philosophically rigorous development of the concept largely passed away until the 20th century; or so the standard scholarly accounts would have it.

21 In 1533, Ignatius of Loyola presented what has been called the final stage in the development of the doctrine in his *Spiritual Exercises* (Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, 367, 373-80).

22 The work of any popular writer in “spirituality” from the late medieval period to today confirms this observation. The writings of many figures make allusions to “spiritual sense” throughout the modern period but these are usually not developed as philosophical doctrines but are taken over with a kind of pious naïveté from Scripture to describe experience. Furthermore, other modern uses of “spiritual sensation” tend to be directed toward practical theology and personal piety. Spiritual sensation is often used to “prove” conversion or right relationship with God but more rarely informs an account of speculative, theoretical, knowledge as well, as is the case in adherents of what is here identified as the spiritual senses tradition. Christian poetry and hymnody continues to use imagery adapted from the senses regularly but usually in an uncritical naïve way. On this point see Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, eds. *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). On the (relative) lack of development in the doctrine after the Reformation period, see Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, 365-80; Olphe-Galliard “Les sens spirituels”; A. Poullain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, trans. Daniel Considine, 6th ed. (London, 1910); Bernard McGinn, ”The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism,” *Spiritus* 1 (2001): 156-71; Karl Rahner, ”The Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in the Middle Ages”; and Sarah Coakley, ”The Resurrection and the ‘Spiritual Senses’: On Wittgenstein, Epistemology, and the Risen Christ,” in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Gender and Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 130-152. The argument of this dissertation is not that Smith is unique in his move to reconstruct the doctrine of the spiritual senses with intellectual rigor during the early modern period. Rather, the argument is that he is notable for
Nonetheless, the fact that this account has been overstated can be shown, in part, by analyzing the use of the doctrine in the early modern period by John Smith, as supplemented by the work of other Cambridge Platonists. Review of the texts this group has left to us, as well as those deeply influenced by them, such as John Wesley (1703-91) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), reveals that it is precisely their insistence on “spiritual apprehension” that enables them to maintain a traditional theology even while accepting some of the findings of modern science and philosophy. The findings of the physical sciences are the result of the rational interpretation of the data of physical sensation while the findings of theology are the result of the rational interpretation (or illumination) of the data of spiritual sensation. The two are not ultimately in conflict for having done so and that both scholars of Cambridge Platonism and the spiritual senses have overlooked this.

23 The phrase “spiritual apprehension” is Coolman’s (Knowing God by Experience). I use the terms “modern” and “contemporary” as general descriptors to designate roughly the periods between the 15th century and the First World War (modern) and between 1918 and today (contemporary). I use the word “science” in both its classic meaning as a body of knowledge and also on occasion to describe (anachronistically) the natural philosophy of Smith’s period.

24 In fact, a review of the works of the Cambridge Platonists reveals two broad categories of “spiritual apprehension.” First, there is a group of texts, especially those by Cudworth and More, that stress the singular nature of the mind’s perception of divine realities through the faculty of intelligence or understanding. For these texts, the human mind or soul is intuitively aware of God through an apprehension of the intellect often discussed on analogy with vision. This apprehension takes the form of a kind of single spiritual sense in ways reminiscent of
Smith not because they are separate spheres with their own “truths” (as Gassendi and Locke were to argue) but because the truth of each is known by means of a different (sensory) modality. Theology is not a matter of simple textual, ecclesiastical, or political authority for Smith and the Cambridge Platonists either. Confirmation of religious views comes through intellectual encounter with God guaranteed by means of public morality. The doctrine of the spiritual senses served as an important, though understudied, element in Smith’s rational philosophy and theology by providing an account of the means by which purely spiritual realities come to be known.

William of Auxerre’s treatment of the spiritual senses as formally one though materially multiple (Coolman, Knowing God by Experience, 33-45). Particularly interesting are two faculties posited by More; the Boniform, which senses the Good, and Divine Sagacity, which perceives the truth when it “sees” it (Taliaferro and Teply, Cambridge Platonist Spirituality, 18-9; Sarah Hutton, “Cambridge Platonists”). Second, there is a group of texts that speak of multiple spiritual sensations on analogy with (at least some of) the five physical senses (but always more than a single sensory modality). This tendency, while found in most of the Cambridge authors to some degree, is especially clear in the work of Smith and represents the tendency within the school to associate spiritual understanding with multiple modes of perception and intellection similar to the classic expressions of the five spiritual senses as found in Origen and others.

Smith does not discuss his views on theological aesthetics in extensive
detail in a single location within a text. Not even Smith’s discourse “Of the True
Way or Method of attaining to Divine Knowledge” presents a full account of his
doctrine of spiritual sensation. Since the spiritual senses perform a
methodological and argumentative function within his work, Smith is more
likely simply to use the concept than to explain it at great length.

Two major approaches have been taken in interpreting Smith, and the
Cambridge Platonists as a group; (1) theological and (2) philosophical/scientific.
Understanding the Cambridge Platonists in terms of the history of English
religion, especially the rise of liberalism and toleration, enjoyed a strong

---

26 This is not at all unusual. For example, Origen’s important discussions of the topic
range over more than 150 passages scattered throughout his extant works (Hans Urs von
Balthasar, Origen Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings, translated by Robert J. Daly
[Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001], 389-92). A. N. Williams’ study of the intellect (and the spiritual
senses for some authors) in the patristic period likewise makes references to many passages
scattered throughout the work of individual authors (and groups of authors) in order to elicit the
“broad patterns” of thought (The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology [Cambridge
University Press, 2007], 20). Coolman’s study of the spiritual senses in William of Auxerre
similarly draws the structure of the doctrine out of separate passages and often treats these out of
sequential order to make the concepts involved clear (Knowing God by Experience). Both Williams
and Coolman however avoid an important problem facing Balthasar’s interpretation of Origen by
relating their selected passages to their historical chronology. In this way, they register
development in the thinking of their subjects. Balthasar in contrast tends to read topically
without regard to the effects of time on Origen’s theology.
following among scholars of “two or three generations ago”. Scholars of this orientation succeeded in bringing to contemporary eyes Smith and his colleagues’ positive attitude toward the role of reason in matters of faith as well as religious tolerance but at the expense of the recognition of their theologies as continuations of a long tradition within Christian thinking. By framing the Cambridge Platonists in their immediate religious and political context rather than the longer history of Christian theology, this approach missed the importance of the role of spiritual sensation in their thought. Furthermore, it failed to notice the way in which Smith especially reconstructed the doctrine.

In contrast, the literature on Smith has focused on too narrow a context for the idea of spiritual sensation both historically and within Smith’s texts. Tulloch, for example, notes that Smith’s spiritual sensation is the heart of his theological

---

27 A. Rupert Hall, *Henry More and the Scientific Revolution* Cambridge Science Biographic Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59. In many ways, this dissertation has been inspired by the reappraisal of the Cambridge Platonists as “spiritual” authors marked by the publishing of Taliaferro and Teply’s volume in the Classics of Western Spirituality series from Paulist Press.

28 Typical accounts of the Cambridge Platonists as religious figures spend little time positioning the group within the history of Christian mystical speculation but instead situate them within the more narrow (and for that reason deceptive) context of the 17th century religion and politics of Brittan. See for example, Tulloch, *Rational Theology*, vol. 2, and Geoffrey Philip Henry Pawson, *The Cambridge Platonists and Their Place in Religious Thought* (New York: B. Franklin Reprints, 1974).
thought but then goes on to discuss the concept in terms of his methodology only, and even there in only the most summary, cursory way.29 Pawson too remarks that Smith attempted to revive the theology of St. John, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen without detailing how.30 The scholarship on Smith thus lacks the depth of treatment and historical breadth of contextualization necessary to give an accurate account of his thought. By allowing Smith to speak within the context of the history of theology, and by listening to his complete theological system, the role of spiritual sensation in his thought will become clear.

More recently, there has been a significant push to understand the Cambridge Platonists in terms of their involvement with early modern science and philosophy. This approach makes much of their correspondence with Descartes, their relationships with the Royal Society, materialism, “atheism,” the occult, and both (pseudo)empiricism (e.g., Boyle) and rationalism (e.g., Spinoza,

29 Tulloch, Rational Theology, 2: 140f. All scholars repeat this pattern when treating Smith’s thought, though most do not give spiritual sensation as much (albeit, unsupported) credit as Tulloch. There is a tendency in the literature, perhaps following the lead of Tulloch, to think that the mere fact that Smith is a “Platonist” explains all that is necessary to know about his theological epistemology. This attitude seems content to ignore the centuries of Christian development that Smith also inherits as a Christian theologian and which justifies his use of the Neoplatonic tradition. In other words, scholars have assumed that there is nothing more to discuss because they have ignored the development of the Christian doctrine of the spiritual senses.

30 Pawson, The Cambridge Platonists, 35.
Leibniz). This approach understandably focuses nearly all of its attention on those members of the group whose thought extended to scientific and

philosophical circles that are still significant in the academy (especially Cudworth, More, and Norris) at the expense of the religious and literary contributions of Cambridge Platonists like Smith and his teacher Whichcote. Thus, the significance of the Cambridge Platonists is often absorbed into the scholarly question of the rise of modern scientific rationalism out of (purported) medieval superstition, magic, and mysticism. In other words, this newer interpretive approach tries to understand the Cambridge Platonists in their full intellectual context. While this approach has clear advantages over the earlier, nearly exclusively theological approach, it too has serious limitations in that it tends to see the theology of these figures as little more than a constraint on their development as philosophers and scientists even as it notes the theological inspiration of their philosophical and scientific ideas.\[32\] The approach also tends it tends to highlight only those elements of their thought that had lasting philosophic and scientific impact while downplaying their theological motives and concerns, which were always the heart of their work. Norris remains significant as a figure in the history of philosophy for popularizing Malebranche in England and to a lesser extent for his influence on the theology of Wesley (English, “John Wesley’s Indebtedness”).

\[32\] This is true of studies on the Cambridge Platonists even when it is no longer indicative of the best in contemporary work in this area. A prominent recent example can be found in Hall (\textit{Henry More}) who portrays More as a misguided (proto)scientist. It might be argued that More’s scientific errors arise largely because he is approaching his topic (perhaps unconsciously) from the perspective of a kind of “sensible theology” and not the empirical science gaining ascendancy in his day, despite his forays into “experimental” work. In other words, perhaps we misread
to obscure the significance of Smith as a Cambridge Platonist in particular, despite his undisputed status as a key figure in the movement, since he had only a peripheral (and far from unique) relationship with the rise of early modern science. Furthermore, this approach promotes reading the entire group for their importance in modern science and philosophy more than as figures within a Christian theological tradition. These tendencies have left Smith understudied in recent years and have contributed to the less than rigorous treatment of his theology.

Both of these common approaches tend to see the group from the perspective of their importance for contemporary thought rather than letting them emerge out of the theological tradition that was their intellectual home. By maintaining a doctrine of the spiritual senses, Smith was able to understand work in science, philosophy, and religion within a larger theological unity. By making judgments based on the sensory modality equipped to supply knowledge of physical, mental, and spiritual realities Smith was a scientist, philosopher, and theologian at the same time. In this way, Smith was like the

---

More when we read him as a philosopher/scientist rather than as a theologian concerned with natural (scientific), symbolic (philosophical), and speculative (mystical) theology.
great theologians of the spiritual senses tradition before him, and one needs to grasp this unity in order to understand the particular dimensions of his thought as parts of a systematic whole.

By means of his doctrine of spiritual sensation, Smith was able to maintain the reasonableness of his faith. That is, he was able to come to a degree of critical self-understanding without recourse to a theology like the neo-Aristotelian systems of the Thomists, or the Protestant Scholastics, both of which ultimately rest on assent to the authority of the Bible as interpreted by some clerical body or another.\(^3\) The spiritual senses, as an intellectual faculty, likewise distinguish Smith’s theology from the “enthusiastic” religion of his day that stressed the emotional over the rational.\(^3\) By means of his theological aesthetic, Smith sought to unite the life of the heart and the life of the mind in a single cognitive and

\(^{3}\) Indeed, Smith was not one to accept anyone’s views on authority alone. As Pawson puts it, “He made no man’s system his shroud” (Pawson, *The Cambridge Platonists and Their Place in Religious Thought*, 34).

conative spiritual exercise like Plotinus, Origen, Augustine, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa had before him.

While the Cambridge Platonists have tended to be portrayed as either liberal theologians with an eye for the important trends in their culture, or as proto-scientists or philosophers in the modern/contemporary sense with a curious allegiance to traditional religion this is an oversimplification that ironically complicates rather than illuminates our understanding. By treating the Cambridge Platonists, through the example of Smith, as a development within the theological tradition of the spiritual senses a much richer understanding of their work in theology as well as philosophy and science is won.

For this to succeed, we must let Smith speak to us out of his theological tradition without projecting what might be important to us back onto him. In this way, we will come to better understand his theology and, by means of it, his role in the history of the doctrine of the spiritual senses. Thus, this study of the spiritual senses in the theology of John Smith will shed light on (1) the history of the doctrine generally by showing its continuing importance in a modern Protestant theology, (2) Smith’s theology by showing the way in which it came out of, and carried on, a long Christian tradition, and (3) the relationship
between Smith’s theological, philosophical, and scientific thought by showing this to be dependent on his doctrine of spiritual sensation. That is, to understand what Smith’s doctrine is we have also to understand what it does rather than merely read about it in a single location as commentators on his “theological epistemology” have done. This process of seeing is made possible by approaching his text holistically with the tradition of spiritual sensation in view.

In order to demonstrate the significance of the spiritual senses for Smith’s theology this dissertation will first present an overview of the development of this key concept in Christian mysticism. In this way, it will become possible to identify how Smith continues and modifies the tradition. This review and interpretation of the literature will itself make a modest, yet significant, contribution to the contemporary understanding of the spiritual senses and by extension mystical theology in general.35 This study will not completely satisfy the need for an account of the doctrine throughout its history because it will trace

---

35 Indeed, a prominent English language author in the field has said of the spiritual senses that “there is no in-depth account of this central thread in the history of Christian mysticism” (McGinn, “The Language of Inner Experience,” 168 n. 4). Mealey agrees, “Taste and See,” 34.
the trajectory most important for Smith.\textsuperscript{36} However, it does contribute to the unprecedented resurgence in scholarly attention being paid by theologians and philosophers reexamine the spiritual senses tradition and the Cambridge Platonists.\textsuperscript{37}

Given the role the Cambridge Platonists played in the intellectual life of their times, and the lasting historical and intellectual significance of the

---

\textsuperscript{36} In addition this project will not give an account of the relationship of “inner sense” to the spiritual senses tradition. Inner sense is related to, but usually distinct from, the “spiritual senses.” The philosophical roots of inner sense are in Aristotle where they are the means by which the perceptions of the external word are apprehended by the mind. The spiritual senses are sometimes depicted on analogy with the external and the inner senses (Coolman, \textit{Knowing God}, 42 n.75). The inner senses are the means by which the perception of the outer and inner worlds (material and spiritual) is made known. In this sense, one may speak of the spiritual senses as a kind of inner sense attuned to God’s manifestation in or to the human spirit. The full relation between neo-Aristotelian inner sense and Neoplatonic spiritual sense remains to be studied with necessary depth and this dissertation can only hope to contribute to such a future philosophic study. See Mark Aloysius Gaffney, \textit{The Psychology of the Interior Senses} (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1942). A much larger project would be required to make anything like a definitive study of this issue but it would be an important step in tracing the continuities and differences in Christian intellectual thought from its beginnings through Kant and to today.

innovations of the seventeenth century, the importance of coming to a better understanding of their theology is clear. Furthermore, there is no better figure for such a study than Smith who possessed what has been called the “richest and most beautiful mind” among the Cambridge Platonists.\textsuperscript{38} Smith’s has been praised as “the most considerable work left to us by this Cambridge School,” and the \textit{Select Discourses} have been called as great a work in English literature as they are in theology.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, nearly every commentator gives a glowing appraisal of Smith’s \textit{Discourses} in philosophical, theological, and literary terms even while they relegate him to far briefer exposition than his peers. It is as if the scholars who have worked with Smith like him, but do not know what to make of him. It is my contention that the reason for this is a lack of proper perspective. When Smith is seen in his relationship to the tradition of the spiritual senses the reason for the significance attributed to him becomes clear.


1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two major parts. Part I reviews the history of the development of the doctrine of the spiritual senses and offer an interpretation thereof in light of recent scholarship (Chapter Two) and the intellectual milieu by means of which Smith received the concept from his predecessors and contemporaries (Chapter Three).

Part II provides a close reading of John Smith’s Select Discourses as amplified by his intellectual inheritance and the work of his peers at Cambridge. Chapter Four presents Smith’s employment of the spiritual senses in his account of the source of and methods for appropriating theological knowledge. Chapter Five outlines the role played by the spiritual senses in Smith’s account of the Christian life. Chapter Six demonstrates how the spiritual senses hold Smith’s theology together in a coherent system of thought.

A concluding seventh chapter picks up where the preceding extended section of textual exegesis leaves off with an analytical summary and reconstruction of Smith’s doctrine of the spiritual senses. Also, the influence of Smith, and particularly his doctrine of the spiritual senses, on future figures is reviewed, including Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, the British Romantics,
American Transcendentalists, and twentieth century scholars like Rufus Jones and William Ralph Inge. The dissertation closes with prospects for future research and an Appendix gives the organization of the *Select Discourses* across published editions.
CHAPTER 2: THE SPIRITUAL SENSES TRADITION

I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Exodus 33:19-20, KJV

O taste and see that the LORD is good.

Psalm 34:8, KJV

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:8, KJV

For just as in the body there are different sense of tasting and seeing, so are there, as Solomon says, divine faculties of perception.

Origen, Commentary on John 20, 33

And hence, having no spiritual senses, no inlets of spiritual knowledge, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

John Wesley, “Awake, Thou that Sleepest” (Ser. 3, I.11)
2.1 The ‘Spiritual Senses’: The Contours of a Paradox

Sensory language has been used to describe the encounter between humanity and God across every era of Christian history (patristic, medieval, and modern) and on every branch of the Christian family tree (Eastern, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant). From the very beginning of Christian thought, we find references that seem to suggest a capacity for the non-physical perception of divine realities. This apparently paradoxical notion is, most broadly speaking, what is usually meant by the term “spiritual sense(s)” in philosophical and theological discourse.¹ The language of spiritual sense can

¹ See for example, Karl Rahner, “The Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in the Middle Ages,” in Theological Investigations, 16 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 104-34 and Coolman, Knowing God by Experience: The Spiritual Senses in the Theology of William of Auxerre (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004). The most basic characteristic of the spiritual senses, its sensory and noetic quality, is also found across religious traditions in various manifestations. On the noetic aspects of the spiritual senses according to Origen see Robert J. Hauck, “Like a Gleaming Flash”: Matthew 6:22-23, Luke 11:34-36 and the Divine Sense in Origen, Anglican Theological Review 88, no. 4 (2006): 557-73. While further comparative study of this phenomenon is warranted, this dissertation will make a more modest and textually based argument within the single religious tradition of Christianity. While attention will be paid to the Christian tradition of the spiritual senses – especially as developed in the Latin West and eventually the Anglo-Germanic North and far western New World – no study of this concept can avoid some degree of cross-cultural study. The roots of the concept are found in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. Significant developments in Jewish and Islamic thought further influenced the medieval Christian discussion of the spiritual senses from “outside” the tradition as well (Harry Austryn Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosphic Texts,” The Harvard Theological Review 28, no. 2 [1935]: 69-133). Specifically, this study will explore the doctrine of the spiritual senses in its historical trajectory from Origen in the third to John Smith in the 17th century. In this respect, while the dissertation aims to supply a much-needed general account of the history of the doctrine such an account will not be complete. The full intellectual history of the spiritual senses remains to be written. For now, this dissertation aims to
make a certain kind of rhetorical or literary sense in isolation but its reference to
a stable object or “doctrine” can be seen only in the history of such language.2 As
Dillon has alerted us, the deep philosophical roots of Christian theological
aesthetics go back at least as far as Plato.3

While this dissertation is focused on a very specific appropriation and
development of the expressly Christian tradition of the spiritual senses, the
phenomenon can be found across the major world religions as well as across the
centuries of philosophical and theological speculation.4 Indeed, the place of

contribute to that goal by demonstrating the continuing significance of the doctrine beyond the
commonly accepted time of its demise as an intellectual principle.

2 The present chapter can offer only a taste of the full extent of the literature on the
spiritual senses. I hope to publish a (nearly) complete bibliography on the theme in the near
future that will represent the range of texts I have consulted. Here however I make mention only
of those texts that I have explicitly used to construct my arguments. It should also be noted that
the overall plan of this chapter predates the work of Gavrilyuk and Coakley on the spiritual
senses. Where I have followed these or other authors directly is clearly indicated in the text
and/or notes to follow.

3 On the Platonie roots see, John Dillon, "Aisthēsis Noêtê: A Doctrine of Spiritual Senses
in Origen and Plotinus," n Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage a Valentin Nikiprowetzky, ed. A Caquot, M.
example asks the gods to give senses like their own to the deceased human’s soul (Eva von
Dassow, Ogden Goelet, and Carol Andrews, The Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Book of Going Forth
by Day: The Papyrus of Ani and the Balance of Chapters from the Theban Recension, translated by
Raymond Faulkner (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998), Chapter 1, Plate 6.).

4 Eckel has noted sensory imagery related to religious understanding in a Buddhist
context (Malcolm David Eckel, To See the Buddha: A Philosopher’s Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness
light, see Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, translated by members of
sensation and sensuality is an important growing area of comparative study. The recent collection of essays *Perceiving the Divine through the Human Body* alone catalogues Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist, and Christian varieties of “spiritual sensation” in the broadest sense.5

Nevertheless, the critical understanding of the Christian tradition of the spiritual senses requires the examination of a topic that has yet to have its full

---

history written.\textsuperscript{6} This chapter seeks to present a kind of schematic first draft of such a history. By laying bare the contours it will later become possible to see John Smith’s place within, and his contributions to, this tradition in the chapters to follow.

Introduction to the Paradox

Already in the Hebrew Bible we find the invitation to “taste and see that the Lord is good,” as though immaterial things such as God and goodness could be “tasted” or “seen.”\textsuperscript{7} The Christian (New) Testament only multiplies this use of sensory language by connecting purity of heart to the vision of God.\textsuperscript{8} Paul speaks both of seeing God “face to face” and of seeing “the glory of the Lord as in a


\textsuperscript{7} Psalm 34: 8. On the central place of the Bible in the spiritual senses tradition see Mealey, “Taste and See,” 38-41.

\textsuperscript{8} Matthew 5: 8.
mirror.” 9 Elsewhere, we read of smelling the aroma of Christ and even touching
the divine Word. 10

All of this language, and there are numerous additional examples, raises
obvious questions in light of the equally well attested notion that God cannot be
“seen” as well as the obvious fact that unlike his first disciples, we can no longer
encounter Jesus Christ in his physical, earthly, form. 11 What, then, can these
descriptions of a purportedly sensory experience of the Divine possible mean?

It is logically possible to interpret talk of “spiritual sense” in at least three
broad ways. One might take a dismissive attitude to such talk and read it as mere
nonsense. This might include reading this language literally, and in the process
raising the apparent problems of outright heresy as well as further issues related
to the exact composition of these “senses” and their relationship to the physical
senses. 12 One might understand spiritual sensation as a metaphorical reference to

9 1 Corinthians 13: 12; 2 Corinthians 2:18.

10 2 Corinthians 2: 15; 1 John 1: 1.

11 Exodus 33: 19-20. On the role of the senses in making an otherwise absent Christ
present to the Christian in the Gospel of John see Dorothy Lee, “The Gospel of John and the Five

12 Anthropomorphites have long been considered Christian heretics. See Irenaeus, Against
some otherwise well-known faculty such as the intellect. Finally, one may read
the “spiritual senses” as analogous in some non-literal yet meaningful way to the
physical senses and in the process raise difficult further questions about just
what this might mean, and again, how these are related to the rest of our
perceptual and noetic faculties.13

Many authors throughout Christian history have tried to explore the
meaning of spiritual sense secure in the notion that, whatever else might be
rightly said, it is meaningful and useful to do so, despite the obvious issues this
raises. Passages such as the epigraphs that opened this chapter are prime
examples of a nearly two-thousand year old tendency in Christian thought and
letters to speak of what we might today call “religious or spiritual experiences”
in terms borrowed from everyday sense perception. This kind of language can be
found in Patristic exegesis and apologetics,14 medieval monasticism,15 the

13 Hauck, for example, makes a convincing case for an analogical use of this language in
Origen (“Like a Gleaming Flash,” 573). On these potential meanings, expressed in terms of
definitions of key terms see Mealey, “Taste and See,” 34-43. While we cover the same territory
Mealey’s approach of offering definitions of terms like “images of sensation,” and “philosophical,”
and “theological” categories is problematic because they these terms (or their equivalents) are
also used by the authors in the tradition in their own ways. By defining them ahead of time, and
injecting a modern (though ultimately Thomistic) distinction between philosophy and theology
Mealey projects perhaps as much as he illuminates here.

14 For example, Origen, Commentaria in Epistulam B. Pauli ad Romans, 4. 5 (PG 14. 977D-
978A) and Augustine, Confessiones, X.27.38 (CCL 27). Also noteworthy are early examples of the
treatises of the schoolmen,\textsuperscript{16} the hymnody of the early Methodists,\textsuperscript{17} the contemporary work of theologians,\textsuperscript{18} philosophers of religion,\textsuperscript{19} priests, pastors, and patriarchs.\textsuperscript{20} In fact, once one begins to look, the spiritual senses appear to be a very common theme in the history of Christian thought.


\textsuperscript{17} See the hymns of Charles and John Wesley in \textit{A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists} (London, 1781). One need look no further than the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} stanzas of the first hymn for prime examples. Cited by Mark T. Mealey, “John Wesley,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 243.


\textsuperscript{20} Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, “‘Song and Space: Art, Architecture, and Liturgy,’” in \textit{Encountering the Mystery: Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today} (New York: Doubleday, 2008) for example, makes reference to hearing, seeing, and touching the “word of life” (31). The
What makes the language of spiritual sensation noteworthy is, therefore, not its rarity but its apparently paradoxical nature within Christian thought. The qualification of Moses being granted a view of God’s “back”\textsuperscript{21} notwithstanding, the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions have all been eager to maintain the impossibility of seeing God. This originally distinguished the people of Israel from their neighbors, who could gaze upon idols thought to make present their various Gods and Goddesses.\textsuperscript{22} Christian tradition has long maintained that an exception of sorts exists in the person of Jesus Christ who has seen God, because he is of, from, and for God’s purposes in the Incarnation of God’s Logos.\textsuperscript{23}

---

\textsuperscript{21} Exodus 33: 23. The notion that Moses spoke to God “face to face” (Exodus 33: 11) is another interesting (potential) challenge but this was nearly always interpreted allegorically or symbolically rather than literally since it would suggest that God has a physical face. On this in the Patristic period see Christopher A. Beeley, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101-10.

\textsuperscript{22} At least in theory, if not in practice. See, for example, Judith M. Hadley, \textit{The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{23} John 1:18; 1: 14.
However, we are told by this same Jesus that “the pure in heart . . . will see God.”

The Christian tradition of understanding God as non-physical, and beyond human comprehension, appears to stand in deep conflict therefore with the notion that one may “see” or otherwise perceive God in any way (metaphorical or literal). This theological constraint makes it all the more surprising that one can find such language so often in Christian texts, from the Bible itself, through the musings of theologians, and the poetry of the hymnodists. If God is non-physical, and thus non-sensible, there should not be any of the talk about sensing God that one finds in the history of Christian thought.

Interpretive Options

So, the affirmation of spiritual sensation – the perception of divine and therefore (apparently) imperceptible things – entails the paradox of “seeing” the God who remains always unseen and indeed invisible. One might take our first

---

24 Matthew 5: 8. While it might be argued that it makes sense for the divine Logos and Son of the Father to see God, an extension of God’s self-perception. This on its own however does little to account for the apparent conflict between the human vision of God being impossible (Exodus 33) and the vision of God being promised to the pure in heart.
logical option and dismiss all talk of the perception of spiritual realities as basically meaningless. This potential meaninglessness would arise from a contradiction between the prohibition on sensing God and the assertion to do just that. With such a reading what we have been calling a “paradox” descends into the realm of outright foolishness. Such a view, however, would seem to rest on the willful ignorance of the ubiquity of such language in Christian texts from the biblical witness onward even up to our day. 25 If meaningless, then why such persistence? Likewise, why is this language so often used both in prayer, liturgy, popular devotion and academic theology? The spiritual senses are appealed to, it would seem, too often to be meaningless or arbitrary. Thus, this option has not been taken seriously by theologians (or most scholars in general). For this reason, we will not entertain this possibility further.

Perhaps then, as a second possibility, such language is metaphorical or poetic? That is to say, it may be that spiritual sensation is not meaningless but that it has a basically different meaning from the literal meaning this language conveys. For example, when we say in modern English that we “see what you mean” we do not mean that another person’s meaning is actually visible to us.

We do not really “see” in this case but rather we understand. In this same way, many authors throughout Christian history have made use of the language of the senses to describe what is in fact a matter of intellection rather than perception.

For example, William Wainwright has argued that John Smith’s “spiritual senses” are a kind of intellectual intuition. As we will see in chapter four below, this reading of Smith is limited and overly simplistic, but more to the point here altogether too much has been made of the distinction between spiritual sense as metaphor for intellection, as in the case of Thomas Aquinas, and the analogical use of such language to refer to a kind of spiritual capacity for spiritual perception, as in the case of Origen. In fact, it is difficult to imagine why


language originally used for perception would be employed to describe intellec- tion unless there is something very much *like* perception going on in the process of thinking. Indeed, it may be that intellec- tion involves, or can plausibly be conceived of as involving, intellectual intuition.  

More interesting than the metaphorical interpretation of spiritual sensation is a third approach, more suitable to some authors and some texts than to others, which identifies such language as descriptions not of otherwise well-known functions of the mind or soul, but rather of some capacity (or capacities) that are literally spiritually sensate. That is, in some cases the intent truly does seem to be to indicate a capacity for experiencing spiritual realities (i.e., God, grace, love, etc.) via a faculty or power analogous to one or more of the five 


28 Wainwright, “Jonathan Edwards and His Puritan Predecessors,” 224-40. Intellectual intuition becomes philosophically suspect with the success of Kant’s critical philosophy in the late eighteenth century. However, for this reason, a Kantian standard in epistemology is anachronistic in the treatment of nearly all the figures dealt with here. A constructive defense of the spiritual senses in light of modern philosophy must await future research. However, the continued presence of active interest in employing the spiritual senses in one form or another (see the remains of this chapter) gives the lie to the notion that such talk is without merit after Kant.
physical senses. For example, as we will see in greater detail below, Origen of Alexandria argued that the spiritual senses are an additional faculty (or set of faculties) beyond the usual physical senses, and perhaps intellect as well.

2.2 Diversity in Language, Use and Meaning

Unlike determinate loci in Christian doctrine, such as the Incarnation, there is little stable or unified vocabulary in the discussion of the “spiritual senses” when the tradition is taken as a whole. In fact, many authors, such as

29 I restrict my analysis to those theories that posit between one and five spiritual senses (following Balthasar and recent scholarly practice) and will not go into the speculations about up to twelve discussed by Fabio Massimo Tedoldi (La dottrina dei cinque sensi spirituali in San Bonaventura [Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1999]). This move is justified by the fact that it is the versions of the doctrine that speak of either one sense (usually “spiritual vision”) or as many as five (matching the physical senses) that have had the greatest historical impact and is represented in the classic texts in the history of Christian thought. That these “classics” are such only now in hindsight in no way diminishes their importance. While Smith and the Cambridge Platonists tend to make explicit reference to ancient Greek authors more than medieval Latin ones the fact remains that their religious heritage is Western and Latin more than it is Eastern and Greek. As Protestants in seventeenth century England their religious viewpoint owes much to the trajectory or development that passes through Augustine, the medieval synthesis of Bonaventure (and in a negative sense Thomas), and the speculations of the Renaissance humanists and Reformers of the Church (Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, etc.). Smith therefore relies explicitly on Plotinus and the Alexandrian theologians but he also references the “Schoolmen” of his own, Latin, tradition (see, for example, Smith, Select Discourses [1660], 126). Smith reads his ancient sources through the tradition of interpretation in the Latin West. This interpretation will be argued for throughout the dissertation. For an under used example of more than five senses see J. Homer Herriott, “The Ten Senses in the Siete Partidas,” Hispanic Review 20 no. 4 (1952): 269-81.

30 For more on this issue see the discussion in Derek Michaud, “The Patristic Roots of John Smith’s ‘True Way of Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,’” in Cattoi and McDaniel, 141-58 and Mark J. McInroy, “Origen of Alexandria,” in Gavrylyuk and Coakley, 20-35.
Pseudo-Dionysius, do not explicitly speak of “spiritual sense” (or their cognates) at all. This does not mean however that they have nothing to say on the topic of spiritual perception. This lack of a unified vocabulary has not kept scholars from identifying a common concern and even threads of recurring terminology around the basic idea of non-physical sensation of divine realities however.

There is currently a fairly stable, if complex and sometimes contested, scholarly vocabulary about the spiritual senses, especially, but not only, around the interpretation of the primary texts in the tradition. The spiritual senses have generally been treated as having implications for various issues in philosophy (epistemology and metaphysics especially) and theology (Christology, anthropology, etc.). As we will see below, since at least Poulain in the early 20th century through the most recent work on the spiritual senses the consensus among theologians and philosophers of religion is that the spiritual senses are best understood as analogous to the physical senses.

While much work in recent years has been analytical or exegetical, and to that extent not explicitly constructive of a contemporary doctrine of spiritual

---

31 After all, one may use the idea of physical sense without making literal or explicit reference to vision, touch, taste, smell or hearing. Consider: “Hey, do you know where my keys are? Oh, never mind. I found them right here.”
sensation, there have also been notable figures who have drawn on the notion to
inform their own systematic work in theology and the philosophy of religion. For
example, Hans Urs von Balthasar made extensive use of his impressive analytical
and exegetical work on the spiritual senses in his own theological aesthetics.32
Balthasar’s aesthetic has stimulated a great deal of work in a revitalized Roman
Catholic emphasis on theological aesthetics and the birth of a self-consciously
aesthetic approach in Protestant theology as well.33 Additionally, the philosopher
William Alston developed his “theory of appearing” into a theory of divine
perception in response to the evidence from the history of mystical or spiritual
experience.34

The terms “spiritual sense(s)” and “spiritual sensation” have been used in
a large variety of ways that involve either sensibility in general or a particular
(physical) sense – sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch – suitability qualified or
modified by terms such as spirit, soul, heart, mind or intellect, inner, or faith.

33 See Oleg V. Bychkov and James Fodor, eds., Theological Aesthetics after von Balthasar
(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).
34 William P. Alston, Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca, NY:
Cornell University Press, 1999).
This broad categorial use of “spiritual sense” as an “umbrella term” is reflected in the work of Gavrilyuk and Coakley and constitutes an advance in scholarly consensus over the past century or so.\textsuperscript{35}

Origen of Alexandria is usually credited with initiating the “spiritual senses tradition.” He speaks often of “spiritual senses” but also of “inner sense” as well as other formulations consistent with the general theme of spiritual perception. That is, the noetic perception of spiritual realities not the physical perception of disembodied spirits (or ghosts). In fact, although Rudy has recently challenged accepted scholarly consensus on this issue,\textsuperscript{36} Origen is best seen as arguing for a distinctly immaterial, spiritual sensory capacity which is analogous to the physical senses but which requires withdrawal from the physical world for its activation in the noetic, spiritual realm.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} A degree of openness or vagueness in the definition of spiritual sense is necessary if we are to speak of a “tradition.” After all, things change over time and in each author or even text. Therefore, to see the whole requires a general approach capable of registering the common themes across the differences. It is with this breadth of reference that the term “spiritual sense(s)” is used here.


A common source of complication, and often confusion, arises from the Aristotelian language of “inner sense.” This inner sense is often identified with the “common sense” of Aristotle’s *De Anima*, *De Partibus Animalium*, and *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* which is thought to unite the objects of the different sensory modalities to give a unified object of judgment to the understanding.\(^{38}\)

Confusion about Origen’s “spiritual sense” (sometimes called “inner sense” to mark it is a function of the “inner man” rather than the carnally minded and bodily “outer man”) and “inner sense” in Aristotelian psychology reached a peak in the medieval West\(^{39}\) but the two were seen by most as distinct faculties.

---


however some, such as Nicholas of Cusa, sought to amalgamate them.\footnote{On Cusa see, Garth W. Green, “Nicholas of Cusa,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 211-5. On medieval inner sense see Harry Austryn Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Internal Senses,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* N.S. 25 (1935), and “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosphic Texts.”; Coolman, *Knowing God by Experience*, 43, 48, 134; Nicholas H. Steneck, “Albert the Great on the Classification and Localization of the Internal Senses,” *Isis* 65 no. 2 (1974): 193-211. See also Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2009).} Notable approaches to the spiritual senses, whether or not they include “inner senses,” include the following.\footnote{For a definitional approach to much the same territory see Mealey, “Taste and See,” 34-43.}

**Spiritualized Senses**

Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor both make little explicit use of the term “spiritual senses” (αἰωθήσεις πνευματικῆ) while also clearly speaking of the perception (in a broad or analogous sense) of divine things.\footnote{Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 5; Sarah Coakley, “Gregory of Nyssa,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 36-55; Frederick D. Aquino, “Maximus the Confessor,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 104-120. See also A.S. Evans, “The Mind Sees: Spiritual Senses in Gregory of Nyssa’s de anima et de resurrection” (Undergraduate Thesis, Harvard College, 2002) and Natalie M. Carnes, “Senses of Beauty” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2011), ch. 4. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus in Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 83.} For example, Gregory of Nyssa has his Macrina refer to the “eyes of the soul” in
relation to thinking in his *De anima et resurrection*. Likewise, over a century later, Maximus too speaks of “divine perception” through the “eyes of the mind.”

Unlike Origen before them, Gregory and Maximus do not see the spiritual senses in opposition to the natural physical senses. For both the spiritual senses are the culmination of the life of piety and asceticism. In fact, as Sarah Coakley has convincingly argued Gregory came to see the spiritual senses as a transformation of the physical senses. This anticipates the spirituality of the Hesychast Gregory Palamas (1296/7-1359), and since then, Eastern Orthodoxy more generally. The

---


45 Coakley, “Gregory of Nyssa” and Aquino, “Maximus the Confessor,” 104-5.

46 Coakley, “Gregory of Nyssa.”

47 The perception of grace was defined as doctrine in the East between 1341 and 1351 and as remained central to Orthodox spirituality since. John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, trans. George Lawrence (London: Faith Press, 1964), 42-62, 94-101. Interestingly, the renewal of interest in pagan Platonism in the Greek East that preceded and directly informed the growth of Renaissance Platonism was itself a reaction to the Hesychast movement. Against the view of Palamas that one may see the “uncreated light” as the disciples did at the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28–36) with one’s physical eyes figures such as Barlaam of Calabria (c.1290-1348), Gregory Akindynos (c.1300-1348), and later Georgius Gemistus Plethon (c.1355–1452/1454) argued on the authority of the ancient Platonic tradition that to literally “see” God was foolishness. This “Hesychast Controversy” raged through the middle of the fourteenth century with the view of Palamas eventually winning out. However, the opposition that the Palamites focused led to intensified study of the pre-Christian religion and philosophy of late antiquity. By the time of the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1431-49) when Plethon taught Platonic
seriousness with which these and other theologians treated the implications of
the Incarnation for a positive appraisal of the human body led them to see the
spiritual senses as amplifications of natural powers of perception and
understanding. The physical is deified and transformed rather than given up.\textsuperscript{48}

\emph{Sensus Spirituales}

Medieval Western authors developed a more stable vocabulary for
spiritual perception focused around the Latin term \emph{sensus spirituales}. Figures such
as, famously, Bonaventure, made use of the concept in their commentaries,
treatises, and mystical works.\textsuperscript{49} We will see the uses to which Bonaventure put

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{48} A similar transformation of the bodily senses is discussed in a radically different
cultural context by Nancy E. Van Deusen in “Reading the Body: Mystical Theology and Spiritual
On the development of the cult of relics and icons, another way in which the physical senses
become spiritualized, see Patricia Cox Miller, \textit{The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late

\textsuperscript{49} On Bonaventure’s doctrine of the spiritual senses see: Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{The
Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, 1; Seeing the Form} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982),
371-3; \textit{The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, 2, Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles} (San
his understanding of the spiritual senses below. By his day other early scholastic thinkers had made extensive, systematic, use of the spiritual senses too.

For example, William of Auxerre developed notions of spiritual sense in his discussion of the Beatific Vision.\textsuperscript{50} “The delight by which we delight in God will not only be in love, but also in vision.”\textsuperscript{51} Moreover, William used the spiritual senses to account for symbolic theology, perceiving God’s effects in the world\textsuperscript{52} as well as in mystic theology to explain perception of God’s effects within the soul.\textsuperscript{53} Even the sacrament of the Eucharist was imagined as an

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}


\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Summa Aurea} IV 18.3.3.1: 501,137ff. Quoted by Coolman, \textit{Knowing God by Experience}, 24-5.

\textsuperscript{52} Coolman, \textit{Knowing God by Experience}, 161-183.

occasion for the exercise of spiritual touch and taste. Coolman, Knowing God by Experience, 218-234. On a more broadly liturgical approach to the spiritual senses see Ella Louise Johnson, “Liturgical Exercise as a Theological Anthropology in Gertrud the Great of Helfta’s ‘Documenta Spiritualium Exercitionum.’” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2010), chs. 3 and 4 esp.

54 Coolman, Knowing God by Experience, 218-234. On a more broadly liturgical approach to the spiritual senses see Ella Louise Johnson, “Liturgical Exercise as a Theological Anthropology in Gertrud the Great of Helfta’s ‘Documenta Spiritualium Exercitionum.’” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2010), chs. 3 and 4 esp.

55 Summa Aurea IV 7.3: 152,83ff. Quoted by Coolman, Knowing God by Experience, 2226-7.
Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Richard Rolle. These themes of experiential spirituality carried on in much popular Catholic devotion and even formed an important aspect of English Puritanism too. For example, John Bradford (1510-1555), William Perkins (1558-1602), and Richard Baxter (1615-1691).

Synesthesia

In addition to this emphasis on the “heart” Bernard of Clairvaux in particular, among others, is notable for the synesthesia in his discussion of spiritual sense. As McGinn has noted, for Bernard the spiritual senses mix and mingle to a remarkable degree. Imagery drawn from sight mixes freely with themes drawn from hearing, touch, and taste. This blending of the language of


the five physical senses with each other is a consistent theme throughout the whole history of Christian speculation on the spiritual senses.59

*Sensus Divinitatis*

Still others, notably John Calvin, speak of a generic “divine sense” (*sensus divinitatis*), a phrase already found in Origen. For example, Origen importantly quoted from an unknown Greek version of Proverbs 2:5 as biblical evidence for a “divine sense” (αἰσθησία θεία).60 Much more well-known is the case of Calvin, who makes frequent appeal to the *sensus divinitatis*. For example,

there exists in the human mind and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity [*sensus divinitatis*], we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead . . . this is not a doctrine which is first learned at school, but one as to which every man is, from the womb, his own master; one which nature herself allows no individual to forget.61

---


Sense of Faith

From the 16th century European Reformations on it becomes more common to find references to spiritual perception as a “sense of faith” (using the “eyes of faith” or some other organ). In developing this terminology the Reformers, Protestant and Roman Catholic, were picking up a thread already to be found in Augustine who remarked that “faith has its eyes.”62 This notion was used by Thomas Aquinas too.63 In modern Roman Catholicism the expression

---


plays an important role in interpreting revelation. Among Protestants one finds consistent use of such terms as “sense of faith” and “eyes of faith” especially among the English Puritans. Today one can find the phrase “eyes of faith” in a whole host of publications that intend to illuminate some area of study or other from an evangelical Protestant perspective. Apparently, in recent years these phrases have come to mean something like a “faith-based lens” on the world.

Intellectual Intuition

Finally, there are authors that speak of intellection in strikingly sensual ways as a kind of intuition of the mind. Early modern rationalists, such as the Cambridge Platonists for example, routinely speak of the perception of divine things through “intellectual touch” but they were also comfortable with the language of “inner sense(s),” “sense(s) of faith,” “sense(s) of the heart,” and

---


66 For example, see the Christian College Coalition Series published by HarperCollins.

67 For example, John Smith, *Select Discourses*, (1660), 3.
“spiritual sense(s)” as well. The works of the Cambridge Platonists reveal two broad categories of “spiritual apprehension.”

First, there is a group of texts, especially those by Cudworth and More, that stress the singular nature of the mind’s perception of divine realities through the faculty of intelligence or understanding. For these texts, the human mind or soul is intuitively aware of God through an apprehension of the intellect often discussed on analogy with vision.68 This apprehension takes the form of a kind of single spiritual sense in ways reminiscent of William of Auxerre’s treatment of the spiritual senses as formally one though materially multiple.69 Particularly interesting are two faculties posited by More; the “boniform,” which senses the Good, and “divine sagacity,” which perceives the truth when it “sees” it.70

68 Ralph Cudworth argued for the existence of God on the basis of human knowledge in The True Intellectual System of the Universe, chapter 5, section 1, in Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists, 195-203. See also Cudworth’s Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), IV. 1, pp.73-83. Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann and John Reynell Morell have said of Henry More that he “derived all philosophical knowledge from intellectual Intuition” (A Manual of the History of Philosophy [London: Bell & Dalby, 1870], 321). For a discussion of this single faculty in Origen as it relates to biblical exegesis especially, see Hauck, “Like a Gleaming Flash,” 560-8.

69 Coolman, Knowing God by Experience, 33-45.

Second, there is a group of texts that speak of multiple spiritual sensations on analogy with (at least some of) the five physical senses (but always more than a single sensory modality). This tendency, while found in most of the Cambridge authors to some degree, is especially associated with the work of Smith and represents the tendency within the school to associate spiritual understanding with multiple modes of perception and intellection similar to the expressions of the five spiritual senses as found in Origen and others.71

Historical Trends


things – the divine realm, we might say (as many do) – makes an overview a daunting task to be sure. Adding to the potential for confusion, these terms do not fall on a neat line of historical development. All of the various expressions mentioned above and others gestured at via a formula of sorts (i.e., “sense of . . . ,” “eyes of . . . ,” etc.) are found throughout the whole history of Christian reflection on spiritual perception.

Only two trends can be clearly identified in the use of terms over time. (1) With the dawn of Western Latin scholasticism, the explicit use of “spiritual sense(s)” multiplies significantly only to decrease again during the rise of humanism in the Renaissance. (2) The use of the language of the heart multiplies greatly with the rise of Protestant and Roman Catholic (Counter-Reformation) pieties in the 16th century, fueled by and large by advances in printing and literacy as well as the democratization of devotional reading and reflection.

In What Way a “Tradition”? These trends have contributed to the notion, common among medievalists and Roman Catholic scholars, that the tradition of the “spiritual senses” all but died out with the advent of the modern world and especially Protestantism. This claim rests on a very specific, and needlessly narrow, definition of the tradition
itself. In the following sections I make a case for a more expansive view of the phenomena collectively labeled “spiritual sense,” as well as for a more broad conception of just what constitutes this “tradition.” By revisiting these basic commitments it becomes possible to demonstrate clearly what the past century of research has only gestured at; that the spiritual senses tradition is alive and well, but also characterized by a very wide diversity of expressions.

### 2.3 The Spiritual Senses Tradition

While it is clear that Christians have often spoken in this way it is not obvious that this manner of speaking is a tradition of thought or even more formally a “doctrine” and not merely a collection of commonly employed metaphors. It may be objected that this manner of speaking is merely metaphorical and thus does not represent a clear “tradition” so much as a collection of vaguely similar expressions which fully exhaust their meaning within the confines of their own texts. In light of the ubiquity of the theme over nearly two thousand years this objection seems obtuse in the extreme. Still, there is much to learn by analyzing just how the tradition is a tradition. Thus, the present section. My sense of what constitutes a “tradition” is similar in this respect to that of Andrew Louth in that we both recognize the “tacit” nature of many traditions (Discerning the Mystery [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983], 73-95). I owe this observation to Mark Mealey.
of the poet, and the prayerful gaze of the spiritual seeker. Many are also suggestive of philosophical insights into the nature of humanity, perception, knowledge and the Divine as well.

As texts, these passages, and indeed the works they are taken from as a whole, have a kind of obvious sense to them. When, however, the flow of time and the happenstances of history are allowed to shine upon them, individually and especially collectively, a kind of loose trajectory does take shape. There is in fact a tradition illustrated by these texts, even when that tradition is itself composed of multiple, sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting, subtraditions of more close resemblance. After all, it would be impossible to recognize different authors as treating the theme if they did not represent, in some sense, a tradition.73

In some cases this tradition is explicit and clear. Such as when we find the language of perceiving the Divine in Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, both of whom were clearly influenced by Origen of Alexandria. Neither Gregory nor Maximus however agrees in every detail with Origen. In

73 The vague sort of understanding of a tradition of the spiritual senses has clearly been accepted by the leading scholars in this area. There could not be a volume such as Gavrilyuk and Coakley’s without this agreement.
fact, their debt to Origen remains clear regardless, and perhaps even because of, the differences between Origen and Nyssa especially. Gregory’s spiritual senses are a clear response to, or development of, those of Origen, just as Maximus develops themes found in Gregory.

In other cases, this tradition of Christian language of spiritual sensation or perception is less obvious in a hereditary sense but nonetheless clear. Many authors speak, for example, of the “eyes of the heart” across the centuries but not always with any clear line of influence between writers. In this case, the imagery is biblical and so there is no mystery about its spread among otherwise unrelated Christians. However, some terms such as the varieties of “spiritual sense” appear across time and geography without any clear line of descent from a previous author or the common biblical origin that accounts for “eyes of the heart” among other phrases. In this way, one may speak of the “tradition” of the Christian spiritual senses as a complex series (or group of subtraditions) of borrowings, inspiration, and non-coincidental re-discovery.

---


75 Ephesians 1: 18.

76 We may thus speak of a tradition in the strict sense running from Origen through many of the notable figures in patristic and medieval (mystical/spiritual) theology and including both
Each major modern commentator on the spiritual senses has her or his own definition of the tradition. This has led to a multitude of sometimes overlapping “traditions” each reflecting a different conception of just what is, or more often ought to be, counted as “spiritual sense(s)”. Often these competing traditions are informed by the confessional allegiances of their authors; Catholics speak of a Catholic tradition and Protestants speak of a Protestant tradition without acknowledging the clear lines of influence between these groups of Christians for example.

For these, and other reasons to be discussed in the remains of this chapter, we should follow the suggestion of Gavrilyuk and Coakley and speak of this tradition in a wide sense as involving “a series of overlapping ‘family resemblances’” between a variety of teachings that had “diverse beginnings in the Christian tradition (although always inspired by biblical prototype and supporters of the Origenist doctrine and those who modify or even reject outright the classic formulation of the doctrine, especially those who appeal to Aristotelian psychology to do so. Call this the tradition de jure. We may also speak in a broader sense of a tradition that includes all those Christian authors who take up this manner of speaking but who are less clearly indebted to the de jure tradition, either because they find it of little interest per se or because they simply have no access to this tradition. We may call this the tradition de facto. Importantly, this de facto line of tradition is marked by numerous (apparent) discoveries of the “spiritual senses” by authors treating topics and drawing on biblical passages nevertheless common to the de jure tradition. As will become clear throughout the remaining of this chapter however I do not see any significant reason to give the de jure priority over the de facto.
suggestion)” and doctrines constituting “a hybrid history of marriages of convenience – or natural attrait – with classical philosophies” all of which contributes to a wide range of “Christian epistemologies”.77

Thus, in the interpretation of the spiritual senses there are two intimately related problems. First, there is the problem of identifying the tradition. Just what should count as belonging? However, where recent interpreters are content to mark out a motif with multiple families of interpretation I am arguing for a more unified tradition characterized by a functional typology capable of registering a wide variety of specifications. Second, there is the problem of defining the spiritual senses themselves. What are these things we have been calling “spiritual senses”? In order to provide an answer to this issue we will review the dominant recent interpretations and argue that a functional approach makes up for their weaknesses. In this way, my interpretation addresses both of the central problems in the field, thereby advancing it in a way that remains open to further refinement and specification as well as demonstrating the place of John Smith within the tradition.

2.4 Modern Theological Interpretations of the Spiritual Senses

There have been three major moments in the theological interpretation of the spiritual senses in the last century. Shortly after the turn of the early twentieth century Augustin-Francois Poulain continued, and brought special attention to, a particularly Jesuit line of interpretation of the spiritual senses that goes back to at least Giovanni Battista Scaramelli in the eighteenth century. Poulain’s Des graces d’oraison was in turn a strong influence on the work of Karl Rahner who was (with Hans Urs von Balthasar) central to the “rediscovery of the topic of the spiritual senses in twentieth-century theology.” After these two

---

There were, of course, a large number of scholars working on the theme of spiritual sensation in one author or even in a school of thinkers in addition to these four moments. However, as far as I am aware, and indeed, as far as the literature would have it, only Poulain, Rahner, Gavrilyuk and Coakley as well as the handful of other recent approaches included below treat the spiritual senses in general at any significant length. I do not include Balthasar in this list for two basic reasons. First, Gavrilyuk and Coakley do not take him up in their overview of the field (but they do discuss Poulain and Rahner). Second, unlike Rahner, Balthasar’s influence has been felt more directly and widely in the aesthetics of physically sensible objects (Christian art, etc.). Indeed, Bychkov and Fodor’s Theological Aesthetics after von Balthasar (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008) does not include the phrase “spiritual sense(s)” at all. The best study of Balthasar’s spiritual senses work is Mark McInroy, “Perceiving Splendor: The ‘Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses’ in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics” (PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School, 2009).


giants of twentieth century Roman Catholic theology the next major attempt at a comprehensive assessment of the spiritual senses came in the form of *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, co-edited by the Orthodox theologian Paul Gavrilyuk and Anglican philosopher of religion and feminist theologian Sarah Coakley.\(^{81}\)

Poulain

Born in 1836 August Poulain was a prominent Jesuit author in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His approach was firmly within the “manual” tradition of Neo-Scholasticism but his topics of interest were in mystical theology and spirituality. In 1901 he published the first of ten editions of *Des graces d’oraison* (*Graces of Interior Prayer*). While under appreciated in

\(^{81}\) In addition, a handful of other lesser known approaches employed by theologians or those working in fields of immediate importance for theology such as philosophy, history, and literary studies will be mentioned very briefly near the close of the present section simply to register the full range of current work in this area.
Anglophone theology, Poulain’s work was an essential inspiration for the later twentieth century flourishing of spiritual senses studies in German.82

Poulain’s discussion of the spiritual senses comes in chapter six of *Graces of Interior Prayer* and forms the “second fundamental character of the mystic union: the interior possession of God” and the “manner in which it is felt.”83 Thus, Poulain sees the spiritual senses as the mode whereby the mystical experience is known. In this he follows the tradition of the Jesuits Scaramelli and Father de le Reguera who likewise saw the spiritual senses as a vital aspect of the experience of the “approved mystics” of the Roman Catholic Church.84

Poulain opens with a basic definition of the spiritual senses. “In the mystic union we have an experimental knowledge of the presence of God,” which is “the result of an impression, a spiritual sensation of a special kind.”85 From this starting point it is clear that Poulain approaches his topic as a consequence of his real goal, understanding “mysticism” in its orthodox (Roman Catholic)

---


84 Ibid., 88 n.

85 Ibid., 88.
manifestations. The spiritual senses are not, therefore, Poulain’s primary focus. Rather they are important for the function they play in mysticism.

Poulain goes on immediately to describe these spiritual senses as “intellectual” and yet “having some resemblance to the bodily senses, so that in an analogous manner ‘the soul’ is able to perceive the presence of pure spirits, and the presence of God in particular.” So, whatever else is involved, the spiritual senses are somehow like the physical senses and they are also involved with the intellect. They have a noetic quality that accompanies their affectivity. Thus, the spiritual senses are not, for Poulain, merely matters of subjective experience in the loose sense, but offer a window into the nature of spiritual realities as well. In this respect, the spiritual senses play an implicitly central role in theological methodology as well.

Poulain dismisses the notion that the spiritual senses might merely be the result of the religious imagination on the grounds that the imagination can only reproduce those things previously known by the physical senses (bodily things with colors, sounds, etc.). Since the spiritual senses are means of contact with

---

86 Ibid.
spiritual objects the imagination can be of little to no help here. Rather, the spiritual senses are a matter of “purely intellectual imitation.”

Drawing widely from the history of Catholic mysticism (especially the Counter-Reformation figures Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross), as well as his own estimate of the common consensus, Poulain asserts that there are, in fact, spiritual versions of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Such phrases as to “see God” are “not mere metaphors” for Poulain. This is not simply poetic license. Rather, such language intends an experience with a “close analogy” to the physical senses. That is, when the mystic speaks of divine union as accompanied by the sight of God they are not merely reporting a vague “spiritual experience.” Instead, there is something very much like vision about their experience, and likewise for the remaining four spiritual senses too.

---

87 Ibid. In this respect, Poulain would seem to be in substantial agreement with Thomas Aquinas who does not understand a spiritual sense “as any kind of special faculty,” but instead “uses the term to refer to an act of cognition” (Richard Cross, “Thomas Aquinas,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 181). Unlike Cross’s Thomas however, Poulain sees no reason to think that “spiritual sense” is unworthy of special attention.

88 Poulain, Graces, 89.

89 Ibid., 90. Hauck, “Like a Gleaming Flash,” 573 supports this analogical interpretation in the case of Origen specifically.
While he is insistent that all five of the physical senses have their spiritual analogue, Poulain focuses above all on what he takes to be the most basic of these modalities, touch.\textsuperscript{90} The reason for this is that Poulain sees the spiritual senses as disclosures of the presence of God “in” the soul.\textsuperscript{91} This presence, closeness, or “saturation” of the soul by God is immediate and not “at a distance.” Thus, it bears a close analogy with touch and is referred to often as “interior touch.”\textsuperscript{92} Here again we see that Poulain’s central interest is not the spiritual senses so much as the phenomenon of mystical union.\textsuperscript{93}

Elaborating on the intellectual character of the spiritual senses, Poulain suggests, again following the example of Scaramelli, that the mystical experience is “produced . . . by the [divine] gift of wisdom.”\textsuperscript{94} Implicitly this wisdom is in contrast to scientific or merely propositional knowledge too as, following the long tradition going back at least to St. Augustine in the Latin West, Poulain

\textsuperscript{90} Poulain, \textit{Graces}, 90-98, 102-13.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{93} Cf. “proof #1,” Ibid., 93.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 96.
describes wisdom “as a sweet-savored knowledge of divine things.” This “tasted knowledge” relies, rhetorically, as it did with Augustine, William of Auxerre, and Bonaventure, on the etymology of sapientia from sapere meaning both “to be wise” and “to taste.” Thus, it is not doctrinal precision that would seem to come from intellectual effects of these spiritual senses so much as the kind of living familiarity that comes from first-hand experience; knowing as we know a friend not as we know an object. The knowledge on offer via the spiritual senses is not abstract or the result of a process of cognitive abstraction. The spiritual senses reveal and occasion wisdom rather than discursive thinking.

Rahner

After Poulain, and indeed following directly in his footsteps in many ways, the next major movement in the recent theological interpretation of the spiritual senses comes with the exegetical and theoretical work of Karl Rahner.

---


96 Poulain, Graces, 88.
Karl Rahner, SJ (1904 - 1984), was one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century. As Mark McInroy has recently noted, “Rahner’s articles on the spiritual senses are routinely acknowledged as among the most important studies . . . in the twentieth century.” Theologians, philosophers, historians, and others all typically begin their comments on this strange doctrine with mention of Rahner’s work on the subject. Rahner wrote two influential articles on the spiritual senses in addition to making use of the


notion in his own constructive work.\textsuperscript{100} For our purposes, it is Rahner the
interpreter not, Rahner the creative theologian, that is our focus.\textsuperscript{101}

Unlike Poulain, Rahner nowhere gives a very detailed account of the
spiritual senses in general. He offers a basic definition of the spiritual senses but
this is no systematic picture of the contours of such a doctrine.\textsuperscript{102} Rahner opens
his article on Origen by placing the spiritual senses in the context of mystical
experience.\textsuperscript{103} Like Poulain, experience is the basic category here and it is

\textsuperscript{100} On this constructive use see McInroy, “Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar.”

\textsuperscript{101} While Rahner addressed the spiritual senses in two early, and heavily influential,
articles, and may even have incorporated aspects of this tradition in his own constructive
theology his general theory of the spiritual senses is found in his exegetical and historical work
on Origen. It is what Rahner says in this article above all that has earned him his place atop the
recent scholarship on the topic. Of course, his article on Bonaventure has been influential as well
but more in the particular area of Bonaventure studies than in the spiritual senses in general. Still,
my account of Rahner’s theory of the spiritual senses makes occasional, usually complicating,
references to this later article as well.

\textsuperscript{102} However, Rahner does give an extensive account of what he takes to be Origen’s
“spiritual sense doctrine.” While the status of the “spiritual senses” as a “doctrine” depends
entirely on what is taken to constitute a doctrine, nonetheless, this is Rahner’s usage and it is very
common in the literature on this topic for that reason. Since Origen is the originator of what
Rahner calls the “doctrine of the spiritual senses,” and since he compares other patristic authors
to Origen as the paradigmatic example of the doctrine, we can safely assume that the general
character of Origen’s doctrine represents what, for Rahner, constitutes the normative view on this
topic. Cf. Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 4-5. Also, the original French title of the
Rahner’s essay on Origen, “Le debut d’une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origene” makes
the sense in which he marks the beginning of the doctrine very clear.

\textsuperscript{103} Rahner, “The Spiritual Senses according to Origen,” 81.
expressed in, or with, the spiritual senses. Unlike Poulain however, Rahner is comfortable referring to the spiritual senses as “imaginative.”

Rahner’s most influential contribution comes in the form of his definition of the doctrine of the spiritual senses. “One can only speak properly of an idea or doctrine of spiritual faculties when these partly imaginative, partly literal expressions . . . are found in a complete system in which five instruments are involved in the spiritual perception of immaterial realities.” So, for Rahner the spiritual senses involve five key aspects. First, faculties that are expressed with “partly imaginative” and “partly literal” language. Presumably this combination of figurative and realistic language means something like analogy. Second, these expressions are to be found in a “complete system.” In other words, in order to count as an example of the spiritual senses an author must make regular use of such language according to a recognizable plan. Third, the central mark of a systematic account of spiritual sense is the explicit use of “five instruments” or spiritual correlates of the five physical senses. Fourth, this doctrine concerns, of course, “spiritual perception.” And fifth, the object of this perception are

---

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., 82.
“immaterial realities.” These last two points emphasize that the spiritual senses are not a species of physical sensation but rather something else entirely.

Thus, “Rahner proposes to understand the spiritual senses on a close analogy with the five physical senses.” On this “five senses analogy” Rahner sees the physical and the spiritual sense “as two different sets of powers or faculties, operating in tandem or separately, or, alternatively, as two states of the same fivefold sensorium directed at different objects altogether”. In this way, Rahner’s theory remains open to a wide variety of specifications even while it ignores those authors who do not speak (clearly) of five spiritual senses.

Complicating matters significantly however is the fact that Rahner did not restrict himself to his own definition in his article on Origen’s spiritual senses. He includes, for example, Diadochus of Photike, who speaks of a single spiritual sense only and should therefore not count as an example of the spiritual senses. Moreover, in his next treatment of the spiritual senses in the theology of Bonaventure, Rahner shows little continued interest in the criteria he set forth in the article on Origen. In fact, in this later essay, “Rahner was more concerned to

---


107 Ibid., 5.
emphasize the unitive character of spiritual perception than to justify the fivefold division of the senses, which he had come to consider ‘rather forced’.”

Many have noted the incongruities here between an earlier and later view of the spiritual senses in Rahner however very little time passed between the original publication of these essays; the first in 1932, the second in 1933. Additionally, Rahner saw fit to include them both in the German edition of volume twelve of his *Schriften zur Theologie*, albeit with abridgments to each. It may be that there is not so much different in these apparently contradictory accounts as first appears to be the case. For in the Origen article, as we have seen, the theory of spiritual sense is placed within a (unitary) vision of “spiritual experience” in general. Moreover, Rahner notes that even in Origen, who arguably fits his five analogy theory best of all the figures he takes up, there is a strong sense of the five spiritual senses as “different species of the general divine sense.”

---

108 Ibid., 5.


111 Rahner, “The Spiritual Senses according to Origen,” 89.
Therefore, Rahner’s considered view on the spiritual senses overall, as opposed to the author and text specific accounts within which one finds this general theory, is that there is a single capacity for “spiritual experience,” or alternatively a single “divine sense” as well as five manifestations of this capability on close analogy with the physical senses. Just as one capacity to experience our world is expressed (or made actual) by the five physical senses so too is our capacity to experience spiritual realities expressed (or made actual) by the five spiritual senses. On this view, Rahner’s famous concern for religious experience fits perfectly well with his exegetical and historical work on the spiritual senses.\(^{112}\)

Gavrilyuk and Coakley

The third major moment in the recent theological interpretation of the spiritual senses came with the publication of *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, edited by Paul Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley. This collection of essays on significant figures (or movements) in the history of Christian

---

\(^{112}\) McInroy, “Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar,” 263-8.
discussion of the spiritual senses\textsuperscript{113} offers a wealth of insight on individual authors and texts. However, as a unified collection it also represents a significant interpretation of the spiritual senses in general as well. Even in the selection of figures to be discussed there is operative a kind of general or basic theory of the spiritual senses in this volume. This, and its place at the leading edge of international scholarship on this topic, makes \textit{The Spiritual Senses} at least as significant as Poulain and Rahner, even though time has yet to reveal this volume’s influence in the field. In the following I will offer an overview of the general account of the spiritual senses presented by this work as a whole, especially as this is formulated in the editor’s “Introduction.”

Whereas Poulain begins his study of the spiritual senses with medieval authors, and Rahner begins with Origen, Gavrilyuk and Coakley rightly begin with scripture. They point out that the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament contain many examples of “sensory language” used “to express human encounters with the divine.”\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113} Despite its title the collection includes figures from the Greek East too (Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus the Confessor).

\textsuperscript{114} Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 1. Passages such as Ps 34 (33): 9, 1 Pet 2:3, Isa 1:10, Hos 4:1, Mt 5:8, 1 Cor 13:12, 2 Cor 2:15, 2 Cor 2:18, and 1 Jn 1:1 “point to certain features of human cognition that makes perception-like contact with God possible” (Ibid.).
By noting the biblical roots of the spiritual senses Gavrilyuk and Coakley give occasion to register the distinction from, as well as occasional connection to, the “non-literal modes of interpreting scripture” that also go by the name “spiritual sense(s).”\textsuperscript{115} What is meant here, is, of course, a sort of “non-physical human perception” and not the allegorical reading of scripture. However, some authors who make use of this unusual form of perception do speak of the ability to do the non-literal interpretation of scripture as closely related to the capacity to (literally in some sense) “see” divine realities.\textsuperscript{116}

Gavrilyuk and Coakley raise the obvious problem inherent in the very idea of “spiritual sensation.” Epistemologically, it is not at all clear that we have, or could conceivably have, faculties of perception in addition to the familiar five physical senses. Metaphysically too, God is simply not the sort of entity that

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{116} Additional important biblical loci in the spiritual senses tradition include, Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai (connected to Platonic intellectual ascent since Philo), and the problematic passages of Gen 32:30 and Ex 33:20 (which suggest that divine perception is impossible, at least in this earthly life). Paul’s “eschatological vision” found in 1 Cor 13:12 and 2 Cor 3:18, 2 Cor 12:2-4 fueled “reflection on the beatific vision” (Ibid., 11.). The \textit{Song of Songs} with its abundant sensory language too provided fertile ground for speculation about the spiritual senses. Likewise many allusions to the five sense or the spiritual senses were found in exegesis of prophetic appeals to hear and obey as well as many of the Gospel parables including Lk 14:15-24, Jn 4:16-8, Jn 20:17, Lk 24: 30-1, among others (Ibid.). Despite this wealth of material in the biblical texts there is of course no biblical doctrine of the spiritual senses. Any such formalized teaching is the result of the work of the theologian (or prophet) in discerning the spirit (meaning) of the biblical letter.
could be an object of perception. How can one “see” a God who is “ontologically different from all ordinary objects of perception”?\footnote{Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 1.} Moreover, in addition to these philosophical problems there are, perhaps more importantly for the Christian theologian, scriptural passages that suggest the impossibility of perceiving God.\footnote{For example, 2 Corinthians 4: 18 and Hebrews 11: 27 suggest that God cannot be seen and Exodus 33: 20 famously proclaims that “no one can see Me [God] and live.”}

After noting that these problems can be dealt with in many ways, including skepticism (either of a rationalist or empiricist sort), or by way of a theory of the spiritual senses as an example of the theological anthropology required for divine self-communication, Gavrilyuk and Coakley offer their basic definition of the spiritual senses.

‘Spiritual senses’ is an umbrella term covering a variety of overlapping, yet distinct, expressions in which ‘sense’ in general or a particular sensory modality (vision, audition, olfaction, touch or taste) is typically qualified by reference to spirit . . . , heart . . . , soul . . . , mind or intellect . . . , inner [man] . . . , or faith.\footnote{Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 2.}

Notice that unlike Rahner, and to some extent Poulain, Gavrilyuk and Coakley do not seek to pin down a narrow definition of spiritual sense. Instead, following
the evidence of the essays in their collection, and the recent history of scholarship on spiritual perception, they look to register the full variety of interesting and/or historically or theologically influential use of spiritual sense(s).\textsuperscript{120} By embracing an “umbrella” approach to their topic, Gavrilyuk and Coakley make it possible to register the otherwise hidden cross pollination between and among authors with otherwise apparently incongruent teachings on the spiritual senses. For example, their definition allows one to speak of “spiritual sense(s)” with regard to Origen’s separate set of spiritually sensible faculties, the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition of the \textit{sensus divinitatis}, and even the notoriously difficult to trace, subtle, or implicit “use of the language of sense-perception to describe divine-human encounter” such as one finds in Augustine.\textsuperscript{121}

Where Rahner’s approach sought to set boundaries for a doctrine of the spiritual senses, Gavrilyuk and Coakley cast a wide net and pick up on the reality of a plurality of teachings about divine perception. A tradition comes into view composed of family resemblances united as much by the functions they perform as by the nature of the faculties or powers described. As we will see in

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
the next section, this feature of the treatment of the spiritual senses by Gavrilyuk
and Coakley marks a significant advance over both Poulain and Rahner that
leads to the present study’s proposed theory of the spiritual senses; which forms
the basis for the interpretation of John Smith that follows in parts two and three
below.

Gavrilyuk and Coakley offer a strong critique of the approach of Rahner,
even while acknowledging the debt all current scholarship owes to his path
clearing work.122 In particular, and as we have just seen, Gavrilyuk and Coakley
are critical of Rahner’s “five senses analogy” theory, calling it, “unduly
restrictive.” They note that not even Origen has what really warrants the
appellation of a “full system” when it comes to the spiritual senses. Moreover,
many, if not most, authors who speak of spiritual sensation discuss less than the
full complement of five senses. Some authors, they point out, stress one or
another sense. Others emphasize a single sensory capacity. While still others
conceive of some senses as aligned with intellect and others with affectivity.
Finally, they note that even Rahner himself is inconsistent on his five senses

122 Ibid., 4-6.
requirement. To this we may add that if a figure as universally deemed important in the literature on the spiritual senses as Bonaventure is not a neat and obvious fit for Rahner’s definition, then it is fatally flawed. Thus, the need for the wider net cast by Gavrilyuk and Coakley.

In perhaps the most significant among the consequences of their expanded view of the spiritual senses, Gavrilyuk and Coakley notice that while one may interpret the language of the spiritual senses metaphorically, “it is by no means obvious . . . that every correlation of the senses with the intellect can be reduced to a metaphor depicting ordinary mental activity.” For, by metaphor one typically means that “no close similarity with the functioning of a physical sensation is intended” while an analogy “obtains when the operation of the spiritual sense is described in terms a kin to the operation of physical sensation.”

Indeed, the Platonic tradition, which continued as an important aspect of Christian theology, has always spoken of an “intellectual vision.” Thus, the

---

123 Ibid., 5.
124 Ibid., 6.
125 Ibid., 7.
tradition of the “spiritual senses” includes at least some (analogical) accounts of
the operation of the intellect itself. As we will see, and as Gavrilyuk and Coakley
themselves also note, this will form an important part of John Smith’s doctrine of
the spiritual senses.\textsuperscript{126}

Similarly, Gavrilyuk and Coakley also make a significant advance in the
field by making room for the often confusing, and occasionally confused,
relationship between Aristotelian “inner senses”\textsuperscript{127} and the, differently “inner”,
spiritual senses.\textsuperscript{128}

\textbf{2.5 Non-theological Approaches}

In addition to the major movements in the theological reception and
interpretation of the spiritual senses outlined above there are several minor

\textsuperscript{126} As I employ the term, “doctrine” means simply “teaching” not the more rigorous (and
arbitrary) meaning intended by Rahner.

\textsuperscript{127} See Pavel Gregoric, \textit{Aristotle on the Common Sense} (New York: Oxford University Press,
2011) and Garth W. Green, “Nicholas of Cusa,” 210-223.

\textsuperscript{128} Gavrilyuk and Coakley, “Introduction,” 9. While Origen did use the language of
“inner senses” to refer to his spiritual senses by the medieval period most authors “were aware of
the difference” (Ibid., 10). Origen’s call to remove oneself from outer sense to activate the
inner/spiritual senses can seem somewhat odd to modern readers. However, Stephen Hawking is
said to have developed the ability to do complex mathematics in his mind when he could not use
pen and paper anymore. He also uses mental “images” of four-dimensional space-time. Could he
do this if his gaze was external? Perhaps capacities really do open up in this way?
moments that warrant mention. Primarily these other approaches are important because they are recent and common in fields of direct relevance for theology.

Scholars in the academic study of religion (“religious studies”) have tended to view the literature from what we have been calling the spiritual senses tradition in markedly different ways from the theological accounts we have reviewed thus far. For example, historians like Gordon Rudy, have tended to focus exclusively on what can be gleaned about the authors and their readers from texts in this tradition. As he says, “my topic is not God or mystical union; it is what people say and think about God and mystical union—it is about people.”

This methodological non-realism is very common in religious studies, and across the humanities, when theological texts are concerned. However, one need not rehearse the debate between realists and non-realists to notice that it is not obvious that texts which purport to be about the Divine can be accurately understood as simply “human artifacts.” Surely the intent to speak truthfully about actually spiritual things is an important aspect of these texts.

---


Likewise, critical theorists have tended to focus attention on the spiritual senses as a means of discussing the body in the context of so-called “mystical” texts. For example, Patricia Dailey’s recent account of “The Body and Its Senses” stresses the way the “inner senses” (which is her preferred term for what we are calling “spiritual senses”) are located in the “inner” person. However, rather than Paul or Origen’s spiritual “inner man” Dailey is concerned with a two-fold body. She opens her essay, “the body is not presented as a united whole but is divided into at least two parts, inner and outer, united only in an unknowable future.” The result is to offer a reading, especially of the affectively saturated texts of medieval mystics (e.g., Hadewijch) that minimizes the oppositional “dualism” between spirit and body. In this way, many postmodern themes are blended together in a “discourse” that bears remarkably little resemblance to the works of theology upon whom they are meant to be commentaries.

---


132 Thus, some scholars have worked hard to save their sources from the more egregiously foolish sounding meanings of “spiritual sensation” in the name of good textual or historical studies. They do so however by falling prey to the more subtle anachronism that so often bedevils textual scholarship where theology and spirituality is concerned. That said, there is
By our contemporary (secular) standards spiritual sensation is an oxymoron at least (which it always was) but more often hopelessly enigmatic poetics. It can be tempting therefore to read these texts as if the materialism of our day was a valid lens for reading the work of the ancients. Is it really necessary to posit a second inner body in order to make sense of language about “inner” or “spiritual” sensation? Perhaps, but only if one already thinks that sensation must be in some sense bodily.

We misread texts employing spiritual sense if we do not take what they say seriously. We also do them a disservice if we read them as if their authors were unaware of the paradoxical nature of their language. Both tendencies are a legitimate tension in the tradition between dualistic and monistic versions of spiritual sense. On this, see Stefanie Knauss, “Aisthesis: Theology and the Senses,” Crosscurrents, March (2013): 106-21.

133 Or, what might amount to the same thing, if we read older texts as if the sensory experiences that they describe are somehow fundamentally foreign to us. Many scholars have suggested that our basic sensory perceptions are culturally, and thus historically, constructed. Suspiciously however these scholars are almost always historians! See for example, Mark M. Smith’s Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History (University of California Press, 2007). While what we see, hear etc. is surely culturally conditioned the sensory modalities themselves would seem to be a priori in the sense that they are the mode by which these culturally conditioned experiences are had. Therefore, when an ancient text speaks of seeing it would seem safe to assume that this is the same sensory modality (vision) we are accustomed to today. This is made more complex, but not unintelligible, by the addition of the spiritual qualifier to vision or any other sensory modality. Recently, John H. McWhorter has argued strongly against this notion of language as a “filter” through which one sees the world in his The Language Hoax: Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language (Oxford University Press, 2014).
to be avoided as much as possible if the texts are to speak to us today. However, a kind of creeping anachronism cannot be avoided if they are to speak to us, today. We cannot read these texts as though the seamless unity they so often presuppose between science and religion, materiality and spirituality, body and soul are lived realities for us. In fact, we would do well to be aware of the appeal of these texts precisely because they speak to us of, and out of, a world made strange to us by our modern advances in technical skill and descriptive analysis.  

Much of the appeal here is of a world that is whole; united across all dimensions of reality, a scientific and sacramental cosmos within which we are made to feel at home in body, mind and spirit.  

At another level however this longed for rest in a cosmos that includes ourselves, as selves, and not merely objects in time and space was always a goal of these authors and never completely realized. Nowhere is this clearer than in the frequent tension in the texts (and their authors?) between the present

---

134 This is, I think, a major part of the fascination of the “spiritual senses” for scholars like Rudy and Dailey who are drawn to what they take to be the (surprising?) unity of the bodily and the spiritual in these texts.
possibility of spiritual sensation and the eschatological certainty of the beatific vision, the sensation of God “face to face.”  

Thus, while there is much to be learned from the non-theological literature on the spiritual senses, it is not merely a matter of allegiance to one’s discipline that would suggest the focus on theological interpretations followed here. There are good reasons to think that a theologically informed approach to these texts is simply a more faithful reading of the texts. Their authors would seem to intend by their words something about God and human nature and not merely about their individual subjective experiences (Rudy) nor, certainly, to offer solutions to our own late-modern problems (Dailey).

2.6 Toward a Functional Approach to the Spiritual Senses Tradition

Each of the major movements in the modern interpretation of the spiritual senses offers important insights into our subject. However, as we have seen, each builds upon the apparent weaknesses of the last as well. For example, Rahner’s definition expands on that offered by Poulain even as it narrows focus on systematic uses of analogues of each of the five senses. Moreover, where

---

Poulain’s treatment was limited (or contextualized) by his primary emphasis on a Neo-Scholastic account of mystical experience, with Rahner the field widens to include “spiritual perception” more generally. That is, whereas for Poulain the spiritual senses are marks of expressly mystical experience for Rahner the spiritual senses are placed within a broader context of religious experience ad theological anthropology. Especially noteworthy in this regard is Rahner’s willingness to discuss the spiritual senses as the means by which prophetic inspiration is accomplished.¹³⁶ In contrast, Poulain’s treatment is limited to the mystical experience of truths already known by revelation. Gavrilyuk and Coakley likewise make clear advances over the work of Rahner. Most notably they have definitively challenged his insistence that in order to speak of the spiritual senses one must have clear evidence of a full system of five spiritual senses.

Overall the trend has been for greater clarity but also for an increasingly broad understanding of “spiritual sense” as including diverse expressions and a wide array of sensory modalities bearing an analogous relationship to the physical senses. Most tellingly of all is the development of the scholarly

¹³⁶ See chapter four, starting on p.228.
consensus around the function of the spiritual senses. For Poulain, they were part and parcel of (especially early modern Roman Catholic) mystical experience. For Rahner, they can be understood to perform this mystical or spiritual function as well as forming the means by which revelation is received by prophets and theological truths are appropriated by adept Christians as well.

For Gavrilyuk and Coakley, all of these functions remain but to them are added a more explicit role in intellection (spiritual senses as intellectual intuition) and in the presentation of a systematic theology. Over recent decades it has become increasingly clear that determining an exact, and completely consistent, account of what the spiritual senses are (or what such language is meant to refer to precisely) is both exceedingly difficult to accomplish and of questionable utility as well. As Gavrilyuk and Coakley have shown, there are any number of (often conflicting) specifications of the spiritual senses that have been historically significant and remain philosophically and theologically interesting even today. To arbitrarily rule any of these out of consideration (as Rahner did) is misguided and unnecessary. What is called for therefore is an approach to the spiritual senses

---

137 Even Mealey’s schematic typology arranged by questions is, fundamentally, functional in the end. His questions about the “thematic place,” source of legitimacy, the stability and significance of the category, relation to dogma, and relation to “modern canons of meaning” are all concerned with what I am calling the systematic, spiritual, and originating (or source) functions of the spiritual senses. Mealey, “Taste and See,” 44-9.
senses based on the range of functions of the analogous expressions of non-
physical perception. The example of Bonaventure illustrates nicely the
hermeneutical strength of such an approach.

Bonaventure as an Example

St. Bonaventure offers an excellent example of why function is a better
way to look at the spiritual senses than making a determination of what they are,
how many there are, and how they work. He used the “spiritual senses” in
several distinct ways and this has led scholars to try to resolve the apparent
contradictions in his thought.138

For example, as Stephen Fields has made clear, Hans Urs von Balthasar
and Karl Rahner offered conflicting, yet persuasive, accounts of Bonaventure’s
theory of the spiritual senses.139 Both focus on the Breviloquium and Itinerarium
Mentis in Deum. Likewise, both Balthasar and Rahner place the spiritual senses
along the mystical path consisting of the purgative, illuminative, and unitive
stages or ways.

138 Jean-Francois Bonnefoy, Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons selon saint Bonaventure (Paris: J. Vrin,
1929), 210-5.

139 Fields, “Balthasar and Rahner on the Spiritual Senses.”
However, Balthasar offered a “kataphatic interpretation that focuse[d] on the journey’s second [illuminative] stage.” For him, Bonaventure’s spiritual senses are connected to the physical senses and reach perfection “when they perceive the full meaning of the Christ-form.”\textsuperscript{140} Rahner, on the other hand, offered “an apophatic interpretation that focuse[d] on the journey’s third [unitive] stage.” For him, Bonaventure’s spiritual senses are distinct from the physical senses and reach their perfection as the corporeal senses become dim and “the intellect and will attain a mystical union with the utterly Transcendent.”\textsuperscript{141} So, Rahner reads Bonaventure as essentially dualistic with respect to the physical and spiritual senses while Balthasar reads him as embracing an embodied anthropology where spiritual perfection arises within the body. For Balthasar, Bonaventure’s spiritual senses unite the “higher and lower faculties of the soul . . . the intellect and will and with the corporeal senses.”\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 235.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 235.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 237.
More recently, Gregory LaNave has offered yet another account which locates Bonaventure’s theory of the spiritual senses “within his doctrine of grace” as well as “religious knowledge.”143 Drawing on a far wider reading of Bonaventure’s corpus, including a predilection for the very early Commentary on the Sentences, LaNave sees the spiritual senses as “the ‘use of interior grace with respect to God himself according to a proportion to the five senses’.”144 Since, “‘To sense’ is ‘to know a thing as present’” according to Bonaventure’s Commentary on the Sentences, LaNave compares knowing God as present via the spiritual senses to the act of “‘putting on the mind of Christ’” in the intellect.145 Thus, for LaNave, Bonaventure speaks of “the spiritual senses only when the question becomes how we grasp God in his ultimate self-expression – what it is about what is known that engages our ability to know.”146

The spiritual senses are, then, the means by which those sanctified by grace receive the self-revelation of God in Christ the Word. In this manner,

---

143 Gregory LaNave, “Bonaventure,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 159.

144 Ibid., 162.

145 Ibid., 163.

146 Ibid., 169.
LaNave is Christocentric in ways that resemble Balthasar. However, for LaNave, the apparent contradictions between the supposedly different accounts of Bonaventure’s spiritual senses are resolved (or dissolved) by noting that wherever he speaks of them they are related to the state of grace and that the object is the Word.

So, for Rahner, the spiritual senses are a matter of unitive mystical experience, for Balthasar, a matter of Christian experience more generally as informed by Christ, and according to LaNave, the means by which “the soul knows God when it apprehends him in his self-expression.” 147 But who, if any, offers the correct interpretation? Each tries, in their own way, to resolve the ambiguity in the various references to the spiritual senses in Bonaventure’s corpus. However, both Rahner and Balthasar accomplish this resolution by asserting that aspects of their own constructive theological projects are present in Bonaventure. This makes one suspicious of the degree to which they truly exegete Bonaventure. 148 LaNave too is not above some measure of suspicion in this

---

147 Ibid., 172.

148 Indeed, it would seem that they are involved in at least this degree of eisegesis.
regard since as a modern systematic theologian he has an interest in finding workable material in the Seraphic Doctor.

If, instead of concerning ourselves primarily with questions of what the spiritual senses are we were to focus more closely on how the various references to them function in Bonaventure’s work we would eliminate the confusions that arise when trying to make divergent uses consistent with each other. We would simply notice, as Rahner, Balthasar, and LaNave have also done, that Bonaventure uses the language of the spiritual senses in his explanation of the source of theological knowledge, his account of the spiritual life, and in his attempts to offer a systematic presentation of the content of the Christian faith. The question of the compatibility of these various uses with each other becomes, from this functional perspective, secondary at best.149

In fact, from a functional perspective it is possible to learn from all three of our interpreters without necessarily siding with any one of them against the others. It may be that Bonaventure’s “spiritual senses” contributes to a systematic theology by being concerned both with theological anthropology (as

---

149 In short, there is no need on this functional approach to think of the “spiritual senses” as designating a single group of acts, powers, or faculties. In this way it is possible to more generously compare texts of different genres and those with radically different contexts and audiences too.
Rahner emphasizes) and by drawing attention to the Divine object of these senses (as LaNave argues). In either case, the “spiritual senses” are being employed in order to give a systematic account, and both may well have been intended by Bonaventure.

Additionally, a functional approach matches well the tendency in the recent spiritual senses scholarship to employ this concept as a means of explaining some other issue or concern, and leaving the spiritual senses themselves frustratingly unexplained. Authors such as Bonaventure are far more concerned to use the spiritual senses as an explanation than to offer an explanation of them. In this sense, the spiritual senses perform a functional task even as they remain underdeveloped themselves. This means that the effort to pin down exactly what they are is sometimes misguided. Some authors simply do not define the spiritual senses in a clear or consistent way at all, even while employing them for various ends. They are an explanation, not something explained.

---

150 For surely the way in which God makes God’s self present to us (LaNave) is itself an important aspect of who we are, considered theologically (Rahner & Balthasar), and vice versa.

151 This is not to say, definitively, that Bonnefoy was correct in his assessment that Bonaventure speaks equivocally on this subject. Rather, it is to suggest that such issues are of minor importance compared to the conceptual work that the “spiritual senses” are put to.
2.7 The Functional Typology of the Spiritual Senses Tradition

In the interests, therefore, of remaining open to all the actual (and possible) complexity in the use of the language of spiritual sensation, I offer a functional typology rather than a strict definition of the spiritual senses. In proposing this typology, I carry forward the recent trend toward a wider application of the “spiritual senses” while simultaneously providing a more defined account of the tradition precisely as a complex collection of trajectories within a fixed range of functional types. Examples of each of these types are drawn from the latest research on the spiritual senses as are the types themselves.

Specialists may object that my approach is so generalized as to be promiscuously inclusive. However, my approach is no more so than the editors and contributors to *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* have been. Likewise, for that matter, any of the countless scholars who have appealed to the “doctrine of the spiritual senses” in passing. A degree of abstraction and comparison is *always* involved when we associate any texts or figures that are not clearly, historically, and textually, linked to each other and employing identical formulations. Moreover, by embracing the current
consensus as to the general character of the spiritual senses as involving non-
physical sensation and adding to it the further specification that this sensation is
employed in the service of one or more broad functional types, my approach is
actually more specific than the received view.

With all the forgoing in view, my proposal is to interpret the entire
spiritual senses tradition, broadly construed along the lines outlined above, as
involving language of non-physical perception with one or more of the following
three functional purposes: first to account for the source of theological
knowledge; second to explicate important features of the spiritual life; and third,
to provide conceptual leverage to provide a systematic account of the relevant
aspects of a theological perspective.

Thus, my definition of the spiritual senses remains open to as wide a
variety of specific theories or usages as possible while also unifying the often
disparate strands of this tradition of “family resemblances.” Indeed, it is only by
casting one’s net this wide that one can meaningfully speak of a “tradition” at all.

152 Assertions of a “consensus” in theology are notoriously liable to appear premature or
simply foolish. However, given the concerted effort of the leading scholars in the field; the work
of all contributors (and others) at multiple rounds of meetings and consultations to refine their
individual essays and to provide substantive contributions to the “Introduction” it is well
warranted to consider the approach outlined by Gavrilyuk and Coakley to be the scholarly
consensus at this time. For more on the process of producing The Spiritual Senses. See the “Forward”
to that volume, xiii-xiv.
With this appropriate level of vagueness, my proposal continues the trajectory of recent scholarship and remains open to future correction or adaptation as the field develops. This openness is, perhaps, the greatest strength of my approach. The functional typology has four key elements.

First, the “spiritual senses” require some reference to, or employment of, non-physical modes or means of perception. This may take the form of any number of specific phrases so long as the clear intent is to signify the perception of things that cannot normally, literally, be perceived. “Objects” like Goodness itself, grace, truth, and God, for example, cannot normally be perceived by the physical senses because they are (or are taken to be) non-physical. Claims to perceive such objects, or objects of their ken, are thus claims to “spiritual sense” as understood here.¹⁵³

These modes of non-physical perception are intended to function in one or another, or often some combination of, three ways. These are as explanatory

---

¹⁵³ I take this to be noncontroversial as the object of these “senses” is universally understood to be of a “spiritual” nature. In the case of the Incarnate Logos and the sacramental presence of the divine things become slightly more complex as there is in those instances a physically sensible object present. However, to perceive the Divinity of Christ is something in addition to perceiving his humanity. If it were not, presumably everyone he encountered would have recognized who he was. Likewise, while everyone may see the physical host in the eucharist only some will perceive, in or through the bread perhaps, Christ.
principles in the areas of (1) the source and thus also the methods of theology, (2) spirituality, and (3) the systematic cognition, apprehension, and presentation of a holistic view of reality as such.

Thus, the second element of my interpretation of the spiritual senses is that it can be used to provide an account of the origin of theological knowledge.\(^{154}\) Gregory the Great speaks of prophecy has involving spiritual touch and sight in his *Homilies on Ezekiel*\(^ {155}\) and as George Demacopoulos has demonstrated, the discernment of scripture too involves spiritual perception.\(^ {156}\) The medieval schoolmen too look to spiritual sensation for an account of theological knowledge. For example, Alexander of Hales, Thomas Gallus, and Bonaventure all speak of the heights of mystical ascent in terms of the affective

\(^{154}\) “Theological” here includes “intellectual” in the Platonic sense, just as, more generally throughout, “spiritual” includes (or is at least compatible with) “intellectual” as well.


\(^{156}\) “Gregory the Great,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 71-85, especially 72-8. Gregory is not unique in this regard among patristic authors. Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa speak of spiritual sensation being involved in theological knowledge too.
spiritual senses of touch and taste assuming the role of intellect in the contemplation of God.\textsuperscript{157}

Third, the spiritual senses are frequently used to express, both descriptively and proscriptively, the proper spiritual path. The faithful “taste” Christ in the Eucharist\textsuperscript{158} and “see” God’s grace at work in the soul.\textsuperscript{159} They feel the Divine presence in prayer, ecstasy, and mystical union.\textsuperscript{160} One need look no further, really, than a hymnal or the transcript of any number of uplifting

\textsuperscript{157} See Boyd T. Coolman, “Alexander of Hales,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 121-39, especially 133-9, and “Thomas Gallus,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 140-58, especially 147-55. On Bonaventure, see also Gregory F. LaNave, “Bonaventure,” in Gavrilyuk and Coakley, 159-73. This list of medieval uses of the spiritual senses in theological knowledge could be added to; for example, William of Auxerre, William of Saint-Thierry, and Bernard of Clairvaux all had interesting things to say in this regard too as well as other patristic and modern authors. On the merger of the affective and the cognitive at the apex of the soul see Pekka Kärkkäinen, “Synderesis in Late Medieval Philosophy and the Wittenberg Reformers,” \textit{British Journal for the History of Philosophy} 20 no. 5 (2012): 881-901.


\textsuperscript{159} On the connection between the spiritual senses and the transformation of the soul by grace see Bonaventure’s \textit{Itinerarium mentis in Deum}, 4. Also, LaNave, “Bonaventure,” 162-5.

sermons in any contemporary church to see the spiritual senses being discussed in relation to living the Christian life.\textsuperscript{161} Often spirituality and some sense or other of receiving divine wisdom go hand in hand as well.\textsuperscript{162} For, as Rowan Williams has noted in reference to the \textit{Philokalia}, “There is no ‘spirituality’ free of doctrine.”\textsuperscript{163}

Fourth, the spiritual senses are also used as a means to unite the disparate elements of the human experience into a unified account of reality as such.\textsuperscript{164} For example, as the non-physical counterpart to the five bodily senses the spiritual senses link us to eternal, invisible, and immutable elements just as it is by the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{161} Popular books in Christian spirituality too often take up the theme. For example, evangelical John Piper, \textit{Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ} (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), and Anglican Martin Warner, \textit{Known to the Senses} (London: Morehouse, 2004).
  
  \item \textsuperscript{162} Thus type one and two are often found together in discussions of the experience of prophets, seers, and visionaries. On this see, for example, Pedro Gomez, “‘Accende lumen sensibus’: A Philosophico-Theological Approach to the Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in Medieval Monastic Theology,” \textit{Teologia y Vida} 49, no. 4 (2008): 749-770, and Daniel Simmons, “‘We shall be like him, for we shall see him’: Augustine’s \textit{De Trinitate} and the Purification of the Mind” \textit{International Journal of Systematic Theology} 15 no., 3)(2013): 240-64.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{163} Rowan Williams, “The Theological World of the Philokalia,” in Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif, eds., \textit{The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality}, with a forward by Kallistos Ware (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 102-21, here, 103.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{164} This is the import of Green’s argument that Nicholas of Cusa attempted to synthesize Aristotelian cognitive psychology and the Origenist spiritual senses into a single account (“Nicholas of Cusa”).
\end{itemize}
physical senses that the material world is known.  This systematic instinct is perhaps more clear the closer to our own time we come. Enlightenment figures such as Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley both sought to construct theologies that remain faithful to the content of their faith and the experience thereof and to the latest in philosophical and scientific thinking. Edwards tried to model spiritual perception closely on the model of sense perception given by John Locke. Wesley too builds much of his notion of spiritual sense in response to, indeed on the model of, empiricism. One measure of the systematic use of the spiritual senses lies in the degree to which this notion, in whatever specification, is brought to bear in order to account for some aspect of a theology. For


168 Mealey, “John Wesley,” 241-56, especially 244-250.
Bonaventure, in addition to whatever else they do, the spiritual senses are located “within his doctrine of grace and of religious knowledge.”\textsuperscript{169} We might bemoan the fact that Bonaventure only speaks explicitly about just what he thinks the spiritual senses are in a “dozen or so” locations with LaNave\textsuperscript{170} or we can recognize, with Bamberger, that authors have taken up this doctrine, “usually only in passing, without any intent to give a further development to it.”\textsuperscript{171} We know what is beneath us by bodily sense, but we know ourselves and what is above or beyond us by spiritual sense.\textsuperscript{172} Thus, by employing the spiritual senses one is able to conceive of a single account of human experience, from the everyday to the Beatific.\textsuperscript{173}

As we will see in part two below, this functional typology accounts well for the spiritual senses tradition in general, and the uses John Smith put this tradition to in particular. Only the arguments offered below for Smith’s

\textsuperscript{169} LaNave, “Bonaventure,” 159.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{171} Bamberger, “Thomas Merton,” 83.

\textsuperscript{172} The example here is Platonic, ultimately originating with Origen, but the spiritual senses need not be thought of in as hierarchical a way.

\textsuperscript{173} On the eclipse of the beatific expectation in modernity see Louis Dupre, “On the Natural Desire of Seeing God,” \textit{Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics} 1 nos. 1-2 (2012): 81-94.
appropriation of these functions from those who came before him can begin to
demonstrate the adequacy of my interpretative theory. A full defense of the
perspective must await an assessment of its usefulness in guiding future research
on the spiritual senses. However, as we have seen above, there are very good
reasons to think that this perspective represents the current scholarly consensus.

2.8 Conclusion

The tradition of the spiritual senses in Christian theology is thus
classified by paradox, a wide range of individual specifications or theories,
and these have been understood by modern scholars in a variety of ways. We
have seen that the trend in recent interpretation has been to include a wider
variety of phenomena under the general label of “spiritual sense.” Most
importantly a new interpretation of this tradition as involving non-physical
perception and three functional types has been offered that benefits from the
trajectory in recent scholarship and accounts for the range of interpretations
offered for individual theories in the field as well.

Armed with this theoretical and historical context we are now in a
position to fully appreciate the place of John Smith within the Christian tradition
of the spiritual senses. In part two below we will see how Smith used his own
formulations of spiritual perception to perform each of the three functional tasks we have identified in this chapter. First, however, the following chapter will position Smith in his intellectual milieu. For one can only truly appreciate the use to which he put the spiritual senses if one knows the world to which he was addressing his discourse.
CHAPTER 3: SMITH IN CONTEXT

3.1 Why Smith?

John Smith has never escaped the attention of scholars in fields as diverse as the history of philosophy, religious studies, theology, literature, history of science and mathematics. Smith’s name appears, as often as not in a footnote

---


crediting him with inspiring some other better known figure, in a broad scholarly literature and it has for several centuries. There are, however, precious few studies of any length or depth on Smith himself. Indeed, one is consistently offered his name, and often his own words too in order to explain more obscure passages in the works of his fellow “Cambridge Platonists” especially Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. Anyone deemed relevant, even essential, for a proper study of so many other figures and important movements in the history of thought is surely due study in his own right. This is one of the central aims of the present chapter.


7 The great exception to this rule of thumb is Mario Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso di John Smith, platonico di Cambridge (Padua: La Garangola, 1976). Nevertheless, my sketch of Smith’s life and times is thematic at most. Those interested in the biographical details of Smith’s life can do little better than Simon Patrick’s funeral sermon, notwithstanding the considerable hagiography. For a fuller picture of Smith’s context one must consult the sources given in the notes to this chapter. My purpose here is not historiographical or biographical per se but rather contextual.
Given his current relative obscurity – Smith has seldom appeared on reading lists in philosophy or theology since the late nineteenth century – as well as the combination of the strangeness and the universally acknowledged significance of his intellectual and cultural context, an extensive introduction to Smith and his times, is not only useful, but essential. For Smith’s thought arises out of, and speaks to, an intensely complex world of intellectual, geographic, and religious dynamism.\(^8\)

Given the thematic preoccupation of this dissertation it may be fairly asked, how or from whom did Smith receive the spiritual senses tradition? However, as our study of this tradition has shown, the ingredients were readily available to anyone in Smith’s context. The biblical, patristic, and medieval sources were all ready to hand, as were more recent important developments in philosophy and theology. Moreover, the spiritual senses tradition is not the sort that passes from master to student in a direct line only. Rather, it is a family of modes of thought that arise naturally within certain aspects of Christian

---

\(^8\) Smith’s context will be a constant companion in our discussion of his theory of the spiritual senses in part two below. In order therefore understand what he has to say on this our primary focus it is necessary to first come to an appreciation of his world.
philosophy and theology. So, where Smith gets his ideas is a topic taken up in
the midst of the close reading of his discourses to follow in part two below.

Thus, the present chapter proceeds as follows. First, a discussion of the
intellectual context into which Smith was born with special attention to its
quality as an “age of discovery.” Second, we explore the educational culture of
Smith’s day with special focus on his own intellectual formation, especially at
Emmanuel College Cambridge under Benjamin Whichcote. In this way we will
see that Smith was educated in, or perhaps better, between two great
pedagogical eras; the scholastic and the modern. Third, is an exposition of the
political and religious turmoil that marked Smith’s adult life, culminating in civil
war for his nation and an appointment as a Fellow of Queens’ College
Cambridge for himself. Finally, we present the remains of his substantial
personal library bequeathed to Queens’ College upon his death in 1652 as a
window into his formation and inclinations. The chapter closes with some
preliminary remarks about the single literary product available from Smith, the
posthumously published Select Discourses, collected and edited by John
Worthington in 1660.
3.2 Into New Worlds

While the long march of history pushes ever forward and greets everyone with a fresh horizon, some of us are blessed, as the Chinese say, to live in interesting times. Our own time, with the speedy advance of technology and a technologically driven (obsessed?) culture, is surely an “interesting time.” However, only time will tell for us. For those born in the early seventeenth century we can now see with the aide of hindsight that their world really was new. It was during the dawn of the modern world that John Smith was born in the rural English town of (Thorpe) Achurch in 1618.

Known in the Doomsday Book as Asechirce, and located in eastern Northamptonshire in the East Midlands of England, the town had been settled, or at least given its permanent name, during the Danish Invasions of the early Middle Ages (“Thorpe” being a common Danish place name).9 The village church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, was first built in 1218 by Sir Ascelin de Waterville in thanks for his safe return from the Holy Land during the Third Crusade under Richard Cœur de Lion.10 This Church was most likely the scene of

---

9 Williams, “Memoir,” v.

much of Smith’s early formation in Christian piety and perhaps learning more generally. In which case, reports of his “Puritan” roots are well founded, albeit of an established church variety often unknown in North America. During Smith’s youth, the Rector of St. John the Baptist Church was Robert Browne, the famous Puritan non-conformist, turned priest in the Church of England, who served there from 1591 to 1633 when he was jailed for not paying taxes. It has also been suggested that Smith may have “received the rudiments of his education at the Grammar School of Oundle” near Achurch but this is little more than a likely supposition.


11 Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso, 13, 91, 294.


13 Williams, “Memoir,” vi.
Our John Smith was apparently the son of John and Catharine (or “Katherine”) Smith, both of whom seem to have been of relatively advanced age at his birth. Nearly all biographies give his birth year as 1618, however Williams reports that Smith’s mother was buried “April 4th, 1616.” Thus, our Smith would seem to have been born early in 1616. The Parish Register of Achurch notes his baptism on “February 15th, 1617.” This would make Smith nearly two years older than reported by Simon Patrick in his Funeral Sermon as well as the “memoir of our Author” written by Lord Hailes. However, at the time of his death Smith left what he calls “that small land which my Father left me in Achurch” to his mother. Thus, Williams’ birth date cannot be accurate as


15 Ibid.

16 These dates are from the Parish Register at Achurch as quoted by Williams, “Memoir,” v.

17 Quoted in Williams, “Memoir,” v.


his account rests in part on the supposed burial of Smith’s mother in 1616. For this reason, there is little doubt that he was born in 1618 after all.\textsuperscript{20}

The elder Smith would seem to have been a small landowning farmer at Achurch.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, the parish records indicate that he was churchwarden there in 1601, 1616, 1621, and 1622. He clearly, therefore, “enjoyed the respect of those among whom he lived.”\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{3.2.1 Geographical Discovery}\textsuperscript{23}

While typical accounts of the early seventeenth century in England tend to focus on religion, politics, and various markers of “modernity,”\textsuperscript{24} our treatment

\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, Williams, like most commentators on Smith, knows nothing of his will. He seems to have learned everything he knows about the disposition of Smith’s estate from Patrick’s \textit{Autobiography} only.

\textsuperscript{21} Kennet, \textit{Register and Chronicle}, 127, cited by Williams, “Memoir,” vi. The younger Smith mentions “that small land which my Father left me in Achurch” in his will as well.

\textsuperscript{22} Williams, “Memoir,” vi.

\textsuperscript{23} The remaining subsections of 3.2 as well as sections 3.2 and 3.4 below offer a relatively detailed overview of some of the more significant historical and intellectual trends that formed the milieu into which Smith was cast. Those familiar with the late Renaissance and Early Modern periods may safely proceed directly to section 3.5.

of Smith’s formative context will take an unusually transatlantic perspective. For, while Smith never traveled far from his birthplace in the East Midlands, the horizons of his mental world extended all the way to the distant shores of New England and beyond. The intellectual and entrepreneurial excitement of geographic discovery was, of course, matched in the early seventeenth century by the explosive flurry of activity and self-conscious development in philosophy as well as the soon to be ascendant modern sciences. Just as Smith was to grow up in a world full of reports of new lands populated by unknown peoples he also lived in a world with a new heliocentric cosmos above and a heart within that bore more than a passing resemblance to the pumps used to drain the nearby fens of Cambridgeshire.25

The “discovery” and settlement of the New World, especially for our purposes the English colonies in North America, is easily overlooked by historians of religion, theology, or (especially) philosophy but to their great loss. For one cannot rightly appreciate this era without an understanding of the true breadth and scope of the spirit of discovery that was in the air. Smith came of age

25 On this see, Henry Clifford Darby, The Draining of the Fens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). See also section 3.2.2 below.
in a generation that not only knew of faraway places but could imagine them as really possible destinations for exploration or even resettlement as many of his fellow Emmanuel College men were to do when they left to settle in New England.26

From our late modern perspective of instantaneous global communications it can be hard to imagine it but nearly half of the planet was “new” to Smith’s contemporaries. Only five or six generations separate him from the epochal voyage of 1492. For all the renewed realism in our appraisal of Christopher Columbus’s accomplishments (he did not, after all, “discover” anything; the Americas were already well-known to many millions), motives (profit, empire, etc.), and methods (murder in the name of God among them), he did usher in an new age of discovery for Europeans and set in motion developments that profoundly changed England.27


27 Without the transatlantic Spanish Empire there is no defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and, perhaps, without Spanish gold from the New World, no rebuilding of St. Peter’s to help set off the Protestant Reformation itself. In any event, unlike so many of his favorite authors Smith was born into a world that included North and South America. Indeed, through the more
Among the impressive volumes Smith eventually left to Queens’ College Library is a copy of Captain John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles.*\(^{28}\) The Captain’s narrative includes, most famously, the story of the early settlement of Jamestown in what is now the US Commonwealth of Virginia.

By the year of our John Smith’s birth, English exploration and commercial settlement had been underway for over a century.\(^{29}\) Smith’s was, therefore, a sophisticated, English speaking, North Atlantic world, even as he keep his finger on the pulse of discoveries of different sorts on the European continent. But North America was not the only “new world” to be explored as Smith arrived on recent adventures of his fellow Englishmen, Smith was actually very familiar with the Atlantic coast of North America.


the scene.\textsuperscript{30} This spirit of discovery extended into the sciences, philosophy, and theology as well.

3.2.2 Scientific Discovery

Smith’s lifetime saw the spread of the heliocentric model of the universe as well as the sometimes intense debates this “Copernican Revolution” inspired.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, for all his respect of ancient wisdom, Smith was also unperturbed by the displacement of the Earth from the center of the universe.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} During the same period of English exploration and colonial expansion in North America, there were similar developments in Central and South America, India and the East Indies, and Africa too. For an interesting perspective on this history see, Hugh Edward Egerton, \textit{A Short History of British Colonial Policy} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). The East India Company settled at Surat in 1608 which remained the headquarters for the Company until its move to Bombay in 1687. A trading facility was built at Machilipatnam on the Coromandel Coast of India in 1611 and the Spice Island of Run was defended against the claims of the Dutch by Nathaniel Courthope in 1616. After protracted conflicts with the Dutch over ownership and trading rights Run was finally ceded to the Netherlands in exchange for the North American island of Manhattan in 1665. On the adventures of the East India Company see, for example, K. N. Chaudhuri, \textit{The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-stock Company 1600-1640}, Vol. 4 (London: Taylor & Francis, 1999). England’s exploits were merely one, relatively small, part of a larger pan-European period of discovery and expansion of economic and political power and influence throughout the world. Across the highways of the seas the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and others brought about the first great age of “globalization.” As one of the best read scholars of his day, Smith was well versed in all these developments. His was one of the very first generations to receive prompt, if not always very accurate, word about the habits and habitats of peoples and places around the planet. In short, Smith’s geographical world (and to some extent his economic world as well) was well on its way to becoming very much like our own.

\textsuperscript{31} In 1543, with the publication of \textit{De revolutionibus orbium coelestium}, Nicholaus Copernicus (1473-1543) offered a viable challenge to the Ptolemaic geocentricism that had been astronomical orthodoxy for over thirteen centuries. There were many heliocentric proposals
While copies of Copernicus’ works are not among those listed in the donation of books Smith made to Queens’ College upon his death, his reading in astronomy does show evidence of being primarily in “the Copernican tradition.”33 Copernicus’s heliocentrism was initially not widely accepted but it was nonetheless tolerated for nearly six decades, so long as it was considered a hypothesis, useful for calculation, and not a definitive statement of fact.34 Just two

---

32 On this development in scientific understanding see Alexandre Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).


34 Indeed, an unauthorized preface to Copernicus’ De revolutionibus was added to the first edition that suggested it be treated as a mathematical theory only (Michael J. Crowe, Theories of the World from Antiquity to the Copernican Revolution [Dover, 2001], 85). This (mis)interpretation
years before Smith’s birth, religious opposition to heliocentrism had grown to the point that Copernicus’s ideas were in serious danger of official sanction by the Roman Catholic Church. The great Italian physicist, mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) who was, by this time, a convinced Copernican, attempted to come to the defense of Copernicus in Rome. However, *De revolutionibus* was declared contrary to scripture by the Congregation of the Index in 1616 and Galileo was told to stay away from the controversial, and apparently unbiblical, theory of heliocentrism.\(^{35}\)

Galileo initially agreed and did not speak openly about his heliocentric beliefs until 1632 when his friend, now Pope Urban VIII, and the Office of the Inquisition, approved of his publication of *Dialogo sopra i due massimi systemi del* stuck easily since without observational evidence Copernicus’s theory seemed little more than a mathematical model, not clearly related to reality at all. Indeed, it must be remembered that even Galileo’s great assault on Aristotelian science was only partly empirical. His hypothesis that objects fall at a uniform rate regardless of mass was based on reason alone (presented in *De Motu*, 1590). Scholars are mixed on the question of the famous experiment from the Leaning Tower of Pisa testing this hypothesis. Many think that Galileo never made such an experiment, having already established that Aristotle was wrong and that he was correct by a priori reasoning. So, while the moons of Jupiter and their use as support for the heliocentric model of the solar system was the result of observations through the telescope, some of Galileo’s contributions were of a purely rational nature. Altogether fitting for a teacher of mathematics at the University of Pisa.

mondo, *The Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. Galileo had overreached however as he did far more than present the arguments for and against geocentrism and heliocentrism, but actually made only the heliocentric system seem viable. Thus, Galileo was accused of making a case for the, still-banned, Copernican system. He was tried and found guilty of “vehement suspicion of heresy” in June of 1633. Sentenced to prison at first, his sentence was commuted to house arrest the following day, however his works were also banned from publication. This ban seems, however, only to have helped to spread the works of Galileo and the offending heliocentrism still further across Europe. Smith’s donations to Queens’ College library included six volumes of Galileo’s works, including a 1635 edition of *Dialogus de Systemate Mundi*.

---

36 Largely this was accomplished through the foolish incompetence of the defender of geocentrism in his dialogue, Simplicio, an Italian name borrowed from the Greek Simplicius, the famous late Neoplatonist and particular favorite of the Cambridge Platonists. Simplicio can carry, however, the connotation of a simpleton in Italian too.


38 Ibid., 16.

39 Queens’ MS 47, p.27. Also, Saveson, “The Library of John Smith,” 216 and Saveson, “Catalogue,” 28-29. In Smith’s discourse “Of Prophecy” he speaks of “an evening star shining upon the conspicuous hemisphere, when another [star] was set” (*Select Discourses* [1859], 267). This may well be a reference to the Earth rotating on its axis, a key part of the new astronomy of this era. On Smith’s theory of prophecy more generally see section 4.2 below.
In addition to these works of Galileo, Smith also possessed several texts by Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), who established the heliocentric model of the solar system still in use today.\(^{40}\) Kepler’s laws of planetary motion directly informed Newton’s theory of universal gravitation and thus helped to usher in the Enlightenment conception of the universe. Smith was therefore among the leading lights of early modern science.

Smith donated eleven works by Kepler to Queens’ upon his death. Most of these were first editions including a copy of the *Paralipomena in Vitellionem* that includes an inscription, presumably in Smith’s own hand, reading “Johannes Smith.”\(^{41}\) All the most significant astronomical works are present among them,\(^{42}\) such as the *Harmonices Mundi (The Harmony of the World, 1619)*, and including

\(^{40}\) On Kepler see Daniel A. Di Liscia, “Johannes Kepler,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified 2 May 2011, accessed 16 May 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/kepler/. Also Koyré, *Closed World*, 58-87. Until Kepler, there was an altogether unfamiliar distance between astronomy (and astrology) which were considered liberal arts, and the “natural philosophy” or sciences of mathematics and physics. Astronomy utilized mathematical models (especially geometry) from ancient times, however it was only with Kepler and Galileo that mathematics began to be important in physics too. In fact, Kepler’s greatest contribution to early modern science is probably his combination of the mathematics of astronomy and the cosmology of ancient physics.

\(^{41}\) Queens’ MS 47, 27; Saveson, “Catalogue,” 37; J. Kepler, *Paralipomena in Vitellionem, quibus Astronomiae Pars Optica traditur.*(Frankfurt-on-Main, 1604), Queens’ Old Library C.14.32.

\(^{42}\) With the exception of the *Tabulae Rudolphinae* (1627). Smith’s interests in astronomy, therefore, seem to be primarily theoretical rather than practical. This general attitude is reflected in his theology as well. See especially sections 4.1 and 4.2 below.
what Carl Sagan has called the first work of science fiction, Kepler’s posthumously published novel, *Somnium (The Dream, 1634).*\(^{43}\) Smith was even acquainted with Kepler’s work on the geometry of snowflakes as set forth in *De Nive Sexangula (On the Six-Cornered Snowflake, 1611).*\(^{44}\)

Thus, Smith came into a world fast on its way toward the modern scientific worldview. But it was not just the received wisdom of the ancients on matters related to the macrocosmos that were being re-evaluated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The microcosmos of the human body too was being reassessed in Smith’s day as scholars and increasingly medical practitioners themselves sought to find more effective treatments for disease than those found in centuries old authorities.

In 1543 Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) published *De humani corporis fabrica, On the Fabric of the Human Body,* dramatically correcting the anatomical orthodoxy that had held sway since Galen (130-200).\(^{45}\) Parting ways with

---


\(^{44}\) Queens’ MS 47, 27; Saveson, “Catalogue,” 37.

tradition, and good morals by the standards of his day, Vesalius began to dissect a corpse during his anatomy lecture at the University of Padua, long the center of medical instruction. His magnum opus, the *Fabrica* was based on these lectures. The text is notable for its detail, including many fine woodcuts to illustrate the structures discussed in the text, and its correction of many serious errors made by Galen and repeated for over a millennium.\(^4\) The *Fabrica* met with significant success, both in its official published form and in pirated copies that circulated widely in Europe.\(^5\)


\(^4\) Among these errors was the notion that the major blood vessels begin in the liver. Through observation Vesalius noted that Galen was mistaken on this (they arise in the heart) because Galen had used animals (dogs and monkeys) rather than human beings. Roger Kenneth French, *Medicine Before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 141-3, 149. Lois N. Magner, *A History of Medicine* (CRC Press, 1992), 158-63. Arranged in seven books, *Fabrica* treats the skeletal, muscular, circulatory, cardio-pulmonary, nervous, and digestive systems with the care of an expert observer and the artistic mastery of the late Renaissance. Indeed, without the development of realistic drawing techniques by the Renaissance masters, Vesalius’ masterpiece would scarcely have been imaginable.

\(^5\) The demand for anatomy texts and the heavy cost of the Fabrica, led Vesalius to publish a much condensed Epitome of the larger work, and kind of “short introduction” to the Fabrica. In 1555 a second edition appeared and a third appears to have been contemplated as
For all his advances in anatomy, both technical and theoretical, Vesalius followed Galen on the incorrect notion that the veins and arteries carry two different sorts of blood. The correct theory of the circulation of the blood would await the work of a fellow Englishman during Smith’s lifetime, William Harvey (1578-1657).48 Beyond living a fascinating life during a tumultuous period, Harvey is best remembered for finally describing accurately the circulation of the blood in his justly celebrated Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus, An Anatomical Exercise on the Motion of the Heart and Blood by Living Beings (1628).49

In De motu cordis Harvey argues that rather than there being two systems of blood as Galen had insisted, a single volume is circulated throughout the

---


body. Most important for the intellectual context that Smith inherited however was the method employed by Harvey to make his great advance in physiology and anatomy. Building on the work of others Harvey added above all a willingness, and the ability, to engage in careful observation and experimentation. By combining anatomical observation and experiments, such as selectively opening and closing of the veins and arteries by the use of tourniquets and ligatures, he was able to work out what must be the case about the heart.

It was by treating the heart as a mechanism that its true physiological function was first understood. The importance for biological and medical science of Harvey’s discovery was noticed immediately but the mechanization of biology was to have lasting effects in philosophy as well. Indeed, the great seventeenth century materialist Thomas Hobbes is said to have noted that of modern authors only Harvey was taught during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{50}

We can be sure that Smith was aware of, and approved, Harvey’s theory from his own words. In Smith’s discourse “On the Immortality of the Soul” he speaks of “The constant circulation of the blood through all our veins and

arteries. From the context of this unmistakable reference to the circulation of the blood, Smith was comfortable thinking of the body in mechanical terms along the lines developed by Harvey and Descartes. Moreover, from the list of works donated to Queens’ by Smith we know that he owned at least one work by Harvey, *Exercitationes de Generatione Animalium* (1651).

This sampling of the discoveries of the period immediately preceding Smith’s lifetime and work clearly shows that he was born into a period of intense novelty in natural philosophy. These technical and practical developments went hand in hand, of course, with new developments in philosophy proper too, as we will see in the next section. Both practice and theory demanded a new account by Smith’s day, and for many the “new philosophy,” associated (retrospectively)
with Rene Descartes above all, was that way forward. As we will see however, Smith responded to these same pressures by looking simultaneously to the great discoveries of his time and back to the ancient wisdom embedded in Christian Platonism.

3.3 Between the Times: Scholastic and Modern Learning in Smith’s Cambridge

John Smith enrolled at Emmanuel College, Cambridge on the 5th of April 1636. College records report that he entered as a “sizar,” roughly the seventeenth century equivalent of a work-study student. Sizars would perform various tasks in college in exchange for their tuition and board. According to Samuel Salter, Smith’s job included recording the sermons and other discourses of his tutor and benefactor Benjamin Whichcote.

---


56 Salter says that one “Mr. Smith” took down Whichcote’s sermons. Salter also says that this Smith said that he “lived upon Dr. Whichcote.” The similarities to our Smith, who spoke in this same way of his relationship with Whichcote according to Worthington and Patrick makes it seem most likely that it was among Smith’s duties as a sizar to record his tutor’s sermons (Samuel Salter, “Preface to this New Edition,” Moral and Religious Aphorisms. Collected from the Manuscript Papers of The Reverend and Learned Doctor Whichcote [London, 1753], xviii). Perhaps this was a more suitable task for one with the obvious intellect and frail health of Smith than cleaning, etc., in college.
Whichcote is universally recognized as a founding member of the Cambridge Platonist movement. Indeed, it is in large measure his influence that gave to the group their idiosyncratic “Platonism.”\(^{57}\) He taught both Smith and Peter Sterry and probably Ralph Cudworth and Nathaniel Culverwell as well.\(^{58}\) Whichcote enrolled at Emmanuel in 1626 but reacted strongly against the orthodox Calvinism he was taught by Anthony Tuckney.\(^{59}\) In 1633 Whichcote became a fellow at Emmanuel and three years later he began a series of lectures at Holy Trinity Church which lasted nearly two decades in which he gradually came to advocate broadly tolerant ideas colored by the hodgepodge of Platonic and Stoic philosophy that came to be known as “Cambridge Platonism.”

By the “early 1640s” Whichcote was teaching what Samuel Salter called a “nobler, freer and more generous set of opinions” than the Calvinism then

\(^{57}\) For example, while they advocated innate ideas they did not have much time for the Platonic doctrine of recollection. See Dominic Scott, “Platonic Recollection and the Cambridge Platonism,” *Hermathena* No. 149 (1990): 73-97 (reprinted in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 139-50. Scott, does not discuss Smith in this article but does, rightly, note that he subscribed to a notion of innate ideas (n.11, pp.77 and 95).

\(^{58}\) Taliaferro and Teply, *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality*, 12.

\(^{59}\) More on their disagreement below.
dominant at Emmanuel. More tellingly for our purposes, Bishop Burnet reports that Whichcote was “disgusted with the dry, systematical way[s]” of his day. Instead of merely promoting the late scholastic curriculum, Whichcote had begun to assign more reading in ancient philosophy, “chiefly Plato, Tully [Cicero] and Plotinus.” This reference to Plotinus is particularly telling as he would become a key influence on Smith.

Alison Teply has suggested that another great light in the “Cambridge Platonist” movement may have been responsible for bringing the study of Plotinus to Cambridge. Henry More (1614-1687) of Christ’s College (physically near Emmanuel and also deeply “Puritan” at the time) had read widely in the “Platonik Writers, Marsilius Ficinus, Plotinus himself” as well as “the Mystical Divines” by the time he took his degree. Ralph Cudworth too had become a Fellow at Emmanuel during Smith’s student days there. Passmore has suggested


that Smith was Cudworth’s “pupil and admirer” on the strength of a letter from Dillingham to Sancroft. The extent to which Smith learned directly from More or Cudworth is unclear but it is likely that they did reinforce the interests and competencies that Smith was already forming under the guidance of Whichcote.

Mention should also be made of another, too-often-neglected, figure in the growth of Platonism at Emmanuel College, Peter Sterry. As Teply has demonstrated, Sterry was among the very first to “make a public profession of Platonism in the University of Cambridge.” There is good reason to take this claim cum grano salis (Platonic theses were defended in the schools throughout the medieval period from time to time). However, Sterry is nonetheless a critical example of the combination of Puritanism and Platonism that seems, from the

---

63 J. A. Passmore, Ralph Cudworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15. Marjorie Hope Nicolson agrees with this view of the student-pupil relationship between Cudworth and Smith. See her "Christ's College and the Latitude-Men," Modern Philology 27, no. 1 (1929): 39, 41-2. Despite obvious similarities on many issues (and we will see several in part two below) there seems to be little reason to suppose that the relationship was unidirectional in the ways supposed by Passmore and Nicolson. Yes, Cudworth was a Fellow during Smith’s later student years at Emmanuel but that does not mean that any similarities between the two are the result of Cudworth’s influence.

64 Thomas Baker, Harleian MS 7033; Baker vi. 84. Cited by Teply, “Mystical Theology,” 11.
outside, so strange in this period at Emmanuel College. How is it that scholars raised to be Puritans found their way to Platonism?

Again, Teply has given us the essential clue. There was a small group of loosely associated Humanist Puritans in this period. Men like Richard Holdsworth, briefly Master of Emmanuel College who was a “moderate Calvinist” had taught at the “Platonist Gresham College [London] in 1629” where he defended “‘Pagan’ authors and greatly admir[ed] Plato.” Moreover, Sterry himself became chaplain to the “Puritan Robert Greville, Lord Brooke” (1608-1643) in either 1637 or 1638, shortly after being made a fellow of Emmanuel. Other Puritan Platonists, such as Thomas Dugard (a Sidney Sussex graduate) also maintained friendships with Sterry and Brooke. Indeed, in the turmoil leading up to the Civil War, Lord Brooke provided security for many

---


66 Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso, 116, 182.

more moderate divines. Thus a circle of temperate Puritans, educated at Cambridge, and open to Platonic philosophy formed around Brooke.\footnote{68 Teply, “Mystical Theology,” 20-52. See also James Deotis Roberts, From Puritanism to Platonism in Seventeenth Century England (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).}

These more tolerant (pseudo-latitudinarian) and humanistic Puritans help to explain the presence of Platonic learning at Cambridge in the 1630s and 1640s.\footnote{69 On the notion of “latitudinarianism” see Simon Patrick, A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men (London, 1662); Edward Fowler, The Principles and Practices of Certaine Moderate Divines of the Church of England Abusively Called Latitudinarians (Greatly Misunderstood) Truly Represented and Defended Wherein (by the Way) Some Controversies of No Mean Importance Are Succinctly Discussed in a Free Discourse between the Two Intimate Friends: In III Parts, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: Printed for Lodowick Lloyd, 1671); E. A. George, Seventeenth Century Men of Latitude (New York, 1908); Marjorie Hope Nicolson, “Christ’s College and the Latitude-Men,” Modern Philology 27, no. 1 (1929): 35-53; John Spurr, “’Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church,” The Historical Journal 31, no. 1 (1988): 61-82. Most basically the phrase distinguishes a style of churchmanship noted for tolerance of a wide variety of views and practices so long as essentials are observed. It is something like a predecessor to what in contemporary America is called “liberal” or “mainline Protestantism.”} In fact, it may even be the case that Sterry himself taught John Smith, thus helping to pass Platonic predilections to our author. In any event, we know that Smith was well aware of moderate Reformers well read in Platonic philosophy; Brooke’s \textit{Nature of Truth} (1640), an influential stimulus to the “formation of Platonic ideas during the early decades of the seventeenth-century,” was included in Smith’s library donation to Queens’ College.\footnote{70 Ibid., 36. See also Queens’ MS 47, 21, and Saveson, “Catalogue,” 14.}
Though almost certainly exposed to a wider range of texts and modes of thought by his tutor Whichcote, and perhaps also Peter Sterry and others too, Smith’s *official* education at Emmanuel would have followed the then standard late scholastic curriculum. However, beyond these generalities, precious little is known about the education that Smith received at Emmanuel.

Richard Holdsworth (one-time President of Emmanuel) reports an ideal course of study in his “Directions for Study” but there is no record of what students such as Smith *actually* read.\(^7^1\) This lacuna is mitigated somewhat by the more general observations scholars have made about the curriculum at seventeenth century Cambridge more broadly. In what follows, I will outline this course of study using Costello as a central guide, supplemented by primary sources related directly to Smith.

The scholar of thirteenth century Paris would have clearly recognized the work of seventeenth century Cambridge.\(^7^2\) By this period scholasticism held on

\(^7^1\) Richard Holdsworth, “Directions for a Student in the Universitie,” Emmanuel College, Cambridge, MS 1.2.27.(1); reprinted as “Appendix II,” in Harris Francis Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton: The Cambridge University Period* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 2: 623-64.

\(^7^2\) Though, of course, with the differences that accrue over time in any living tradition. Scholastic forms and subject matter had come of age in Paris and Oxford during the early centuries of the first gathering of scholars along the river Cam (12th and 13th centuries).
as the official mode of thought and instruction in the University and its Colleges, even if in some respects they had grown tired and merely formal.73 In an age such as ours when academic fashions race by at the speed of digital communications the contrast could not be greater.

Instruction took the form of three basic scholastic practices and the informal tutoring that still marks an Oxbridge education. Teaching officials in the Schools and the Colleges gave regular lectures on the central texts of the curriculum in the medieval style with students taking down lectures word for word so as to have their text available for later study. By Smith’s day the increasing accessibility of printed books was making the lecture less important than it had originally been, but they continued throughout the seventeenth century nonetheless.

More dynamic than the formal scholastic lecture were the disputation and its written cousin the declamation. Disputations were held in both the Colleges and in the Schools as a “way of examining the talents of those who aspired to a

Cambridge degree.”74 Theses, which could be assigned or chosen by the student, were presented with full academic ceremonial and defended via syllogistic arguments and debate. As live oral battles of wits, the disputationss were a highlight of the academic life of the University as well as being great entertainment. The intellectual and rhetorical talent required for participants in a disputation made for excellent training of young scholars. But most of the skills needed for disputationss were practiced in a third form of scholastic practice, the declamation.

The declamation was essentially “a polished essay,” though, like the disputation meant to be presented orally.75 They were regularly assigned, both privately in College and publically in the Schools. The central task of the declamation was effective oratory in a clear and plain rhetorical style. However, precision in argumentation was expected as well.76

---


75 Costello, *Scholastic Curriculum*, 146.

76 Ibid., 32.
The primary subject matter for an undergraduate at early seventeenth century Cambridge followed the scholastic pattern as well. Students read the three arts of logic, rhetoric, and ethics and the four sciences of metaphysics, physics, mathematics, and “cosmography” (a combination of geography and what would today be geology, anthropology, history, and the like). Graduate studies at Cambridge were limited to the highest medieval disciplines: music, law, medicine, and above all, theology.

3.3.1 Logic

The logic studied at seventeenth century Cambridge was Aristotelian. This does not mean that it was Aristotle himself that students read however. Through “such manuals as Keckermann’s *Systema Logicae*, Burgersdicius’ *Institutium Logicarum Libri Duo*, Heorebords *Annotamenta*, and Eustachius of St. Paul’s *Summa Philosophiae Quadripartia*” undergraduates received “Aristotle

---


resystematized and simplified.”79 Thus, the syllogism and *a priori* argument was highly praised as the way to true science. This lead to a relative lack of attention to inductive, *a posteriori*, methods of argument in the Cambridge curriculum. Over time, this meant that the newer scientific approaches of Bacon and Galileo had no clear line of entry into the curriculum. As we will see below, Smith managed to work around this delay in the modernization of the curriculum through extensive reading, discussion, and correspondence.80

3.3.2 Rhetoric

Every reader of Smith has been impressed by his eloquence. While undoubtedly owning to his own unique genius, rhetoric was also a central part of the seventeenth century curriculum as well. Having learned through his studies in logic to seek the truth the Cambridge undergraduate turned to rhetoric.

---


80 John Wallis appealed to correspondence with Smith to back up his claim to have developed a method for solving cubic equations in which he mentions that Smith had asked him for his assistance on some aspects of Descartes’ *Geometry*. John Wallis, *A Treatise on Algebra, both Historical and Critical* (London: Richard Davis, Oxford, 1685), 121, 177, 209. The original correspondence with Smith is lost but the contents thereof have been more-or-less reconstructed in Philip Beeley and Christoph Scriba, eds., *Correspondence of John Wallis (1616-1703)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1: 9.
to make some profitable use of that truth. Holdsworth says of rhetoric that it “teaches the nature of men’s passions and affections, how to raise and move them, how to allay, quiet and change them, a knowledge necessary not only in writing, but speeches and letters, but also in common discourse and dealing with men, if not to make use of it yourself at least to discover it to other men that you may not be at any time abused and over reached by it.”

In short, rhetoric teaches one how to persuade and how not to be persuaded by others too easily. In the still largely oral academic culture of seventeenth century Cambridge the ability to speak well cannot be overestimated.

Holdsworth recommends that students keep a commonplace book (i.e., notebook) for what Costello calls “the idiomatic fruits of reading” primarily in the Latin classics. The idea being to learn artful expression by imitation of the masters and in the process to gain fluency in good Latin too. In addition to this method of imitation, Holdsworth recommended a number of manuals in oratory,

---


83 Costello, *Scholastic Curriculum*, 56.
but above all that of the French Jesuit, Nicolas Caussin (1583-1651), *De Eloquentia sacra et humana*.\(^8^4\)

Smith would seem to have taken this, or some similar, advice to heart as his single extant “commonplace book” is full of quotations from the Greek and Roman classics, poetry, oratory, history, geography as well as the philosophical sciences.\(^8^5\) Moreover, the list of authorities given in the early pages of Caussin’s *De Eloquentia* (1630) includes nearly every author referenced by Smith in his *Select Discourses*, with the exceptions of moderns like Descartes and Platonists such as Plotinus and Proclus.\(^8^6\) For example, Caussin recommends Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Plato, Plutarch, Tacitus, Pliny, (Pseudo-)Dionysius, Origen, 


\(^{8^5}\) Cambridge University Library MS Dd.ix.44. This manuscript is described in *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, ed. Syndics of the University Press (Cambridge: University Press, 1856), I: 403 (item 531). It contains historical, geographical and cosmographical notes on many topics as well as some notes on figures of philosophical and theological significance.

\(^{8^6}\) Caussin, “Auctores qui Laudantur et Expenduntur,” in *De Eloquentia*. 
Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Tertullian, and others, all of whom appear in Smith’s Discourses frequently. A fine copy of De Eloquentia was donated by Smith to Queens’ College.87

Holdsworth was also keen on memorizing choice passages out of key authors in a process he called “getting without book.” It would seem that Smith excelled at this too, since Simon Patrick referred to him as a “living library” capable of sharing what he had gleaned from his wide reading with any who should seek to converse with him.88

3.3.3 Ethics

As in many other areas, the curriculum at Cambridge looked to Aristotle for its guide to ethics, at least in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Aristotelian “virtue ethics” was studied, like logic, less in the original than in commentaries or summaries by Catholics such as “Victoria, Lessius, De Lugo, Suarez, and Dominicus Soto” and Protestants like “Melanchthon or Grotius.”89


88 Costello, Scholastic Curriculum, 58; Simon Patrick, “Funeral Sermon” (1660), 506-7.

89 Costello, Scholastic Curriculum, 64.
Thus while Aristotelian, the student of ethics was also exposed to (relatively) modern texts and concerns. For example, Smith himself owned four works by Grotius, including a copy of the *Mare Liberum*. His collection also included the *Historiae Florentinae* of Machiavelli, Sadler’s *Rights of the Kingdom* (1649), and John Selden’s *De Jure Naturali* (1640), among many others.

While centrally concerned with virtue after the style of Aristotle, the Cambridge undergraduate knew this approach to morality as it related to others from classical antiquity as well. Fellow student at Emmanuel, John Balderston, notes the Epicurean concern for pleasure, the Stoic view of virtue as its own

---

90 Smith also owned copies of Grotius’ *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi, adversus Faustum Socinum* (Leyden, 1617), *Apologetica* (Paris, 1622), *De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra, Commentarius Posthumus* (Paris, 1647), as well as the *Mare Liberum* (edition uncertain). Queens’ MS 47, 25; Saveson, “Catalogue,” 30, 70 n.54. Smith’s own moral theory is essentially Aristotelian in the sense that it places great emphasis on the cultivation of virtue. But, far more importantly, his ethics is theological and spiritual. See especially chapters four and five below.


reward, the Platonic goal of “assimilation to God” along with Aristotle’s “virtuous activity.”

In an age as fully saturated with religion (and religious controversy) as the seventeenth century in England, much of what would today be the purview of philosophical (meta)ethics was then dealt with under the rubric of theology. Questions about the moral nature of humanity for example often took the form of disputes between Catholic and Protestant (and different types of each) over predestination, justification, etc.

3.3.4 Metaphysics

For the seventeenth century, as it had for centuries, metaphysics meant the primary philosophical science, which dealt with the most generalized principles of being and which prescinded being entirely from its status as literary or economic, sensible or suprasensible.

In other words, metaphysics included the study of Being qua Being, just as it had for Aristotle. Closely aligned with theology, in that it too dealt with God,

---


95 On this see, for example, Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

metaphysics differed in that it did not rely on revelation but instead upon reason alone (or so the scholastic thought). Natural theology therefore was a matter of metaphysical speculation but so too was the general principles of substance, form, potential, actuality, and the four causes, which are central to an Aristotelian account of any sensible or material being at all.

Despite the predominance of Aristotelian metaphysics at seventeenth century Cambridge, the Platonic tradition was not (completely) neglected. For example, Neoplatonic themes are clearly apparent in verses composed to introduce some disputations in the Schools. Moreover, as early as 1605 the Platonic thesis that “the soul of the man is the man” (*Animus cuiusque quisque*) was defended before the Schools and was introduced with the statement that “only Plato [and presumably the Platonists with him] among all the philosophers dared” to hold this thesis. The disputant continues, “This opinion is acceptable to me, not because Platonic, though Plato’s authority carries more weight with me than that of any other philosopher, but because his opinion seems to me to approach nearer the truth.” So, while the architectonic of metaphysical study

97 Ibid., 18.

98 Quoted in Costello, 30.
remained Aristotelian, already by the early years of the seventeenth century
room was being made for the Platonism that would come to prominence in
Smith and the other Cambridge Platonists.99

With Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, Smith was among the first at
Cambridge to read the new metaphysics of Rene Descartes. While More carried
on a correspondence with Descartes and both he and Cudworth cooled to his
system over time, Smith remained an uncritical admirer of Cartesian philosophy
up to his death in 1652. For Smith, Cartesian dualism sat well with ancient

---

99 The “Platonism” of the Cambridge Platonists was never pure or simple however. As
Sarah Hutton has cautioned, the Cambridge Platonists were well versed in many schools of
ancient philosophy (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, etc.) as well as the new developments
of Descartes and Hobbes. See Hutton, “The Cambridge Platonists” and “Introduction to the
Renaissance and Seventeenth Century,” in Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton, eds., Platonism and
the English Imagination (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67-75. Also, John Sellars, “Stoics
Against Stoics in Cudworth’s A Treatise of Freewill,” British Journal for the History of Philosophy 20
History Review 21 no.2 (2011): 121-33; and This mixed bag should not come as a surprise however.
The Platonism present in scholastic philosophy was always a hybrid form combining Christian,
Stoic, and Aristotelian elements. In short, scholastic Platonism was Christian Neoplatonism.
Platonism. In Descartes’ metaphysics “Smith found contemporary support for the philosophy of Plotinus.”

There are no references to Thomas Hobbes in the Select Discourses at all; Smith seems to have been unaware of Hobbes’s challenge to the incorporeal soul and the spiritual God that Smith took for granted. Where More and Cudworth were to become strong opponents of new varieties of corporealism, the atheism and materialism that concerned Smith took the form of ancient atomism (Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius). Commentators have typically dismissed this as a touch of antiquarian curiosity on his part, as if these ancient

100 “Gli stessi argomenti per l’immortalità dell’anima in cui l’originalità di Smith consiste nella combinazione di platonismo e cartesianesimo, sono discussioni speculative elaborate dalla ragione per chiarire una convinzione generata dall’ fede . . . ” (Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso, 100; see also 81 and 262). See also chapter six below.


102 Tulloch, Rational Theology, 2: 141.


104 Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso, 332. See chapter 6 below.
theories were irrelevant. In this, scholarship on Smith has sold him short as a Christian apologist just as set against materialism as More and Cudworth.

While atomism and various forms of attendant materialism did explode on to the European philosophical scene in the mid-seventeenth century, the roots of this flowering go far deeper and were well known to Smith. For one thing, late medieval and early Renaissance philosophy already had significant attempts to explain the natural world in terms of atoms, among them the religious reformer John Wycliffe (1320-84). Both Erasmus and Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth century thought the philosophy of Lucretius a serious enough matter to compose a fictional dialogue titled *The Epicurean* (Erasmus) and to include the epicurean “pleasure principle” as the guiding force of the (superior) morality of the inhabitants of *Utopia* (More).


In the early seventeenth century, on the heels of the execution of Giordano Bruno, Jesuits at the University of Pisa were given a Latin prayer against the temptations of atomism to recite daily.

Nothing comes from atoms. 
All the bodies of the world shine with the beauty of their forms. 
Without these the globe would only be an immense chaos. 
In the beginning God made all things, so that they might generate something. 
Consider to be nothing that from which nothing can come. 
You, O Democritus, form nothing different starting from atoms. 
Atoms produce nothing; therefore atoms are nothing.108

When Bruno began to write his “heretical” views of the cosmos as infinite, the heliocentric solar system,109 pantheism, and the denial of the divinity of Jesus, he chose to do so in Latin verse, following Lucretius’s De rerum natura as his guide.110 Indeed, Greenblatt has argued convincingly that Bruno was deeply

---


109 See Koyré, Closed World, 28-57.

110 Ingrid D. Rowland, Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 214. Importantly, it was not for his scientific views that Bruno was burnt at the stake in 1600 but rather his theological opinions. There was no official position within the Catholic Church against heliocentrism at the time. Sheila Rabin, “Nicolaus Copernicus,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified 16 August 2010, accessed 19
influenced by his reading of Lucretius while Rowland notes that much of what is “most revolutionary” in Bruno “had already been ventured by ancient Greek philosophers.”

In England, Puritans frequently hurled the label “epicurean” at the despised members of King Charles’ Court. Some of this was simply a fashionable and learned way of calling Royalists un-Godly in the moral sense. However, there were actually some entanglements with actual philosophical Epicureanism at Court too. Clearly, then, materialism in the form of Epicurean atomism was a living concern in Smith’s day. When he offers arguments directed against Epicurus and Lucretius he is not only offering a lesson in the history of


111 Greenblatt, The Swerve, 233-41; Rowland, Giordano Bruno, 216.

philosophy. Smith is there making a case against a real threat to sound Christian philosophy as he understands it.\footnote{There are two potential reasons why this has been ignored by scholars working on Smith and the Cambridge Platonists more broadly. First, it has become eccentric in the extreme to think of ancient schools of philosophy, and the texts associated with them, as anything like a \textit{living} challenge to our understandings of nature and ourselves. This was not so in Smith’s day when, as we have seen, the texts, phrases, and modes of thought of the ancients were the very stuff of current thinking and writing. Second, compared to More and Cudworth (who lived to respond to the challenge of Hobbes and the “mind-body problem” in ways that were not as relevant in Smith’s lifetime, Smith offers relatively little in the way of explicit argument against his ancient atomist foes. See chapter six in part II below for my argument that this owes much to Smith’s reliance on the spiritual senses in his theology. In short, for Smith one can “see” that the Epicurean system is false when one lives and thus comes to consciousness of the true Christian Neoplatonic system.}

3.3.5 Physics

Early seventeenth century physics included elements of what today would be called philosophy and several sciences too. What kept all the disparate strands of physics, or natural philosophy, together was that it treated being in so far as it is subject to change. Physics was, in its more philosophical guise, essentially “concerned with the universal principles of matter, form, time, place, and extension.”\footnote{Costello, \textit{Scholastic Curriculum}, 90.} In addition, physics treated the physical composition of the universe including astronomy, the elements (ether, fire, air, water, and earth),
Aristotelian psychology including the rational soul of human beings, and the origin of the world.

3.3.6 Mathematics

The state of mathematical knowledge at early seventeenth century Cambridge lagged well behind that of universities in Italy and elsewhere. Emmanuel student John Wallis reports that during his time there (the early 1630s) he “did thenceforth prosecute it [mathematics] . . . not as a formal study, but as a pleasing diversion, at spare hours . . . For I had none to direct me.”115 The general lack of notebooks and disputations related to mathematics makes it all the more remarkable that among Smith’s personal library collection are several works from the cutting edge of early modern mathematics. For example, Smith owned a copy of Descartes’ *Geometry* and many books of astronomy in the tradition of Copernicus.116 These include eleven works by Kepler, Galileo’s *Dialogus de Systemate Mundi*, as well as works by Rheticus (*Narratio Prima*) and the scientific works of Giordano Bruno.117

115 Quoted in Costello, *Scholastic Curriculum*, 102.


In addition to these newer texts in mathematics and physics, Smith also possessed, and likely used in conjunction with Descartes’ *Geometry* in his mathematical teaching, copies of the geometrical works of Jacobi de Billy, Bonaventura Cavalieri, Oronce Fine, Marini Ghetaldi, Michaelis Havemanni, Petri Ryffii, and Petrus Ramus. He would have also had available the *Elements* of Euclid with an influential preface by the sixteenth century magus John Dee. Mordechai Feingold tells us that it was most likely Smith, and a few others, that set Isaac Barrow on his path toward the development of the fundamental theorem of calculus, a key step on the road to the great breakthroughs of Barrow’s student, Isaac Newton a generation later. Unlike his contemporaries, Smith both had the opportunity to study mathematics and obviously the proficiency to help bring that field to prominence at Cambridge by the end of the seventeenth century.

---


3.3.7 Cosmography

The last of the four sciences in the undergraduate curriculum is virtually unheard of today and in fact was heavily neglected even in the seventeenth century. Cosmography was the science of the general features of the cosmos, including the heavens and the Earth. It included what today would be called geophysics and geography, but also history, physical and cultural anthropology, and comparative religions/philosophies too. Cosmography treated the shape and location of geographic features as well as the cultures and histories of the inhabitants of far off lands.

Surprisingly, given the pace of English colonization at the time, there was little emphasis on cosmography at seventeenth century Cambridge. This may be related, as Costello suggests, to the poor state of mathematical knowledge since cartography increasingly relied on mathematics during this period.\textsuperscript{121} But, most likely the work of merchants and explorers was simply not “academic” enough to receive attention at Cambridge in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Costello, \textit{Scholastic Curriculum}, 104.

\textsuperscript{122} Even so, there were notable efforts made in this area such as the cosmographic works of Samuel Purchas. Ibid.
In this area, Smith’s interests seem to be particularly unusual for his context. As we have already seen, he had deep interests in the geography and history of the world. Smith’s commonplace book is mostly full of citations from histories. His library too included a vast number of histories and geographic texts as well. Smith’s interests here are suggestive of an active imagination on his part, precisely the sort of lively faculty that plays a central role in his version of the spiritual senses.

In light of his unusual interest in cosmography, mathematics and the new physics, Smith was clearly no less concerned with the developments of his own day than the classical and scholastic elements of his education. Smith was a modern scholar but one who clearly knew his scholastic tradition too. As we will see in Part II below, this combination was to serve him well when he came to compose his Select Discourses.

---


124 For example, the geographical works of Lamberti Danaei, Ferrari, Abraham Golnitzi, among many others. Saveson, “Catalogue,” 24, 27, 31.

125 See part two below.
3.3.8 Theology

In addition to the undergraduate studies outlined above there were four graduate disciplines in early modern Cambridge; theology, medicine, law, and music.\footnote{Costello, Scholastic Curriculum, 107.} There is little evidence however of any particular interest in law or music on Smith’s part, and this is basically in keeping with the overall paucity of these studies at Cambridge. Medicine too was not a major concern of the scholars along the Cam. Most who did study the healing arts did so after they left Cambridge, often at the great international center for medical training, Padua, as we have seen in the example of Harvey.\footnote{Ibid., 128-45. On Renaissance medical education see Nancy G. Siraisi, Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 48-77.} The one area that really excelled at Cambridge was theology. We will see much more about the religious situation in Smith’s time at Cambridge in the next section but the academic aspects (which are not really distinguishable from the more general religious and political situation) can be presented relatively briefly.

At Emmanuel there were, by statute, weekly theological disputations that were intended to follow the “usual custom of the other colleges.”\footnote{Costello, Scholastic Curriculum, 110.} Presumably
then, such theological battles of wits were common across Cambridge. In addition to disputations conducted by Fellows and attended by scholars there were opportunities to be schooled in the basics of Puritan, that is Calvinist, theology at Emmanuel. For example, in 1628 Anthony Tuckney, who would eventually engage in valuable epistolary debate with Whichcote and rise to the Mastership of Emmanuel, delivered what has been recorded as “A brief and pithy catechism” in the College Chapel.

This catechesis as well as the numerous sermons given in chapel (attended by all while in college), from the pulpits of the surrounding churches, and the University sermons given at Great St. Mary’s were well attended by scholars who were encouraged to take them down word for word (“diting”) so that their content could be further reflected on and studied later.129 Often sermons were answered by another preacher in something resembling the disputation; a kind of disputation by alternating sermons.130 The Divinity School disputations too “were the acme of the school exercises, and the undergraduates attended.”131

---

129 Ibid., 111.

130 Ibid., 111-2.

131 Ibid., 112.
Thus, the Cambridge student was well versed and rehearsed in theology and theological controversy.\textsuperscript{132}

The content of the majority of theological instruction at Cambridge in the early seventeenth century was Reformed, in the Lutheran/Calvinist sense, while on issues of ecclesiology, ritual, and the like, opinions differed from very nearly what would today be called Anglo-Catholic to non-conformist and extreme Protestant (Presbyterian, Congregational, etc.). Even those who wished to maintain the episcopacy and the rituals of the medieval church tended to be thoroughly Protestant on issues of salvation, stressing the free gift of salvation through faith. Indeed, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England are fully consistent with a Reformed interpretation even as they keep open the possibility of retaining some Catholic practices. This is why, while Emmanuel College was a clearly “Puritan” institution in Smith’s day, this does not mean that its members opposed the established Church of England. Not all Puritans were non-conformists, or indeed Parliamentarians during the Civil War. Holdsworth, for example, was both a Puritan \textit{and} a Royalist.

\textsuperscript{132} So much so that one recent graduate was able to argue, complete with full scholastic flourish, with a French Catholic priest in Latin. Ibid.
The theology taught along the Cam was a kind of scholastic Protestantism. Prominent among the disputation topics in theology were the central issues of contention between Protestants and Catholics at the time. However the only real options open to members of Cambridge Colleges was how Protestant to be; Catholicism was itself essentially illegal from 1559-1685 and again from 1688-1829 in England. Students of theology included Calvinists of various stripes, including the more extreme Puritans like Anthony Tuckney, but also Arminians of either High (Laudian) or Low Church sorts too.

---


134 Arminianism takes its name from Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609). His basic tenants were: “1. Prior to being drawn and enabled, one is unable to believe . . . able only to resist. 2. Having been drawn and enabled, but prior to regeneration, one is able to believe . . . able also to resist. 3. After one believes, God then regenerates; one is able to continue believing . . . able also to resist. 4. Upon resisting to the point of unbelief, one is unable again to believe . . . able only to resist” (Stephen Ashby, ”Reformed Arminianism,” in Four Views on Eternal Security [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 159). Thus, ”Arminianism” is associated, especially by (orthodox) Calvinists with the notion that one may (must) cooperate with grace in the process of salvation. Arminians were often accused of Pelagianism (the heresy that original sin left no taint on human nature) by opponents. The classic study with regard to the Cambridge Platonists (Cudworth and More primarily) is Rosalie L. Colie, Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). ”Laudian” refers to that style of churchmanship promulgated by Archbishop William Laud. It was “High” in ritual and ecclesiology and tended toward Arminian in theology.
on issues of grace, justification, the freedom of the will as well as ritual and
polity, a common collection of texts and authors remained the steady diet of the
typical Cambridge divine. Medieval schoolmen such as Thomas Aquinas,
Bonaventure, and John Duns Scotus, were read and used along with modern
scholastics such as Suarez, Molina, and Victoria.135 With these masters, and many
others, the scholar was also expected to turn to the Church Fathers for help in
understanding scripture. Among them, Augustine, Justin Martyr, Clement of
Alexandria, and Ambrose of Millan, figured prominently. Even a figure of such
questioned orthodoxy as Origen was read, even at Puritan Emmanuel.136

Notice should also be made of the move toward reading scripture in its
original languages, Hebrew and Greek, rather than in Latin only. Here the
driving forces are Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation. In

---

135 Costello, *Scholastic Curriculum*, 121, and 81. Scholastic authors abound in the libraries
of Emmanuel and Queens’ Colleges in the early seventeenth century. See S. Bush, Jr. and C. J.
St. Bernard, Commonly Called Queen’s College in the University of Cambridge* (London, 1827).

136 Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, was owned by both Emmanuel and Queens’ Colleges’s
Libraries in a 1605 Greek and Latin edition. For Emmanuel College see Bush and Rasmussen, *The
Library of Emmanuel College*, 146. This volume was in the collection for the first year of Smith’s
undergraduate studies in the College. There was also most likely a copy, of the same edition, at
Queens’ College when he became a fellow in 1644. See Horne, *Catalogue*, 122. The edition in both
cases was that of David Hoeschelius.
fact, it was Catholic humanism that led to Erasmus’ Greek New Testament. And one of the first great vernacular translations of the Bible was composed by Martin Luther in German from that quintessential work of humanist scholarship.137 Moreover, many an Oxbridge don was set to work in the early seventeenth century putting the sacred texts into English out of their originals.138 

Smith too was well read in Hebrew and Greek as well as Latin, and shows clear signs of interest in other Near Eastern languages in his library collection as well.139 Like Thomas Aquinas, who read and learned from Maimonides, and the Renaissance Platonist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who read the Kabbalah, John Smith benefited from a relatively extensive study of Judaica. Smith was well

137 Luther’s New Testament in Early New High German (1522) used as its source text the second edition of Erasmus’s Textus Receptus (1519).


versed in the Talmud and the works of many Rabbis, but above all the Great Rambam himself whom he relies on often in his discourse on prophecy.¹⁴⁰

As we have seen above, Smith was both a product of his educational milieu and in some respects highly unusual for his day. His fluency with the classics shows his clear debt to the late scholastic curriculum. Simultaneously his interest and expertise in the new science, mathematics and cosmography mark him out as a thoroughly modern thinker as well. However, even his modern concerns for geography and history are typically put to use in service of Smith’s classical rhetoric. As we will see in part II, the new learning seemed to fit in seamlessly with the old for Smith; all offering occasions for embellishment with an apt quote or commonplace.

Perhaps most noteworthy in terms of Smith’s divergence from the typical pattern is his Platonism. In an age still dominated by the long (albeit dimming) shadow of Aristotle, Smith and his colleagues were unusual for their interest in, ¹⁴⁰ This rabbinic learning is nowhere more in evidence than in the sixth of his Select Discourses, “Of Prophesie” (Smith, Select Discourses [1660], 167-280). The wealth of references herein to the work of Maimonides and other Rabbis may help to account for this discourse remaining influential well into the following century and beyond. Indeed, this discourse was translated into Latin for a Continental audience and included in Jean Le Clerc’s Commentary on the Prophets (Amsterdam, 1731). The further details of Smith’s reading and influences in theology are explored in depth in chapter four below.
and approval of, Platonic modes of thought. However, it would be a mistake to make too much of this apparent “outbreak” of Platonism at Cambridge.

Platonism had always been present within scholasticism and Smith is a second generation Platonist after Whichcote and Sterry.141 Moreover, the rhetorical text recommended by Holdsworth at Emmanuel lists Plato and several Platonist Fathers as important authorities. Among them, Smith was particularly drawn to Origen and Clement of Alexandria. Interest in the later pagan Neoplatonists, such as Simplicius (c.490 – c.560) who Smith cites approvingly many times, is much more unusual for a seventeenth century Cambridge scholar. However, this is in all likelihood the influence of the Renaissance Neoplatonism centered in the Platonic Academy of Florence. There Ficino and others were acquainted with, used, and translated later Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus and Proclus.142

---


3.4 The Politics of Faith: Civil War & Fellowship at Queens’

The religious and political context into which Smith was born is the stuff of whole libraries, and, therefore, cannot be given adequate treatment here.\footnote{143} Nonetheless, it is critical to an appreciation of Smith to note at least the broadest outlines of the religio-political situation.

From the start, no one was happy with the English Reformation. Begun as a matter of state to remedy Henry VIII’s (1491-1547) need for a male heir, it also afforded an opportunity for what started as an underground movement keen to

---

follow the lead of the Protestant Reformers in Continental Europe. With the Act of Supremacy (1534) ties between English bishops and the Pope were cut and shortly thereafter Henry declared himself to be head of the English Church.

Upon his death in 1547, Henry’s Protestant son Edward succeeded to the throne and used the royal supremacy to take the Church in a much more Reformed, Calvinist, direction. Just as the Church seemed to be heading clearly

---

144 Many of whom first began to read Luther at the White Horse Inn in Cambridge. This is commemorated with a “blue plaque” on an otherwise nondescript wall of King’s College facing King’s Parade. See Jo Edkins, “Plaques and notices in Cambridge,” 2010, accessed 15 April 2014, http://gwydir.demon.co.uk/jo/walks/plaques.htm#inn.

145 Still, the King that had earned the title “defender of the faith” for his opposition to Luther’s views on the sacraments remained a Catholic at heart. Bernard, The King’s Reformation, 225-42. Also, Christopher Haigh, English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 152-67.

146 “Calvinist” is a notoriously difficult label. In general however, it refers to followers of the theology of John Calvin (laid out in his many scriptural commentaries and in the Instituto Christianae religionis [1536] and subsequently revised and translated several times; John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beverage [London, 1599]). In general, what is typically taken to represent Calvin’s thought most, especially in early seventeenth century England, are (1) the sufficiency of scripture, (2) salvation by faith not works or merit, (3) emphasis on covenant, (4) total depravity owing to original sin, (5) monergism in salvation through God’s free election and grace (there is no cooperation with grace on the part of the believer), and (6) double-predestination, the idea that God has already ordained some for salvation and some for damnation. Beyond these basics, Calvinist or Reformed theologians differ widely on specifics. Returning to the Reformation in England, in 1548, “images” began to be removed from churches, including also vestments, ashes, palms, holy water, and crucifixes – all important objects in Catholic ritual. In 1549 Thomas Cranmer finished the first English Book of Common Prayer, emphasizing the participation of the laity, providing for the reading of the entire Bible over the year, and retaining the fast days but not also the feasts of the saints. Three years later this first Book of Common Prayer was replaced by a second that was even more expressly Protestant; it removed all reference to the “real presence” of Christ in the eucharist, did away
in the direction of Calvinism in terms of ritual, polity, and doctrine Edward VI died only to be followed by his half-sister Mary and the return of Roman Catholicism in 1554. Protestants of many varieties were executed at the stake during Mary’s brief reign; nearly three hundred in total including five bishops, one hundred priests, and sixty women.\textsuperscript{147}

In 1558 the moderate Protestant Elizabeth was crowned Queen, ushering in the “Elizabethan Settlement.”\textsuperscript{148} In 1563, the Thirty-nine Articles were drafted as a statement of doctrine for the Church of England, marking the \textit{via media} of Anglicanism; Reformed in doctrine, yet Catholic (to some extent) in worship.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[C\textsuperscript{147}] See Eamon Duffy and David Loades, eds., \textit{The Church of Mary Tudor} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and John Foxe, \textit{Acts and Monuments} (London, 1563). Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” was added to, reprinted, and translated several times in the late sixteenth century and has remained continuously in print to this day. See also, Haigh, \textit{English Reformations}, 203-50.
\item[C\textsuperscript{148}] See, for example, A. G. Dickens, \textit{The English Reformation} (Fontana, 1967) and Judith Maltby, \textit{Prayer book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
\item[C\textsuperscript{149}] See Elizabeth’s Acts of Supremacy (1559), Uniformity (1559), and Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles (1571), collected in Henry Gee and William John Hardy, eds., \textit{Documents Illustrative of English Church History} (London: Macmillan, 1914), 416-545., available at http://history.hanover.edu/texts/ENGref/links.html, accessed 17 April 2014. The phrase “via media” is above all \textit{associated} with Richard Hooker’s \textit{Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity} (1594-1604), although he nowhere uses it. The phrase is generally meant to signify the particularly Anglican approach to theology and the life of the Church; Reformed in doctrine but Catholic in ritual and
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In 1603, James Stuart succeeded Elizabeth. By this point, the English Church contained a wide variety of views on nearly all matters. “Puritans,” in particular, sought for a more complete Reformation of the Church of England along Calvinist lines.

Already by 1584 Emmanuel College had been founded in Cambridge by Sir Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Elizabeth and a Puritan, to train Protestant (Reformed/Calvinist) preachers. Thus by the dawn of the seventeenth century, Emmanuel was a center of learned Calvinism. During James’ reign the Authorized Version of the Bible was commissioned and first


published in 1611, becoming the standard edition in English until very recently. Many bishops appointed under James were Calvinist, but the elements of Catholic ritual and polity set in place by Elizabeth remained in most cases. Still, by the second decade of the seventeenth century the Church of England was strongly Reformed in theological orientation.153

A period of growth in the direction of High Church Anglicanism (if not Catholicism) began in 1625 with the coronation of Charles I (1600-1649). Under the direction of Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud (1573-1645), more ornate rituals and decorations were (re-)established in the Church of England, much to the dismay of the Puritan party. Moreover, Laud and others among the “Caroline Divines” leaned toward Arminianism, and thus away from Calvinism, in doctrine.154 This made many Puritans eager to leave England altogether and in

153 Tom Webster, Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c.1620-1643 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-14, 36-59. While the more extreme Calvinists, known as Puritans, were by no means a majority a basically Reformed outlook was very common in the Church of England (and not just among Presbyterians). While James favored the episcopal governance of the Church he also had no time for Arminians or Dissenters. On this, see David Harris Willson, King James VI & I (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), 240-1.

fact helped bring about the Great Migration of English Puritans (and others) to New England in the 1630-1640s.  

By the time Smith arrived at Emmanuel in 1636 there were separatist Puritans, conforming Puritans, Arminians, Laudians, and a variety of Anabaptists in England, each vying for influence, if not over the nation as a whole, then at least over their own individual spiritual lives. To what extent this diversity led to political instability will be explored below. For now, we turn to a more focused review of some of the religious tensions within Cambridge in the period by way of the example of a series of letters between the Cambridge Platonist Benjamin Whichcote and the Puritan Anthony Tuckney.  

---


156 To separate our treatment of religion and politics in the years of Smith’s life at Cambridge is already to misunderstand the deeply intertwined nature of both in early modern English history. Still, for purely analytical purposes, and to facilitate presentation of this key context, this degree of anachronism is justified.
3.4.1 Tuckney and Whichcote Correspondence

Tuckney was named Master of Emmanuel in 1645 after already having established himself as an excellent tutor there in the 1630s. Among his students was Benjamin Whichcote. Salter reports that he was “a man of great reading and much knowledge, a ready and elegant Latinist, but narrow, stiff, and dogmatical” in religion.\(^{157}\) In fact, he was a strict Puritan of the Presbyterian sort who was equally suspicious of Roman Catholics, Arminians, and Independents (Congregationalists, Baptists, etc.).\(^{158}\) Tuckney played an active role in the doctrinal work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.\(^{159}\) In 1653 he was named Master of St. John’s College and in 1655 Regius Professor of Divinity.\(^{160}\) As Whichcote’s former tutor, Tuckney initially believed him to be a like-minded Puritan but in the autumn of 1651 a commencement sermon delivered by his protégé gave him reason to doubt. In the first of eight letters exchanged between

---

\(^{157}\) Salter, “Preface,” xii.

\(^{158}\) Tulloch, *Rational Theology*, 2: 53.

\(^{159}\) The Westminster Assembly was a committee formed by Parliament during the English Civil War to work on reforms for the Church of England. It was Puritan in orientation and the resultant documents of this Assembly are still held as the standard of orthodoxy by some Calvinists even today. More on the Assembly below with respect to the governance of Cambridge Colleges under their influence.

them in quick succession, Tuckney wrote to Whichcote, then Vice-Chancellor of the University and Provost of King’s College, on the eighth of September 1651 to express his, and others’, distress at the content of his sermon and his teaching in recent years.

While the full exchange well rewards careful study, an exposition of the first two letters only will give a taste of the issues involved for both the orthodox Calvinist and the budding “Cambridge Platonist.” In his first letter, Tuckney comes to his point immediately by contrasting “ingenuity” with “saving grace” by which he means to draw a distinction between the natural light of reason Whichcote has been praising, and the supernatural, imputed righteousness that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

More specifically, Tuckney takes issue with four things he has observed in Whichcote’s recent sermon. First, Tuckney opposes Whichcote’s assertion that some things in religion may be disagreed upon by equally well intentioned

161 While the disagreement between the two men is heated there is an impressive degree of affection expressed by both for the other. They are an excellent example of committed debate that does not become personal and degenerate into ad hominem attacks and counter attacks. Each seems honestly to seek the truth and be willing to hear the other out and even be persuaded (to some extent) by the other. The correspondence can be found in Samuel Salter, ed., Moral and Religious Aphorisms, Collected from the Manuscript Papers of the Reverend and Learned Doctor Whichcote (London: J. Payne, 1753) and in Tod E. Jones, ed., The Cambridge Platonists: A Brief Introduction, With Eight Letters of Dr. Anthony Tuckney and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote, with translations by Sarah E. Phang (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 51-156.
people. Indeed, for Whichcote, some issues in piety and polity are *adiaphora* ("things indifferent") for which competing evidence may be found in scripture. Thus, there is no way to determine who is correct. For the Calvinist, this is “unsafe and unsound” presumably because it suggests that Puritan interpretations of scripture might be in error. Indeed, in the Church of England many ancient Catholic customs were retained for exactly the reason that nothing in scripture suggested that they should be removed and that they do no harm.

Tuckney’s second objection is that Whichcote advocated limiting religious language to those “Scripture words and expressions” upon which “all parties agree” in order to limit disagreements over “forms of words which are from fallible men” that disrupt the peace of Christendom. Third, Tuckney returns to his suspicions about the role of human reason in religion. Where Whichcote had advocated using one’s rational faculties to discern spiritual matters for one’s self, Tuckney worries that such license ("*libertas prophetandi*”) opens the door to all manner of monstrous opinions. The use of the language of prophesy here on Tuckney’s part recalls both the early church’s struggles with the Montanist heresy and more recent conflicts, dating from the reign of Elizabeth I, over “prophesyings,” meetings of clergy and laity to discuss scripture and the state of
the church including the need for reform. In the later sense, prophesy was associated with a breakdown of discipline in the Church of England. While Tuckney wished to see the Church of England reformed on Presbyterian lines he was still very much in favor of a centralized Church polity.

Finally, Tuckney comes to an objection that goes to the very heart of his disagreement with Whichcote and illustrates nicely the central preoccupation of the orthodox Calvinist; reconciliation between humanity and God. For Calvin, as for Tuckney, the reconciliation of sinful human beings with their Creator is an entirely divine action. Against the traditional Catholic model of cooperation with God’s grace (synergism) Calvin and other Reformed theologians (including Luther, Beza, and Cramner) argued that humanity is in no position to even


164 Jones, Eight Letters, 71-3. This offers an excellent reminder for Americans especially who tend to think of “Puritans” as being synonymous with the more radical sort that famously settled in New England. Even they were mostly in favor of the established Church of England too however. Separatist or Non-conformist Puritans were in the minority at least until the height of the Civil Wars.

165 Indeed, disagreement over this was one of the central issues in the Reformation from the very start.
cooperate with grace. Reconciliation with God is thus God’s doing in the individual by grace through faith. All of the active contribution stems from God’s side of the relationship (monergism). Whichcote, in contrast, seemed to be advocating the idea that human beings can and must cooperate with grace through the use of their reason and will.

Within days Whichcote wrote a humble reply to his old tutor. First he addresses their relationship and the offense that Tuckney had taken at his commencement sermon. More interestingly for our purposes, Whichcote explains the ideas he had presented in his sermon from his notes. First, that “all truly good men among us, do substantially agree; in all things saving.” That is, that while various sorts of Christians disagree on many things all agree on the issue of salvation. An odd claim, given the Reformed preoccupation with opposing salvation by grace through faith to the good works of (stereotypical) Catholic theology. The important point here is not the current state of agreement but Whichcote’s faith that such an agreement can be had between Christians of good faith and clear reason.

---

166 Jones, Eight Letters, 77.
Second, Whichcote repeats the claim that the issues that Christians differ on are non-canonical. He mentions too that perhaps the level of specificity that gives rise to disagreement is in excess of the divinely appointed revelation. The disagreements that arise stand, therefore, upon what God has seen fit to keep veiled from us. The clear connotation being that our theologizing is too-often a blasphemous presumption on our part. In this respect, Whichcote seeks to be more scriptural, and more humble than his Puritan interlocutor.

Third, Whichcote’s proposal to restrain theological language to those expressions that are found in scripture is elaborated as a practical device for keeping the peace among Christians. The century of religious warfare in Europe is clearly in his mind here as he seeks to find common ground and good pious reasons for limiting theological language to those things upon which all can agree. However, he is quick to establish his Protestant bona fides in this regard by making the connection between sola scriptura and this call for humility and economy in theological discourse. Far from calling for unchecked

\[167\] Ibid.

\[168\] Ibid., 77-8.
rationalism as Tuckney feared, Whichcote is upping the ante on a fundamental principle of Protestantism.

Fourth, Whichcote quickly and directly affirms that he does, in fact, think that an “ingenuous-spirited Christian, after application to God, and diligent use of means to finde-out truth; might fairly propose, without offense taken, what upon search he finds cause to believe; and whereon he will venture his own soule.” In other words, an intelligent Christian can, and should, use his faculties to grow in the pious knowledge of God.

Finally, on the issue of reconciliation, Whichcote explains that he “had no intention of undervaluing the free grace of God, but only sought to bring out the necessity of Christ’s work being recognized as not only something without us but also within us.” In short, where Tuckney’s Calvinism would prefer to hear of complete monergism in salvation, Whichcote maintains that the work of God must be internalized too and not merely an act from outside of the human heart.

---

169 Ibid., 78.

170 Tulloch, *Rational Theology*, 2: 64.
To the imputed righteousness of Tuckney, Whichcote seeks to add sanctification and reform of the soul in the image and likeness of God.\textsuperscript{171}

Still, despite his largely scriptural arguments in response, Tuckney persisted in condemning the way Whichcote had “cried up” (we might say, “talked up”) reason. His dislike of the employment (or advocating) of reason in theology is best summed up in his denunciation of the (over)use of the phrase, “the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{172} Ironically, this biblical phrase is thought by Tuckney to have “no relation to the truths of supernatural or evangelical theology.”\textsuperscript{173} So, where Whichcote sees a biblical precedent for the life of the pious mind, Tuckney would have no elevation of human faculties, even to work with the grace of God. In this, Tuckney is a classic example of monergistic thinking, while Whichcote, for all his protestations to the contrary, is also a monergist, albeit of a more internal kind. For Whichcote salvation is entirely the work of God (he is not a synergist) but this work is not simply a matter of declaring us to be reconciled from without but also of making us regenerate from within too. In this sense, we can identify both Reformed

\textsuperscript{171} Perhaps an indication of the classic Platonist formula that only “like can know like.”

\textsuperscript{172} Proverbs 20:27.

theological elements and more “mystical” aspects in the teaching of Whichcote; he is, to this extent, a Reformed Platonist while Tuckney is a Calvinist Puritan.

Neither, however, represent the radical ends of the ideological spectrum in their period. They are, after all, academics as well as religionists. Theirs is, therefore, a dispute among colleagues. For all his resistance to the importance of reason in religious matters (as advocated by Whichcote) Tuckney was famous in his own time for making appointments to fellowships on the basis of erudition not piety since while, “they may deceive me, in their Godliness; they can not, in their Scholarship.”  

3.4.2 Disputes in State and Church

During Smith’s early childhood, as Calvinism was very popular in the Puritan varieties discussed above, Charles I married the Catholic daughter of Henry IV of France, Henrietta Maria in 1625. The match was deeply unpopular, partly owing to the historic enmity between the English and the French, but also because it seemed to signal a change in religion for the monarch and thus the nation. For Puritans who already thought of the Church of England as “papist”

---

an actual Catholic in the Royal family was cause for serious alarm.\textsuperscript{175} As if to confirm his papist leanings, at least in Puritan eyes, Charles re-issued the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles in 1628. The following year, Parliament, increasingly dominated by Puritans, passed Three Resolutions against the excesses of Charles’ reign. In response, Charles had several members arrested.\textsuperscript{176}

Rocky relations between King and Parliament continued through 1633 when Charles, in an effort to curb the rise of Puritanism, appointed Laud Archbishop of Canterbury. At the same time that Laud was reforming the Church of England, Charles was imposing new taxes, called “ship money” to pay for the royal navy. A tax not approved by Parliament flew in the face of \textit{Magna Carta} and the Three Resolutions of 1629. Moreover, as merchants were often Puritans many of those who saw in Charles an enemy to their faith found a pickpocket as well.\textsuperscript{177}


\textsuperscript{176} Anthony Milton, "Laud, William (1573–1645),” in \textit{Dictionary of National Biography} (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900). The resolutions were: First, that Parliament would oppose any change in religion. Second, that they would condemn any taxes levied without their consent. And third, that to pay illegal taxes was a violation of English liberty.

In April 1640 a new Parliament refused to authorize any new taxes to pay for the King’s conflicts in Scotland, where the *Book of Common Prayer* had recently been imposed on the deeply Calvinist Kirk. Charles was also already involved in conflict in Ireland along Catholic/Protestant lines too and thus in desperate need of funds.\(^\text{178}\) The “Short Parliament” was dismissed after just three weeks of non-cooperation with the King. By November 1640 however Charles was willing to deal, and the “Long Parliament” approved funds to handle the Scots but only if Charles granted concessions to Parliament.\(^\text{179}\) The legislative body had begun to take the upper hand after over a decade of being shut out of the business of the Kingdom.

In 1641 Parliament’s grievances against the King were put to paper in the *Grand Remonstrance*.\(^\text{180}\) By January of 1642 both Parliament and the King were preparing for war, even as negotiations continued. In June, Parliament proposed Nineteen Propositions to Charles. Among these was the demand for a new

\(^{178}\) Lindley, *Sourcebook*, 9, 13, 18, 21, 24, 46, 79-84.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 7-17, 60-78.

constitution that would place Parliament in charge of nearly all matters of state.

By August, Charles gave his answer as he raised his standard against Parliament at Nottingham. On October 23rd 1642 the armies of the King and Parliament fought to a stalemate in the first battle of the English Civil Wars at Edgehill in Warwickshire.\textsuperscript{181}

The following August (1643) the Solemn League and Covenant was drafted. The document, accepted by the English Parliament in September, guaranteed to preserve the Scottish Kirk and to reform the religion of England and Ireland along Calvinist lines “according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches.”\textsuperscript{182} A synod of divines and Members of Parliament had already been gathered to propose reforms in faith, polity, ritual, and government of the kingdom (a necessity since the Church of England was essentially a department of state, answerable to the crown). This Westminster


Assembly (1643-1653) sought to model the Church of England on the Presbyterian system of the Scottish Kirk.\textsuperscript{183}

By the summer of 1646 Charles surrendered to a Scottish army aligned with the English Parliament.\textsuperscript{184} At the close of this First Civil War (1642-1646) three political and religious factions remained in England: Royalists, Independents (or separatists/nonconformists) and Presbyterians. While Parliament debated a new constitution (the “Putney Debates”) Charles escaped leading to the Second Civil War.\textsuperscript{185} This conflict ended with the recapture of Charles (December 1648), his trial, and execution (30 January 1649).\textsuperscript{186} However, later in 1649 a Third Civil War erupted between Parliament and Royalists including Charles II in league with Scottish covenanters. Under Oliver Cromwell,


\textsuperscript{184} Purkiss, English Civil War, 451-62. Charles was imprisoned in late January 1647.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 532-51.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 552-60.
the Parliamentary forces won a decisive victory and established the
Commonwealth of England, which persisted until the restoration of the
monarchy in 1660.187

3.4.3 Cambridge during the Wars

Cambridge remained in Parliamentary hands throughout the Civil Wars,
but the effects of these conflicts were deeply felt there nonetheless. In January
1644 Parliament appointed Edward Montagu, the second Earl of Manchester, to
“regulate” the University of Cambridge. He, and his designees, were granted the
“power to call before them all provosts, masters, and fellows of the colleges, all
students and members of the University.” Manchester was also given “power to
eject such as he shall judge unfit for their places . . . and to place other fitting
persons in their room, such as shall be approved of by the assembly of divines
sitting at Westminster.” Moreover, the authority to “administer the late covenant
. . . to all persons” and to “examine and inhibit all such as do obstruct the
reformation, now endeavoured by the Parliament and assembly of divines.”188

187 Lindley, Sourcebook, 167-175.

188 “Regulation of the University of Cambridge, Monday, 22 January 1643/1644,” William
period at Cambridge generally see G. R. Evans, The University of Cambridge: A New History
It was in this context that Manchester removed Dr. Edward Martin from his post as President of Queens’ College. On the eighth, ninth, and eleventh days of April 1644, he also ejected nine fellows from the College.\textsuperscript{189} In total, over two hundred fellows were ejected from Cambridge Colleges.\textsuperscript{190} The charges against the ejected fellows of Queens’ were “non-residence,” “not returning to College when summoned,” and, one suspects the real reason in the midst of Puritan reform, for “refusing to take the solemn league and covenant.”\textsuperscript{191}

On April eleventh Manchester appointed Herbert Palmer the new President of Queens’ and installed replacement fellows, including John Smith from Emmanuel, who had “been examined and approved by” the Westminster Assembly.\textsuperscript{192} It was this bit of Parliamentary intervention and an arcane policy at Emmanuel that led to Smith’s all too short tenure at Queens’. By statute no two

---

\textsuperscript{189} Williams, “Memoir,” vii-viii.


\textsuperscript{191} Williams, “Memoir,” vii.

\textsuperscript{192} Williams, “Memoir,” viii. See also Arnold Gwynne Matthews, \textit{Walker Revised: Being a Revision of John Walker’s Sufferings of the Clergy During the Grand Rebellion, 1642-60} (Clarendon Press, 1948).
fellows of Emmanuel could then be of the same county of origin. Since William Dillingham, who enrolled around the same time as Smith, was also from Northamptonshire, and took his BA a year before Smith, he and not Smith rose to a fellowship there in 1642.193

That Smith was selected within days of the ejections that made his position available says much about the estimate of his talents among those involved. That Smith accepted the fellowship says that he was “agreeable to the late solemn nation league and Covenant” as well.194 The degree to which Smith was committed to the Westminster Assembly’s agenda is unclear, but in any case they were clearly committed to him.

Little detail remains concerning Smith’s work at Queens’. However as a Fellow he would have begun to tutor students immediately.195 By the 24th of June, 1644, Smith was named Hebrew Lecturer, a sign that the familiarity with Jewish

193 Williams, “Memoir,” vii. Much has been made in the literature on Smith of this county policy but it would seem that Smith was also simply slower to proceed to the MA then Dillingham.

194 Twigg, History of Queens’ College, 525; Queens’ College Archives, Box 31.

literature evident in the Select Discourses was already well in hand and well known. In the fall of that year (10 September) he was named “Censor Philosophicus” as well. To this already impressive collection of appointments was added the post of Greek Praelector on 16th September 1645. Clearly then, he was already a well-respected authority on the literature for which he has come to be especially known. Moreover, his position as a “Censor Philosophicus,” a position previously held by the late President Martin, while only just having been made a fellow would seem to suggest that he was on friendly terms with those in power.  

When in 1648 the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Wollaston, sought to improve the quality of mathematics at Cambridge with funds for a University...
Lecturer, it was John Smith who “was appointed the first incumbent.”\footnote{Mordechai Feingold, “Isaac Barrow and the Foundation of the Lucasian Professorship,” in Kevin C. Knox and Richard Noakes, eds., From Newton to Hawking: A History of Cambridge University’s Lucasian Professors of Mathematics (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 49.} He seems to have taken up the post in November of 1648 “with a course of lectures on Descartes’ Geometry” a volume that, as we have seen, was among those donated to Queens’ College upon Smith’s death in 1652.\footnote{Strangely, the appropriate copy among the collections of Queens’ College Library today has no annotations at all. It is almost certain that Isaac Barrow was among those attending Smith’s lectures. By 1652 this Wollastonian Lectuership had ceased since in that year John Pell was seeking funding for a new lecturer in mathematics and in 1658 John Worthington, Smith’ editor, was petitioning for funds for a professorship in mathematics as well. This position would eventually be funded by Lucas becoming the famous Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics held by Isaac Barrow, Isaac Newton, and Steven Hawking. See Feingold, “Isaac Barrow,” 49 n.6. Worthington mentions Smith’s mathematical lectures in his “To the Reader,” in Select Discourses (1660), x. See also Beeley and Scriba, Correspondence of John Wallis, 1: 9.}

In 1650, Smith was named Dean and Catechist of Queens’ College. It was in this capacity, which included regular preaching and teaching in the College Chapel, that Smith came to draft the majority of the discourses later published by Worthington as the Select Discourses.\footnote{William Ralph Inge, The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought: The Hulsean Lectures at Cambridge 1925-1926 (New York and London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), 62; Williams, “Memoir,” ix; Worthington, “To the Reader,” xii-xxx; Mario Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso di John Smith, platonico di Cambridge (Padua: La Garangola, 1976), 17.}
Smith’s health seems to have been fragile from the first, as one might expect of one who died so young. This may help to explain the length of time Smith spent at studies. He did not earn the Master of Arts until 1644. Health concerns may also be behind the otherwise curious (though not unheard of) fact that while the statutes of Queens’ College required that he be ordained in 1646 to maintain his fellowship, Smith was granted permission to postpone for four years.\textsuperscript{200} Smith appears to not have been ordained at all, perhaps owing to concerns over his health or other practical issues related to the Civil War. In any event, his contribution to the learned ministry in England was significant in his various capacities at Queens’ College (1644-1652).

In 1651 Smith fell ill with what was most likely the beginning stages of tuberculosis. By the spring of 1652 he had transferred his students to his friend Simon Patrick. In the spring of that year Smith went to London seeking treatment from Dr. Theodore Mayerne.\textsuperscript{201} On May 5\textsuperscript{th} the “Master and Fellows” granted

\textsuperscript{200} Williams, “Memoir of the Author,” ix. The Order is dated Jan. 19 1646 (1647).

Smith “his whole stipend and dividend for this current quarter and likewise his stipend for so much of the last quarter as he was absent upon the same cause of his sicknesse.” He continued a patient of Mayerne for a few months but “he derived no benefit” from this care.

In late July, Smith returned to Cambridge, apparently resigned to his fate after finding no relief from any of his many medical practitioners. After lying in a “state of listlessness for nearly a week” he experienced a lucid moment during which his friends took down his last will and testament. Smith died however before he could sign this document on the 7th of August 1652. He was buried in the College Chapel of Queens’ College, the site of the funeral sermon given by Simon Patrick and likely many of Smith’s own discourses. Smith was accompanied to the grave by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, all the Heads of House (Masters, Presidents, etc.), the Fellows, and students. He now lies, appropriately for a “living library,” in the present War Memorial Library of Queens’ College.

---

202 Queens’ College Register, quoted by Williams, “Memoir,” xi n.1.

203 Williams, “Memoir,” xi.

204 There is no known marker for his burial.
3.6 The Select Discourses

Other than the remembrances of friends, John Worthington, Simon Patrick, and others, his library gift to Queens’ College, and a single commonplace book, all that we have from John Smith is the posthumously published Select Discourses. These were collected and edited by Worthington from papers given to him by Cradock upon Smith’s death. How long Worthington possessed them is not known. The Discourses were primarily composed during Smith’s time as Catechist at Queens’. Indeed, several were first preached in the Chapel there, and all were apparently meant to be delivered aloud. To his original papers however Smith added considerable material after they had been presented. But, even these were in need of significant editing.

———

205 “A Common Place Book,” Cambridge University Library MS Dd.ix.44. See the Appendix below for a full listing of the discourses contained in the Select Discourses. Cf. the arrangement of Gregory of Nazianzus’s Theological Orations and Origen’s On First Principles (Christopher A. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 39). Like these patristic texts the Select Discourses starts with theological method, proceeds to the general character of theology in general and closes with specifically revealed theology.

206 Worthington, “To the Reader,” v; Williams, “Memoir,” ix; Micheletti, Il pensiero religioso, 17.

207 Worthington, “To the Reader,” iii-iv.

208 Ibid., iv.
Worthington’s procedure was four-fold. First, gathering papers that “were loose and scattered” in some cases forming proper “discourses” out of diverse material. Second, transcribing the papers and examining the quotations in Smith’s discourses. With the help of unnamed friends, Worthington identified whatever quotations seemed most important (i.e., where the substance was significant and Smith had not provided author or text). Third, in a remarkable gesture, Worthington also sought to translate from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew into English the significant quotations that were not also already clear from the context of the surrounding English text. Fourth, Worthington added, especially to the first six discourses which he reports were written as a single treatise “without any distinction or sections,” divisions between discourses, chapters, and sections as they seemed to facilitate the reading of the text. Worthington also added summaries of the contents of each discourse, chapter or section.

The text of the *Select Discourses* published in 1660 by F. Flesher in London for W. Morden, a bookseller in Cambridge, was, as many seventeenth century

---

209 Ibid., v.

210 Ibid., iv-v.

211 Ibid., v.
volumes were, highly flawed. There were numerous mistakes in text and citations from the start. Moreover, the highly non-standard spellings are annoying at best to the modern reader (some words have multiple spellings on the same page!). Thus it is no surprise that the *Select Discourses* were reprinted in a “corrected” edition by John Hayes in Cambridge, again for Morden. Apparently Smith was something of a “bestseller.”

Still, the text left much to be desired, and in 1821 another full edition, this time “carefully corrected” appeared in London at the hands of Rivington and Cochran. By far the most helpful edition to date, however, was that “corrected and revised” by Henry Griffin Williams published by Cambridge University Press in 1859. Above all, Williams’ edition provides the best published guide to the massive number of quotations in Smith’s text.\(^{212}\)

Among the more obvious issues with the original 1660 text, which has been the most widely used and reprinted over recent years, is the fact that Worthington’s translations from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew are haphazard at

\(^{212}\) Williams makes frequent alterations to Smith’s original but faithfully conveys the sense always even when he moves Smith’s quotations in foreign languages to footnotes. The great advantage of his edition is the number and quality of the citations to Smith’s (likely) sources. Its biggest limitation is that these sources are given in nineteenth century editions with no regard for the texts Smith had access to.
best. While he probably did translate what, in his day, seemed most in need of “Englishing,” a great number of phrases remained un-translated in his and most of the following editions. In fact, many quotations are not referenced even in Williams’ edition of 1859.213 There remains, therefore, a clear need for a proper critical edition of the Select Discourses.

Beyond the state of the text in the most basic sense, there is also the matter of the work’s treatment at the hands of Worthington. The original papers upon which the Select Discourses are based appear to be lost, so the degree to which they can be said to reflect the authentic work of Smith or a kind of collaboration between Smith and his editor cannot be adequately judged. From what Worthington tells us about his procedure in bringing the Select Discourses to print it seems most reasonable to conclude that the texts, as we have them, are substantially Smith’s but to a considerable extent the organization belongs to Worthington. An answer to these questions must await a careful study of the known works of Worthington and a critical edition of the Select Discourses.

For the purposes of the present study, the authorship of the Select Discourses is assumed rather than carefully argued. That is, I take the published

---

213 For example, a key quotation from Origen is left untranslated. Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 4. On this, see chapter four below.
editions of the *Select Discourses* to be, *de facto*, the work of (the literary) John Smith. The historical Smith is, as nearly as can be discerned, the literary Smith, albeit with allowances made for the editing of his work by a friend. There is no reason to suspect that Smith himself did not in fact write the *Select Discourses*, even if the presentation of them owes much to Worthington. None of Smith’s close companions treats the *Select Discourses* as anything but an authentic presentation of his thought and teaching.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have situated Smith in his intellectual and cultural milieu. We have seen that his was an age of discovery in geography, the sciences, and philosophy. Smith was educated in a mixture of the older scholastic style and work at the very cutting edge of early modern science, philosophy, and mathematics. We have also seen how Smith’s career at Queens’ College involved all these influences during the tumultuous period of the English Civil Wars. In part II below we will see specifically how all these elements contribute to Smith’s use of the spiritual senses tradition. As argued in chapter two above, this tradition is best understood by way of a functional typology.
The “spiritual senses” are employed by the tradition to (1) explain the source of theological knowledge, (2) account for aspects of the spiritual life, and (3) to hold together one’s theology as a coherent system of thought. Thus, chapter four presents the role of the spiritual senses in Smith’s account of the appropriation and ultimate source of theological knowledge. Chapter five demonstrates the place of spiritual sensation in Smith’s description of the spiritual life. Finally, chapter six argues that the spiritual senses perform a central systematic function in Smith’s theology. In this way, both Smith’s debts to the tradition and his innovations therein become clear, illustrating his place in Christian theological aesthetics generally.
CHAPTER 4: THE SOURCE OF THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

How do we come to know the Divine? From where do we receive the theological knowledge that is presupposed by the life of faith? For surely, we cannot love and serve a God that we do not first know.¹ Such Augustinian considerations were not lost on John Smith. He too felt the pressing need to give an account of the source of theological understanding. Indeed, the growing skepticism of his early modern world made such an account all the more acutely felt.² Smith responded to this need with an apologetic just as surely as More and Cudworth. Inheriting a newly relevant, yet ultimately, Patristic sense of the need to answer critiques of traditional theology, Smith was also heir to the scholastic distinction between the rational or natural and the revealed knowledge of God.³

¹ Augustine, Confessions, I. 1.


Thus, to appreciate Smith’s account of the origins of theological understanding
one must look, above all, in two places.

First, for the source or method of coming to natural knowledge of God
one must consult the first discourse, “On the True Way or Method of Attaining to
Divine Knowledge.”

4 Here we find that for Smith rational theology, and the
personal appropriation of revealed truths, rests on “spiritual sensation.” Indeed,
Smith draws from Origen both as a model and as a source for constructing his
own account. Second, for the corresponding, and complementary, account of the
source of revealed theology one must turn to the sixth discourse “Of Prophesie.”

5 Here we find that revealed truths are communicated to the prophet in sensible
images in the imagination and intellectually via intuitions.

In both cases these

4 John Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 1-21. For Smith, “natural theology” does not mean
the complete absence of scriptural references. Rather, it signifies that branch of theology that
attempts to give rational arguments in support of theological claims. In short, natural theology is,
for Smith, rational theology (as opposed to biblical exegesis).

5 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 169-281; (1859), 170-293. For an excellent overview of the
philosophical issues raised by prophecy see, Scott A. Davison, "Prophecy," in The Stanford

6 Smith is not very explicit or consistent with his use of terms. Partly this is because much
of the philosophical terminology relevant to his discussion of religious epistemology was in a
period of flux between older scholastic meanings and early modern ones familiar in the work of
figures like Locke, Hume, and Kant. Also, Smith is adverse to the terminological precision of the
old scholasticism because it “entombs” our understanding of divinity more than it enlightens.
communications are supplied, ultimately, by God. While some are merely inspired by the presence of the Holy Spirit, others receive actual spiritual (i.e., non-corporeal) sensations of the Divine will in the imagination, either in a vision or in a dream. Still others, Moses and presumably Jesus Christ as well, receive an “intellectual touch” in the intellect without a sensible image (“face to face”). In such cases of what Smith calls “prophecy proper” the prophet comes to know by spiritual perception.

Both rational (natural) and revealed theology involve, for Smith, what we have identified as the “spiritual senses.” Each combines the metaphorical

However, from his usage “mind,” “soul,” and “intellect” refer to the same non-corporeal aspect of the human person as that which thinks or employs reason in an immediate, intuitive, and non-discursive way. He would seem to have in view something much like nous in the Neoplatonic sense but he rarely uses the term except in quoting some ancient authority or other. On the concept of mind in the Cambridge Platonists (really More and Cudworth only) see G. A. J. Rogers, “John Locke and the Cambridge Platonists on the Nature of the Mind,” in Essays on the Concept of Mind in Early-modern Philosophy, ed. Petr Glombiček and James Hill (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 81-96. Also Alexander M. Schlutz, “Epistemology, Metaphysics, and Rhetoric: Contests of Imagination,” in Mind’s World: Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 15-35. “Imagination,” “fancy” (phantasia) and variations on these terms are used by Smith for the faculty of representing objects of perception. It is the “stage” upon which information is presented to the understanding. However, there is no reason to think that this must be the result of the external senses for Smith. This inner sense of imagination is capable of receiving images directly, as in the case of prophecy, without an external sensory object. See the Oxford English Dictionary under “imagination,” 1.a. “the power or capacity to form internal images or ideas of objects and situations not actually present to the senses”; 1.b. “an inner image or idea of an object or objects not actually present to the senses”; also “fantasy/phantasy,” 1.a. “mental apprehension of an object of perception”; and “fancy,” A.1. “in scholastic psychology: = FANTASY n.1”; A.4.a. “In early use synonymous with IMAGINATION,” A.4.b. “a mental image.”
(intellection as “vision”) and the analogical (perception of a spiritual kind). In both cases the imagination serves as a bridge between the sensible realm of corporeal reality and the purely intellectual realm of reason and God. 7 And, both, in the final analysis, disclose the same Divine truths. For Smith, as for other Christian Platonists such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas,8 natural theology is complemented or completed, but not replaced, by revealed theology.9 Like his


tutor Whichcote therefore, Smith does not set the rational and the spiritual against each other, “for spiritual is most rational.”

4.1 The Source of Rational Theology

In the chapel at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, among the more unusual sights in an otherwise properly plain, “Puritan” space, whose only images are of opened books, are a series of stained glass windows. Like St. Paul’s in London, this Wren church too did not survive the Victorian love of interior decoration. Along the north wall, a series of panels depict great ecclesial and educational organizers and systematic theologians, ranging from St. Augustine to John Harvard. Along the south wall, one finds a series of panels representing great figures in spirituality and mystical theology. The series begins with Origen of Alexandria and the second to the last is John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist. Origen and Smith, the windows tell us, have a connection. The Emmanuel College Chapel windows present vestiges in light and glass of an insight from a more romantic age, when resonance and sensitivity were still important tools for

---

and Smith, a tradition unbroken by the fall of empires and the discovery of new worlds.

This section explores a key aspect of that tradition. It provides an analysis of the reception and modification of Origen of Alexandria’s doctrine of the spiritual senses in the “Discourse on the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge.” The analysis offered here is twofold. First, an argument about the exegetical and hermeneutical roots of Origen’s presentation of the spiritual senses is compared to a closely analogous approach found in Smith. Second, Origen is shown to have supplied an important source for Smith’s conception and employment of the spiritual senses as the means by which one comes to natural knowledge of the Divine and the way to appropriate revelation for one’s self.

As will be demonstrated below, Smith accepted important elements of the doctrine of the spiritual senses as he found it in Origen but was too modern to take the doctrine on authority. Instead, Smith offers his own case for the spiritual

---

senses, at once mimicking Origen’s interpretive synthesis of (Middle/Neo-
)Platonism and Scripture (as model), and echoing Origen’s own words (as
source). Smith used this twofold influence as the basis for his distinctive
theological method that seeks to base all other theological work on immediately
self-evident principles encountered through spiritual sensation.

“The True Way,” Smith’s first discourse, begins by making his intentions
and his methods clear. Just as all other arts and sciences have as their basis and
starting point some precondition or principle(s) upon which everything else
depends so too with divinity.12 Divinity rests on and in fact is “a divine life”
rather than a “divine science.”13 The principle for the intelligibility of divinity
lays in the varieties of “Spiritual Sensation” which unite the will, intellect, and
the affections, says Smith, and this is the basis of his theological method.14
Smith’s intent here is to establish a firm foundation upon which all his later work

---

12 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 1-2.
13 Ibid., 2.
14 Ibid.
can stand. In this, his deep admiration for Descartes shines through.\textsuperscript{15} However, much of what Smith has to say about this method echoes Origen.\textsuperscript{16}

4.1.1 Origen as Model

Origen affirmed the existence of a set of five spiritual senses analogous to the physical senses located in the mind or soul, what Origen calls the “inner man,” which is distinct from the physical body and thus also from the physical senses.\textsuperscript{17} Origen largely developed his view based on biblical evidence and as a way of interpreting passages where the clearly non-sensible (i.e., spiritual, conceptual or intellectual) is said to be sensed.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{16} While it is not usually possible to demonstrate a clear line of influence directly to Origen (he makes very few direct references to Origen for example) Smith's understanding of the sensible nature of spiritual understanding nevertheless echoes the Alexandrian in important ways and in at least one critical case makes direct appeal to the Father of the spiritual senses.

\textsuperscript{17} Smith too, as we have seen, tends to speak of the “mind” and “soul” as essentially the same thing. Cf. Benjamin Whichcote, “The Work of Reason,” in Cragg, \textit{The Cambridge Platonists}, 63 where he equates the “internal” with the mind and soul.

\textsuperscript{18} Andrew Louth, \textit{The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 66-7. This point is not without contention however. Several scholars have suggested that Origen’s language about the spiritual senses is best understood as metaphorical either throughout his corpus or in one supposed stage or another in his developing thoughts on the matter. The received scholarly opinion on the issue is however that
For I do not suppose that the visible heaven was actually opened, and its physical structure divided, in order that Ezekiel might be able to record such an occurrence....although such an occurrence may be a stumbling-block to the simple, who in their simplicity would set the whole world in movement, and split in sunder the compact and mighty body of the whole heavens. But he who examines such matters more profoundly will say, that there being, as the Scripture calls it, a kind of general divine perception which the blessed man alone knows how to discover, according to the saying of Solomon, You shall find a divine sense; and as there are various forms of this perceptive power, such as a faculty of vision which can naturally see things that are better than bodies, among which are ranked the cherubim and seraphim; and a faculty of hearing which can perceive voices which have not their being in the air; and a sense of taste which can make use of living bread that has come down from heaven, and that gives life unto the world; and so also a sense of smelling, which scents such things as leads Paul to say that he is a sweet savour of Christ unto God; and a sense of touch, by which John says that he handled with his hands of the Word of life; — the blessed prophets having discovered this divine perception, and seeing and hearing in this divine manner, and tasting likewise, and smelling, so to speak, with no sensible organs of perception, and laying hold on the Logos by faith, so that a healing effluence from it comes upon them, saw in this manner what they record as having seen, and heard what they say they heard....

Thus, for Origen the spiritual or allegorical reading of scripture suggests that references to sensing the divine are not literal accounts. In this way, Origen

notwithstanding elements of metaphor here and there, Origen, by in large, does intend to speak of five spiritual senses that function analogously to the physical senses. See the work of Dillon, Rudy, and McInroy on this topic.

19 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.48 (Crombie, trans.). This translation is taken from the *Ante Nicene Fathers* translation with corrections to match Chadwick in the reference to Proverbs 2:5. “Knowledge” has been changed to the misreading of the LXX that Origen actually gives, “sense.”
counters the ridicule of Celsus and other critics of Christian doctrine. At the same
time, however, Origen is convinced that references to spiritual senses are not
without literal meaning of some kind. That is, rather than reading these passages
as *mere* metaphorical references to knowledge, or comprehension, Origen takes a
sudden and unexpected turn by suggesting such passages refer to *literal* spiritual
senses, actual spiritual capacities for perceiving the non-sensory.\(^{20}\)

While Karl Rahner is certainly correct about the exegetical provenance of
Origen’s doctrine, his claim that it is a conclusion based solely on scripture fails
to convince.\(^{21}\) Beyond the possible incarnational or sacramental reasons for such
a reading lies the possibility, suggested by Dillon, that Origen is drawing on
previous and contemporaneous speculation about “a noetic correlate of sense-
perception” found in Plato, Albinus, a Gnostic treatise (*Zostrianos*), Plotinus

\(^{20}\) Some passages related to spiritual sensation do seem to be simply metaphorical for
Origen but clearly not all. Some of Origen’s reading of scripture seems to indicate an analogy
between spiritual sense and physical sense. For a sample of the debate on this point see Louth,
*Origins*, 66-7; J. M. Dillon, “Aisthesis Noete: A Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in Origen and in
Plotinus,” in *Hellenica et Judaica*, A. Caquot, et al., eds. (Leuven; Paris: Peeters, 1986), 443-55; and

\(^{21}\) Karl Rahner, « Le debut d’une doctrine des cinq sens spirituals chez Origene, » *Revue
d’ascetique et de mystique* 13 (1932): 112-45; English translation, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According
to Origen,” in *Theological Investigations*, XVI (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 89-103. The claim
about the exclusively biblical source of Origen’s doctrine is made on p.83 in the ET.
(Ennead VI.7), and Philo. Only if the spiritual senses have an initial air of plausibility can the move to read biblical passages allegorically, but not totally so, be justified.

Without some reason to suggest that such a thing is even possible, Origen should be expected simply to allegorize the language of sensing the divine out of the picture entirely. Since Origen does not do that, and instead affirms literally spiritual senses, and given that there was ample non-Christian speculation about spiritual sensibility in Origen’s intellectual milieu, it seems likely that he asserts his view of the spiritual senses with a basically platonic philosophical and a Christian scriptural background in mind. Origen finds the spiritual senses in his reading of the Bible but he was able to find them because he already had access to the philosophic tools needed to “see” them. Origen’s interpretation was thus likely given additional, and necessary, philosophical credence by a common

---

22 Dillon, “Aisthesis Noete,” 454-5, here 455. To Dillon’s suggestive, albeit speculative, list could be added the much more ancient tradition of the postmortem opening of the senses in order to interact with the Gods found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead and numerous additional passages in Plato that speak of “intellectual vision” and inner “eyes” (e.g., Republic 519A, Symposium 219A, etc.) as well as other passages from Plotinus of particular interest to John Smith such as Ennead I.8.1, I.6.9, I.3.4, and VI.7.13.

23 Dillon is far more nuanced in his discussion but I argue that he need not be in this area. This same kind of plausible warrant seems to be at work in other decisions of Origen to limit his allegorizing. For example, his numerous appeals to Old Testament signs for Christ only makes sense in light of a knowledge of Christ as that to which the allegory refers.
tradition within the intellectual context Origen shared with Plotinus and others who also suggest similar intellectual senses. Regardless of the specific methods employed, Origen’s concerns are exegetical and, to that extent, Rahner is correct.

As we have seen, Origen draws on scripture and, if our argument based on Dillon’s suggestion is correct, elements in the prevailing philosophical speculations of his day to advance the reality of the spiritual senses of the soul. In much the same manner, Smith appeals directly to scripture and the Neoplatonism of Plotinus as his “evidence” for the spiritual sensation upon which all theological understanding rests. Spiritual concepts are understood by being perceived, and this spiritual sensibility is thoroughly intellectual and therefore not physical, and yet, somehow, still best described by way of perceptual language. For both Smith and Origen the spiritual senses are capacities of mind that are both conceptual and perceptual. Perceptual in the sense that it is by means of these senses that purely noetic (purely spiritual)

24 The apologetic impulse in Contra Celsum, is made more clear by this suggestion as well.

25 As Mark McInroy has pointed out, in following the suggestion of Dillon against the position articulated by Rahner, I am parting company with most observers since Rahner’s influential treatment of Origen’s doctrine of spiritual sense. While Rahner’s approach makes Origen’s thoughts on these matters seem more clearly “Christian,” mine makes what Origen says more clearly intelligible.
objects are brought to awareness and conceptual in the sense that they have to do with realities that are by their very nature concepts or ideas not physically sensible things. In this sense, what we have here are examples of intellectual intuition.

Smith is notable for his insistence that divinity is a practical, living enterprise. Divinity is a “Divine life,” rather than a “science” conveyed by mere “Verbal description” because it has to do with things of “Sense & Life” and thus requires “Sentient and Vital faculties.” Smith here makes explicit his employment of Neoplatonism in the service of scriptural exegesis, and both in spiritual guidance, by combining Plotinus’ affirmation that, in Smith’s words, “Every thing is best known by that which bears a just resemblance and analogie with it” with the biblical principle, derived specifically from Proverbs 10, that a good life is the prolepsis for coming to an understanding of divine things.

---

26 See in the first instance Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 2 but the point is made repeatedly throughout the First Discourse and the whole of the Select Discourses.

27 Ibid., 2. Smith’s plotinian reference is to Ennead I.8.1. The biblical allusion is to Proverbs 10 (“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”). On the Stoic notion of a prolepsis and on their epistemology generally see R. J. Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology,” in The Cambridge Companion to Stoicism, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 59-84. On the influence of the Cambridge Platonists on the moral sense theory of Shaftesbury, including his use of “preconceptions” for the Stoic notion of prolepsis see Patrick Müller, “Hobbes, Locke and the Consequences: Shaftesbury’s Moral Sense and Political Agitation in Early Eighteenth-
A little later, Smith introduces the sixth Beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:8) with a reference to Plotinus; “Divinity is indeed a true enflux from that eternal light” but this light does not merely enlighten, but enlivens also. While the framework for intelligibility here is borrowed from the light mysticism common to Plotinus and Origen (and others), the authority for Smith’s point lies with Christ, who connects “purity of heart with the beatific vision.” In this way, Smith offers support for his claim that what is essential in theology is a practical, existential, and spiritually sensitive approach and not the study or composition of dry treatises. In nearly the same breath, Smith returns to Plotinus and the imagery of light for the idea that just “as the eye cannot behold the sun . . . unless it hath the form and resemblance of the sun drawn in it” so too for the soul to “behold God . . . unless it be Godlike.” This touchstone on the landscape of platonic intelligibility leads back again to scripture immediately, “and the apostle St. Paul, when he would lay open the right way of

---

28 See Louth, Origins, 35-72.

29 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 2.
attaining to divine truth, saith, that ‘knowledge puffeth up,’ but it is ‘love that edifieth.’”

For Smith, no less than Origen, emotion and the will, especially love, play a central role in the directedness of our attention. When we strive after physical things, we are drawn by our love (or “lust) away from the inner spiritual realities and therefore we fail to love rightly that which is more valuable in itself (i.e., spirit not matter). When we direct our wills toward inner spiritual things, love plays a positive role in spiritual sensation. The spiritual senses are partly activated by, and partly cause and deepen, love of God possible through God’s grace in creation and salvation. It is within the inner realm of the heart that the spiritual senses operate for Smith. In this, Smith differs slightly from Origen who stresses intellect with respect to the spiritual senses, but for both it is the inner person, the mind or soul, which is the locus of spiritual sensation. However, like Origen, Smith finds his basis for spiritual sensibility in the Bible with the aid of a (neo)platonic framework that helps to make it noticeable and plausible.

30 Ibid., 3. The Pauline reference is to I Cor. 8:1. The reference to Plotinus appears to be Ennead I.2.4. On the perfection of divine knowledge in love in Smith, Richard Hooker, Pascal, and others see Susan James, Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 234-42.
Three additional passages form the heart of Smith’s affirmation of the reality and necessity of spiritual sensation. The first comes from Plotinus. After pointing out the uselessness of seeking divinity in books alone where it is “entombed” more often than “enshrined,” Smith gives Plotinus as his source for the sentiment that one is to “seek God within” our “own soul” for God “is best discerned by an intellectual touch.”\(^3\) This is not allowed to stand on its own however, and is buoyed within the same sentence by reference to the *First Epistle of John* (1:1); “we must ‘see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and our hands must handle the word of life.’ Smith adds to this that, “the soul itself hath its sense, as well as the body” and again within the same sentence goes on to say that it is for this reason that David recommends in the Psalm “not speculation but sensation” as the means of arriving at an understanding of divine goodness; “Taste and see how good the Lord is.”\(^3\)

\(^3\) *Enneads* I.2.6 and V.3.17 seem to be the inspiration for Smith’s reference here but as is often the case his reference is not exact and does not match the words of the passage so much as the likely meaning of it. This tendency will be important later in our discussion of Smith’s use of Origen as a source. The phrase, “intellectual touch,” is a key to the way in which spiritual sensation is concerned with a blending of the conceptual and the (in some sense) perceptual.

\(^3\) Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 3; Psalm 34:8. Cf. Smith’s “internal sensating Faculty” for the good (Ibid., 138) discussed in 6.1.4.1 below. Also, Douglas Hedley on the influence of this opposition to “mere speculation” on Coleridge (*Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 225, 281).
In this way, Smith follows Origen’s hermeneutical approach (as suggested by Dillon) but as a late Renaissance Neoplatonist, Smith sees no reason to keep his reliance on a pagan philosopher implicit. Plotinus is for Smith a great teacher whose limits are overcome by the revelations of scripture but who nonetheless supplies a sure and steady guide by supplying the context within which scriptural passages can be read in their most literal way possible. Like Origen, Smith denies that there is biblical warrant for a vision of divine things with the physical eyes but his allegiance to a Neoplatonism open to the possibility of noetic sensibility allows him to affirm that these passages are not merely poetic devices.

Smith’s initial presentation of the reality of spiritual sensation rests on much the same combination of philosophical plausibility and scriptural warrant that Origen relies on. The most significant difference in this regard seems to be the added level of expressly methodical concern in Smith. As an early, and in some respects uncritical, admirer of Descartes, Smith seeks to offer foundations for his theological work in ways that Origen does not, but Smith finds his foundations not in modernity, but in Origen’s era. In other words, Smith was
urged by his present to recover a past within the tradition of Christian Platonism, because this is a living tradition for him.\textsuperscript{33}

4.1.2 Origen as Source

As has been demonstrated, Smith seems to follow the example of Origen’s creative combination of platonic plausibility and allegorical scriptural exegesis. This move on its own however only demonstrates that Smith is a Christian Platonist. His specific indebtedness to Origen is seen when one considers the way in which Origen acts not only as a model but also as a source for Smith’s presentation of the spiritual senses. This indebtedness to Origen as source will in turn offer support for the preceding argument about Origen as model.

Several specific elements in the theories of both figures might be discussed in this regard. For example, both Origen and Smith suggest that all human beings have a natural capacity for spiritual sensation as part of our original make up as rational beings. However in our earthly, sinful, fallen, life most people do not realize this potential. To actualize one’s spiritual senses requires God’s grace as well as personal effort and practice, essentially, moral behavior, philosophical

\textsuperscript{33} Saveson has suggested that Smith seems to think of the French Oratory, Descartes and Copernican astronomy as manifestations of a generally platonic philosophy.
training, reflection, prayer, scriptural study, and other spiritual practices.  
Likewise, both ascribe to the spiritual senses the ability to perceive spiritual life and spiritual death. Both Origen and Smith describe particular spiritual senses as taking for their objects various delightful manifestations of the Divine Logos. Finally, both locate the spiritual senses within an inner person as opposed to the outer, and both suggest that one’s attention to the external senses must decrease in order for the spiritual senses to increase. All of these similarities are suggestive of Smith’s debt to Origen; however, discussion here will be limited to


35 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 4-5, 7; Origen, Cant. Co. 1, in Balthasar, Spirit and Fire, nos. 545, 547.

36 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 3 (“we must see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and our hands must handle the word of life”); Balthasar, Spirit and Fire, nos. 539-540, 604-693.

37 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 3, etc.; Balthasar, Spirit and Fire, nos. 519-521, and 536. Origen follows St. Paul and platonic convention and Smith follows Descartes and what he takes to be the Christian tradition. Cf. John Norris, Reason and Religion, or the Grounds and Measures of Devotion Considered from the Nature of God and the Nature of Man, in Cragg, ed., The Cambridge Platonists, 157: “…the mind sees the divine essence must be totally and thoroughly absolved from all commerce with the corporeal senses.” There is an interesting parallel here with the philosophical objections raised by opponents of the Hesychast movement in the fourteenth century. Like the Greek Humanist Platonists Smith thinks that to suppose one may see God with one’s physical eyes is to make a category mistake. See Niketas Siniossoglou, Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 93-124.
their common apologetic use of the spiritual senses where Smith makes explicit reference to Origen.

From the very start of his first discourse Smith is eager to show that theology has a kind of demonstration that is different from the pure ratiocination of the intellect, or the dry presentations of doctrines and proofs in books. For example, Smith tells us, “They are not alwaies the best skill’d in Divinity, that are most studied in those Pandects which it is sometimes digested into, or that have erected the greatest Monopolies of Art and Science.” A little later Smith adds, “We must not think we have attained to the right knowledge of Truth, when we have broke through the outward shell of words & phrases that house it up; or when by a Logical Analysis we have found out the dependencies and coherences of them with one another.” Smith is here framing his presentation of the “True

38 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 2. Cf. Ralph Cudworth, “… as if Religion were nothing but a little Book-craft, a mere paper-skill” (“A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, March 31, 1647,” in C.A. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists, 91).

39 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 8. To these quotations can be added: “The knowledge of Divinity that appears in systems and models is but a poor wan light” (3). “All Light and Knowledge that may seem sometimes to rise up in unhallowed minds, is but like those fuliginous flames that arise up from our culinary fire, that are soon quench’d in their own smoke; or like those foolish fires that fetch their birth from terrene exudations, that doe but hop up & down, and flit to and fro upon the surface of this earth where they were first brought forth; and serve not so much to enlighten, as to delude us; nor to direct the wandering traveler into his way, but to lead him farther out of it” (3-4). Others like this are found throughout the first “Discourse” and indeed throughout the entire Select Discourses.
Way” in apologetic terms against a merely logical or intellectual approach to philosophy and theology. His opponents in this apologetic are the early modern Skeptics, various types of materialists (especially Epicureans), other “atheists,” and especially Christian scholastics.

In the midst of this apologetic Smith repeatedly points to the true method as that of a purified life and the awakening of a capacity for spiritual sensation which grants knowledge more akin to personal encounter than logical inference. This is the different kind of demonstration that Christianity has for Smith, proven not in the unaffected intellect calmly accessing the evidence but felt in a direct experience of God by the soul. It is in the midst of this apology that Smith makes his only direct appeal to Origen. “It is but a thin, aiery knowledge that is got by meer Speculation, which is usher’d in by Syllogisms and Demonstrations; but that which springs forth from true Goodness, is θειωτερόν τι πασης ἀπόδειξεως, [theioteron ti pases apodeixeos, “a more divine demonstration” or “more divine than any demonstration”] as Origen speaks, it brings such a Divine Light into the Soul, as is more clear and convincing than any Demonstration.”40

40 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 4. Without the full context it is difficult to be precise about the intended meaning of the phrase from Origen. Cf. Henry More, A Brief Discourse of the
Examination of Origen’s works, and the editions of Origen known to have been available to Smith, reveals that the “quote” here is most likely a paraphrase taken from *Contra Celsum* I.2.

In keeping with Smith’s general practice, the phrase is not attributed to a specific passage in Origen. Unlike most other quotations from Greek and Hebrew, this phrase has not been “Englished” by Smith’s editor. Apparently, Worthington judged a translation of this passage “was less needful” because of the surrounding text. C. A. Patrides translates the phrase, “more sacred than any evidence.” No edition of the *Discourses* has offered a specific citation for this phrase and the most recent abridged edition of the first “Discourse” offers only the suggestion that Smith may have in mind Origen’s *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Book X, 25, in which Origen, “discourses on the Divine light.”

---

41 Worthington, “To the Reader,” in *Select Discourses* (1660), iv-v.

42 *The Cambridge Platonists* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 130. “Sacred” is an unusual choice for Smith who is much more partial to variations on “divine.” Also, Smith’s larger point is that there is a kind of “evidence” for Christianity. It is just not discursive argument.

suggestion however seems to have more to do with the English phrases that follow Smith’s quotation from Origen and not the quotation itself.

According to the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, θειότερον occurs 27 times in Origen’s corpus but this phrase is never given.\(^44\) However, a search of Origen’s works in the *Patrologia Graeca* (Migne) edition also reveals that the phrase in fact does not occur in exactly this form in Origen. Furthermore, according to Origen’s, *Opera Omnia, Lexicum Proprium seu ’Concordances,’* the word θειότερον occurs only once and this phrase is not there.\(^45\) Chadwick’s edition has, “something divine about him” in this place.\(^46\) Similar forms of Smith’s Greek for “divine” and “proof/demonstration” do occur in *Contra Celsum* I.2 however, where the same sentiment, though not the exact phrase, is found. Apparently, Smith has paraphrased Origen from memory or less-than-exact notes. This is not at all unusual for Smith; the majority of his references in the first “Discourse,” except for the Bible, are of this sort.


\(^{46}\) *Contra Celsum*, col. 00336 (1.31), in Chadwick trans., 30.
It should also be noted that although the seventeenth century manuscript list of books from Smith’s library donated to Queens’ College Library upon his death in 1652 does not include Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, both Emmanuel (where he was a student) and Queens’ (where he was a fellow) had copies in a 1605 Greek and Latin edition. The Emmanuel volume was removed before 1693 when the current copy held there was donated by Sancroft. The volume was in the collection for the first year of Smith’s undergraduate studies in the College however.47 There was also most likely a copy, of the same edition, at Queens’ College when he became a fellow in 1644.48 Moreover, Smith did know the *Contra Celsum*; he references it specifically in his discourse “Of Prophecy.”49

That Smith intends this passage specifically is indicated most strongly by the parallel intensions at work in both texts. In *Contra Celsum* I.2, Celsus is critiqued for trying to apply the criterion of a “Greek proof” to Christianity and


48 T. H. Horne, *A Catalogue of the Library of The College of St. Margaret and St. Bernard, Commonly Called Queen’s College in the University of Cambridge…* (London, 1827), 122. The edition in both cases was that of David Hoeschelius published in 1605 in both Greek and Latin (on alternating pages but with continuous pagination) and copious notes and apparatus. The Queens’ copy remains in the Old Library.

then Origen says, “Moreover, we have to say this, that the gospel has a proof which is particular to itself, and which is more divine than a Greek proof based on dialectical argument. This more divine demonstration the apostle calls a ‘demonstration of the Spirit and of power’ – of the spirit because of the prophecies and especially those which refer to Christ, which are capable of convincing anyone who reads them; of power because of the prodigious miracles which may be proved to have happened by this argument among many others, that traces of them still remain among those who live according to the will of the Logos.”

Likewise, Smith appeals to Origen in his own apologetic use of spiritual sensation. Immediately after his reference to Origen, Smith continues his attack on the “thin speculations” of logicians (both believers and non-believers). In addition, Origen suggests that the prophets employ the spiritual senses and that there is a single spiritual sensibility that takes five forms later in book I at chapter forty-eight. Chapters two and forty-eight are thus closely related for Origen and

---

50 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.2 (trans., Chadwick), emphasis added to show Chadwick’s English for the similar forms of the Greek offered by Smith as a “quotation” from Origen.

51 What I am calling Smith’s “apology” runs the full length of the first numbered section of the first discourse (Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 1-13).
both play a role in defending the sensible language of scripture from outside attack. And, as we will see below, just as Origen relates the spiritual senses to prophecy as the means by which revelation is received by human beings, so too does Smith.\footnote{See below on Smith’s theory of prophecy.}

While it would seem from these considerations that the spiritual senses are not merely metaphorical for Origen, it remains to be seen if they are rightly understood to be five in number or if they are merely so many ways of speaking of a single spiritual capacity or “intellectual sense” as Smith puts it.\footnote{Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 3.} In light of what Origen says about the inner and outer person however, it would seem that he indeed does intend to maintain that there are five distinct spiritual senses. This is important because it implies that there is something about the divine objects of these senses that could not be captured by a single noetic sense.

There is however no reason to affirm a strict opposition between one spiritual sensibility and five spiritual senses. Indeed, in \textit{Contra Celsum} I. 48 Origen suggests, in the midst of his discussion of the connection between the demonstration of the Spirit in prophecy and its connection to the five spiritual
senses, that there is a single “general divine perception” but that this single spiritual sensibility takes many forms, which Origen gives as the five spiritual senses.

Smith seems to be in basic agreement on this point. However, he is far less interested in speaking of a full set of five spiritual senses than is Origen. Smith moves easily from talking about spiritual sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, to speaking of a single spiritual sensibility, often called an “intellectual touch” and occasionally referred to as a sense of the heart. Unlike Origen, Smith does not put forward a clear theory of five distinct spiritual senses with anything approaching consistency in regards to their objects or other particulars, but he does consistently speak of the spiritual senses as more than simply one. Divinity is best known through a spiritual sensation for Smith that may take a form

---

54 Boyd T. Coolman has shown a very similar arrangement in William of Auxerre who also poses both a single noetic sense and five spiritual senses as parts of this whole (Knowing God by Experience: The Spiritual Senses in the Theology of William of Auxerre [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004]). Thus, it is not at all unprecedented within the tradition to speak this way. It should be noted however that I am not aware of any direct connection between William and Smith.
analogous to any of the physical senses, in keeping with Origen’s statement in

Contra Celsum I.48.\textsuperscript{55}

It seems probable therefore that Smith has in mind an arrangement very much like the one suggested by Origen where a “general divine perception” takes many different forms in order that the plenitude of the divine nature may be more fully expressed.\textsuperscript{56} This would help account for the ease with which Smith can go from speaking of a single noetic sense, using sensory language as a metaphor for knowledge (i.e., intellectual intuition), to multiple senses akin to the physical senses with different sensory objects within the spiritual realm (i.e., spiritual sight, taste, touch, of etc.).\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Smith is drawing on Origen’s discussion in the first book of Contra Celsum.

\textsuperscript{55} For example, Smith speaks of spiritual sight, touch, and taste already on p.3 of the “True Way” discourse (1660).

\textsuperscript{56} And this is exactly what one finds in Smith’s treatment of the divine inspiration in the imagination of the prophet. See below.

\textsuperscript{57} Smith will speak of this sort of variety especially in his discussion of the influx of divine revelation upon the imagination in prophecy. However, this also helps to explain the otherwise merely poetic appeal to different sensory modes in a “spiritual” key in the “True Way.”
4.1.3 Intellectual Intuition and the ‘Spiritual Senses’

As we have seen, for Smith we come to a natural understanding of divine things via the activation of our capacity for spiritual sensation. This power is noetic and functions as an intuition of Divine truth. Moreover, this ability is affective and captured best by employing the language of sense.58 I have argued that what Smith means here is both intellectual intuition and something more along the lines of the five spiritual senses as employed by Origen. However, it seems that there is a problem with understanding how Smith’s “spiritual sense” can be simultaneously intellectual and sensible. At least one commentator has tried to get around this issue by interpreting Smith’s discussion in the “True Way” discourse as entirely concerned with intellectual intuition simpliciter.

In his important study of the spiritual senses in Jonathan Edwards, William Wainwright argues that spiritual sensation for Smith is a matter of “affect-laden intellectual insight or intuition.”59 Drawing on many of the same passages discussed above, Wainwright focuses on the obviously intellectual


nature of Smith’s talk of spiritual sensation. He rightly concludes that the spiritual senses are, for Smith, a matter of intellectual intuition with a strong “affective dimension.”

However, because he ignores the influence of Origen in the “True Way” discourse, and because he does not explore the use of spiritual sensation in the theory “Of Prophecy” at all, Wainwright misses the subtle way in which Smith actually sees the spiritual senses as both unitary, as a metaphor for intellection, and diverse, on analogy with the five physical senses. Moreover, Smith is explicit that the “internal sensating Faculty” by which goodness is perceived is not a matter of the intellect but the will.

While Wainwright is correct in acknowledging that the affections are involved in Smith’s account of spiritual sensation in the “True Way” he misses

---

60 Ibid., 229-231.

61 Ibid., 231.

62 See section 4.2 below.

63 On the way sensory language for intellection may be analogical and not merely metaphorical see Mark T. Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good: John Wesley in the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Sensation” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2006), 37. Thought is metaphorically referred to with images drawn from sense but in such a way as to suggest an analogy between the mind and the faculties of sense.

64 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 138.
the possibility that in Smith’s day the emotions (i.e., being “amorous of Divine beauty” for example) can be thought of as receptive, like sense. After all, Descartes famously argued that the “passions” were a species of sensation.\textsuperscript{65} Wainwright is again correct that “Platonists think that reason itself has an affective dimension”\textsuperscript{66} but the emotional response to the intuition of Divine things is also perceptual for Smith. It is perceived through a “living sense” in and through a truly spiritual life. Wainwright mentions that other “analogies are at least as apt” as that between intellection and sense and goes on to include, as an example, “our immediate acquaintance with numbers.”\textsuperscript{67} However, Smith thinks that the “true Perfection, Sweetness, Energie, and Loveliness” of the purified soul reflecting Divine truth “is οὐτε ρητού ουτε γραπτον [neither explicit nor written] . . . [and] can no more be known by a naked Demonstration, then Colours can be

\textsuperscript{65} This tendency to associate affect with sense begins with Aristotle, can be found in the medieval scholastics (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) and continued well into the seventeenth century with figures like Descartes and into the eighteenth century with Francis Hutcheson. See Amy M. Schmitter, “17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions,” in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified 15 October 2010, accessed 29 April 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/emotions-17th18th/. Also Susan James, Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{66} Wainwright, “Jonathan Edwards,” 231.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
perceived of a blinde man by any Definition or Description which he can hear of them.”68 But what does it mean to have an “immediate acquaintance” with numbers or other mathematical objects other than to be brought to a proper cognition of them by a demonstration, definition, or description?

It would seem, therefore, that there is more of the actually sensible going on in Smith than Wainwright has allowed. For, our intellectual intuition of divine things must remain in this life “but here in its Infancy.” Even the understanding of the “true Metaphysical and Contemplative man” must still contend with the “Imaginative Powers” that will be “breathing a grosse dew upon the pure Glasse of our Understandings” so that at best we intellectually intuit “in a glass darkly.”69 That is, the sensible images of our imaginations remain with us while we live. The goal remains the pure “affect-laden intellectual . . . intuition” but this is a goal we are, here on Earth, only ever approaching; a goal only reached in the life of the world to come.

68 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 15.

69 Ibid., 20, 21.
Additionally, Smith speaks of “knowing of the truth as it is in Jesus”\textsuperscript{70} and of the results of his “True Way” as transforming what “was onely Faith” into “Vision.”\textsuperscript{71} Thus, he rather clearly means to say that as well as providing natural or rational access to the basics of theology, his “method” is also a means by which one comes to realize the truths of revelation for one’s self. By purifying one’s mind one comes to see that what Christ and the prophets have revealed is real and living truth. What starts out as belief of propositions from without becomes the perception of truths from within.

It is true that intellectual intuition is involved for Smith, but that is not \textit{all} that is going on in his treatment of the “spiritual senses.” For all the intellectualism in the “True Way,” the imagination is not, cannot be, completely surpassed. To do so would be to take important aspects of the “life” out of Smith’s proposed method. Furthermore, the role of the will is far more important than merely an affective adjunct to the intellect. In the perception of the Divine Goodness it is the will that senses, not the intellect.\textsuperscript{72} Moreover, as we will see

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{72} Though, to be fair, Smith does not hold to a consistent or firm distinction between intellect and will. He tends to see them both simply as activities of the one soul.
when we turn to Smith’s discussion of prophecy, the imagination, no less than the intellect, plays a key role in the reception of the saving truths of revelation.73

4.1.4 Conclusions along the Way

John Smith was influenced by the doctrine of the spiritual senses as expressed by its first systematic Christian exponent, Origen of Alexandria. Smith has been shown to follow Origen’s practice as the basis for his own presentation of spiritual sensibility. Whereas Origen relied on Middle Platonism and scripture however, Smith relied on Neoplatonism (especially Plotinus) as well as scripture. Smith is also indebted to Origen for important elements in the content of his doctrine. Both employ spiritual sensibility in a presentation of the means by which one comes to a proper theological understanding and Smith makes explicit reference to Origen’s apologetics as support for his own. Together this twofold influence is suggestive of a conscious appropriation of Origen’s thought by Smith.

Although other lines of influence cannot be ruled out with absolute confidence, the cumulative case is strong. While Smith follows Origen’s lead only briefly by the letter, and even then only as a paraphrase, in spirit Smith’s debt to the Alexandrian is clear. Therefore, the Emmanuel College Chapel windows are correct. Smith is rightfully thought of as an heir to the legacy of Origen, and much of this inheritance is manifest in Smith’s discussion of spiritual sensation.

4.2 The Source of Revealed Theology: Prophecy & the Spiritual Senses

In addition to the use of these varieties of spiritual perception in accounting for natural theological knowledge, Smith employs complex notions of spiritual sensation in his presentation of the origin of revealed theology too. For this, Smith will allow for only one “way whereby” this “Revealed Truth which tend[s] most of all to foment . . . true and real Piety” and that is prophecy.74

74 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 171; “Of Prophecy,” ch.1. In this section I cite from the edition of Williams published in 1859 because of his helpful citations of Smith’s rabbinic sources. For corresponding pages in other full editions see the Appendix. See also Sarah Hutton, “The Prophetic Imagination: A Comparative Study of Spinoza and the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith.” In Spinoza’s Political and Theological Thought: International Symposium under the Auspices of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Birth of Spinoza, Amsterdam, 24-27 November 1982, edited by C. Deugd, 73-81. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1984). Cf. More, A Brief Discourse, 145: “. . . the moral and human certainty of faith grounded upon the certainty of universal tradition, prophecy, history, and the nature of things delivered, reason and sense assisting the mind in her disquisitions touching these matters. . . . By prophecy I understand as well those divine predictions of the coming of Christ, as those touching the Church after he had come.”
4.2.1 General Character of Prophecy

Smith opens his discourse by noting the classic scholastic distinction between natural theology and “Revealed Truth” or revealed theology. This signals a major shift in the Select Discourses to this point. The previous five discourses have treated topics in natural theology (“Of the True Way of Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,” “Of Superstition,” “Of Atheism,” “Of the Immortality of the Soul,” and “Of the Existence and Nature of God”). But now, with the sixth, Smith’s attention turns to matters dependent “solely upon the Free will of God.” As Worthington reports on the state of Smith’s papers, and as Smith himself reports in the beginning of his discourse “Of the Immortality of the Soul,” the plan was to pivot here to discourses on “The Communication of God to Mankind through Christ.” In order to introduce revealed theology Smith takes up much the same task as we have seen above in the case of “The True Way”


76 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 171.

77 Worthington, “An Advertisement,” in Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 294; (1660), 280. These Smith did not live long enough to compose; Worthington attempts to make up for them by providing some related discourses in the remains of his edition of Smith’s work.
discourse. He gives an overview of the way by which one comes to receive revelation, which he asserts is only accomplished through prophecy.

Where “natural truth” is “engraven upon”\textsuperscript{78} and “folded up in”\textsuperscript{79} our own essences as “participations of the Divine Mind” within the human, “positive truth can only be made known to us by a free influx of the Divine Mind upon our minds and understandings.”\textsuperscript{80} In this way Smith contrasts the innatism of the

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. Plotinus, \textit{Ennead} V. 3. 4.

\textsuperscript{79} Smith’s use of the phrase “folded up in” is reminiscent of the language of Nicholas of Cusa. For Cusanus, enfold-unfold (complicare-explicare) are technical terms of art signifying the relationship between God, in Whom all things exist \textit{qua} enfolded, and the multiplicity of creation, where things are unfolded \textit{qua} individuals. If Smith has this connotation in mind, he would seem to be suggesting that our native notions of God are enfolded within us. Thus, on this reading we are the idea or form of God; perhaps another way of speaking of humanity as made in the \textit{imago Dei}. Interesting as such a speculative reading is, there is (1) no reason to think that Smith had read Cusa, and (2) for this metaphor to work one would need to posit real plurality in God (and make of the Deity a human creation too). See Christopher M. Bellitto, Thomas M. Izbicki, Gerald Christianson, eds., \textit{Introducing Nicholas of Cusa: A Guide to a Renaissance Man} (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 459-60 and Jasper Hopkins, \textit{Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985). Douglas Hedley has made a case for greater partiality on the part of Christian theology to “the claims of the imagination” in part on the basis of the \textit{imago Dei} in his “Homo Imaginans and the Concursus Divinus,” in Charles Taliaferro and Jil Evans, eds., \textit{Turning Images in Philosophy, Science, and Religion: A New Book of Nature} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 114-32, here 132.

\textsuperscript{80} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 171. Cf. Benjamin Whichcote, “Moral and Religious Aphorisms,” in C.A. Patrides, #460 (p.331): “Reason is not a shallow thing: it is the first Participation from God: therefore he, that observes Reason, observes God.” Since Smith will elaborate that the intellect and the imagination are inspired in prophecy it seems clear that he includes the imagination \textit{in} or \textit{with} the “mind.” On the idea of knowledge of God being placed in the mind by God see also Henry More, \textit{An Antidote Against Atheism} (1652), in Cragg, ed., \textit{The Cambridge Platonists}, Book I Chapter 8, p.177: “For this idea of God being no arbitrary figure...
natural with the free gift ad extra of the revealed. Still, in contrast to the radical monergism of the Calvinists of his day, “the souls of men are as capable of conversing with” this divine disclosure “as they are with any sensible and external objects.” Moreover, “there is some analogical way, whereby the knowledge of Divine Truth may also be revealed to us.” That is, revelation takes a form that is analogous to everyday corporeal sensation.

In fact, Smith is prepared, though he does not develop the idea fully, to speak of the “historical truth of corporeal and material things” as “revealed” to our understanding. To reinforce this notion Smith argues that just as God has made us capable of communication with each other so too has God made us “capable of receiving any impressions from Himself.” This form of divine communication is “originally nothing else but prophetical.”

---

81 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 172.

82 Some contemporary philosophers have spoken in much this same way about phenomenal experience as “revealed.” See, Dominique Janicaud, Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

83 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 172.
While the primary purpose of prophecy will be to communicate those truths that must be freely given by God, Smith is also quick to acknowledge that it can be a means of arriving at natural truths more quickly too. For this reason, “Scripture treats, not only those pieces of truth which are the results of God’s free counsels, but also those which are most akin and allied to our understandings [natural truths], and that in the greatest way of condescension [i.e., accommodation] that may be, speaking to the weakest sort of men in the most vulgar sort of dialect.”\(^8^4\) In this, Smith is clearly following the well-worn scholastic consensus.\(^8^5\) God’s “Truth is content” when expressed in scripture “to wear our mantles, to learn our language.” In order that we might understand the record of prophecy in scripture “speaks with the most idiotical sort of men in the most idiotical way.”\(^8^6\) For this reason, the best way to approach scripture “is not rigidly to examine it upon philosophical interrogatories, or to bring it under the

\(^8^4\) Ibid., 173.


\(^8^6\) Smith, *Select Discourses* (1859), 173. “Idiotical” here is meant in the now obsolete sense of plain, simple, or unlearned not “idiotic” in our contemporary sense.
scrutiny of school definitions and distinctions [i.e., scholastic inquiry].” 87 Instead, one must interpret passages that speak of God sensing, feeling, or moving as symbolic of omniscience or omnipresence or the like. 88 In the same way, hell and heaven too, while spoken of as places are rather to be understood as states of the soul instead. 89 Thus, scripture speaks of divine things metaphorically in order that we might understand, even though the prophet has received the truths so recorded in a way analogous to ordinary sensible experience.

4.2.2 Degrees of Prophecy

While this discourse is primarily concerned with prophecy, that is actually not its overall topic. For Smith includes in this discourse discussions of those who do not technically count as prophets at all. Some received divine revelation in more perfect ways than others. The real topic of the discourse is divine inspiration, enthusiasm and illumination and all the varieties of this broader

---

87 Ibid., 174.

88 Ibid., 174-6.

category. As will be made clear below, what Smith means by “inspiration,” “illumination,” and “enthusiasm” comes into sharpest focus in his treatment of the specifics of each of these degrees of the reception of revelation. Some preliminary words of clarification must be made from the start however.

Unlike the very different meaning of terms such as enthusiasm and illumination as employed by some other authors, Smith means to express by them that process whereby the individual human soul receives divine revelation. Rather than our contemporary meaning of a particularly intense emotional interest in someone or something (i.e., “I’ve always been a great ice hockey enthusiast”) or even the meaning that one finds in Henry More of an “ill-regulated or misdirected religious emotion,” especially associated with ecstasy, purported prophecy or other inspiration from God, Smith nearly always uses “enthusiasm” in its original sense as signifying “supernatural inspiration.”

“Inspiration” in this context means for Smith the influence of God, perhaps via a mediating angel, upon a person. “Illumination” can call to mind Augustine’s

---

90 See the Oxford English Dictionary under “enthusiasm.” On More’s concerns to distinguish true from false or “enthusiastic” visions and dreams see Scott, “Visions, Dreams, and Discernment,” 215-20. The classic text is Henry More, Enthusiasmus triumphatus, or, a discourse of the nature, causes, kinds, and cure, of enthusiasme…and prefixed to Alazonomastix His Observations and reply…. (London: J. Flesher, sold by W. Morden, Cambridge, 1656).
famous epistemological theory and a whole host of similar uses that arose from
his influence. Smith, in contrast, usually intends by the word merely an instance
of inspiration or revelation in the mind. While Smith is happy to use the
metaphor of light as Augustine did he shows no obvious sign of following the
great Church Father in specifics.\textsuperscript{91} In general, therefore, Smith uses terms such as
revelation, inspiration, enthusiasm, and illumination more or less synonymously
to indicate the act of communication between God and human beings.

Smith calls upon the definitions of prophecy by Maimonides and Joseph
Albo (c.1380-1444) to establish that this communication is effected via the action
of God upon the imagination and the mind or intellect.\textsuperscript{92} “The true essence of

\textsuperscript{91} Indeed, Smith’s usage seems to owe more to earlier Greek Patristic and pagan
philosophical models than to Augustine or the Scholastics. Cf. See R. Crocker, “The Role of
in Philosophical Context}, 129-44. For a standard treatment of divine illumination of the
Augustinian variety see Robert Pasnau, "Divine Illumination," in \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of
Philosophy}, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified 4 April 2011, accessed 26 April 2014,
http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/illumination/. For a more recent perspective
that challenges the traditional philosophical interpretation see Lydia Schumacher, \textit{Divine
Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge} (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell,
2011). Smith tends to employ illumination in ways more like Schumacher’s “intrinsic”
interpretation of Augustine’s theory than the usual “external” approach found in Pasnau. That is,
Smith, like Schumacher’s Augustine, thinks of divine illumination as arising \textit{within} us rather than
coming from without.

\textsuperscript{92} Important background for medieval theories of the “inner senses,” including the
imagination, can still be found in Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic,
Maimonides in particular see Wolfson’s "Maimonides on the Internal Senses," \textit{Jewish Quarterly
prophecy is nothing else but an influence from the Deity first upon the rational, and afterwards upon the imaginative faculty’’ according to Maimonides.93 Rabbi Albo agrees, saying, ’’Prophecy is an influence from God upon the rational faculty, either by mediation of the fancy [imagination] or otherwise.’’94 Smith will follow his Jewish sources here and maintain that the grades of revelation are distinguished by the relative involvement of the two faculties of the imagination and the intellect. Additional specification comes only in the context of Smith’s discussion of the various types of this general category of phenomena.


94 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 180.
Smith follows the example of biblical and rabbinic tradition in arguing that there is a “gradual variety” among those who have received revelations. Above all there is the distinction between Moses and the rest of the prophets. Moses shares, of course, the status of being a prophet with many others but in terms of the quality, “clearness and evidence,” he far exceeds them all.95 The other prophets, e.g., Elijah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, rank below Moses as having revelations of a similar but less perfect kind. Below these are yet another rank of hagiographi, figures inspired by the Spirit of God to write biblical works such as the Psalms, Job, and the Song of Solomon, among others. These texts are not “prophetic” in the full or proper sense but they are “inspired” by God, and thus they represent a lower degree of revelation.96 Finally, at the lowest level of the hierarchy of illumination is the Bath Kol, or the “voice of God” heard through the corporeal sense of hearing.

Tellingly, this last degree of revelation is not mentioned in chapter two where the others are first introduced. Instead, Smith adds a brief review in what

---

95 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 178. Also, Deut. 34: 10. “Evidence” here refers to the quality of being evident not data or testimony.

96 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 178-83; 268-71. In addition to Numbers 12: 5-8, Smith’s authorities for this division include Maimonides and Joseph Albo.
became chapter ten, just before laying out the highest degree of prophetical illumination, the Mosaic. Smith does note however that Joseph Albo “distinguished prophecy into . . . four degrees.” The lowest degree being that in which “the imaginative power is most predominant” corresponds to the Bath Kol in being most associated with physical perception and thus least intellectual. The next “when the strength of the imaginative and rational powers equally balance each other” to the hagiographi. The third, yet again more perfect grade, is “when the rational power is most predominant” is associated with the prophets in the full sense. Fourth and finally, the most perfect form of prophecy, that associated with Moses above all others, is that “in which all imagination ceaseth, and the representation of truth descends not so low as the imaginative part, but is made in the highest stage of reason and understanding.”

---

97 The ordering of the material, it must be remembered, was done by Worthington after Smith’s death. Given the repetition and overall flow of this discourse in particular however it seems likely that it was in a very rough state indeed.

98 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 181. Thus, the imagination is perceptual. It is where the objects of sense are presented to the understanding. It is between, therefore, the intellect and the senses, or as Smith puts it, it is the “middle region of man” (200).

99 Ibid., 183.
In endorsing Albo’s hierarchy of prophecy Smith is also making clear his commitment to the hierarchy of faculties in the soul following the *ordo cognoscendi*.\(^{100}\) But his true guide is not Aristotle, but, Platonic, as what makes these grades hierarchical is their level of conformity to the divine realm of true *noesis*.\(^{101}\)

4.2.3 Prophecy Proper

As befits his purposes in this discourse Smith spends most of his time on what he calls “prophecy proper” or those degrees of divine inspiration that involve either a predominance, or the exclusive use, of the rational faculty over that of the imagination.\(^{102}\) For most prophets, revelation is received in the

---

\(^{100}\) That is from external sense, to the inner faculties of perception, imagination, and memory, up to those of judgment and intellect.

\(^{101}\) There is an interesting parallel between Albo’s degrees of prophecy and the four ranks of men according to their degree of knowledge and way of life, stemming ultimately from Plato’s *Divided Line* (*Republic*, 509d-510a), in “The True Way” discourse (1660, 17). We take this up in full in chapter five below.

\(^{102}\) Smith, *Select Discourses* (1859), 180. R. J. Scott has offered an important, albeit brief and imperfect account of Smith’s theory of prophecy as related to visions and dreams in “Visions, Dreams, and Discernment,” 201-33. In so far as Scott tries to draw conclusions about Smith by contrasting him with Thomas Aquinas (an unnecessary stand in for Protestant scholastics; Smith would be familiar with Thomas too) I think an important aspect of Smith’s thought is overlooked. He was resolutely opposed to the schoolmen of his day and to Aristotelians in particular. Maimonides and the other rabbinic sources Smith relies on are excepted not because of their philosophy but because they speak for the ancient Jewish tradition.
imagination as a representation of sensible objects. “The imaginative power . . .
set forth as a stage, upon which certain visa and simulacra were represented,” as
Smith phrases it. 103 These “apparitions” or “types and shadows” are “symbols of
some spiritual things.” That is, these presentations in the imagination are
manifestations of purely “intelligible mysteries” which are seen by the intellect in
their symbolic reflections. This intellectual intuition is occasioned by the action of
God upon the intellect in coordination with the influx of images into the
imagination. 104

103 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 180. Douglas Hedley has pointed to the collegiate
context that may help to account for this image of the imagination as a “stage” in his Sacrifice
reports a 1640 inventory held by the Old Library at Queens’ College that includes a “Colledge
stage” (56). Hedley has also called attention to the work of I. R. Wright (“An Early Stage at
Queens’,” Magazine of the Cambridge Society 18 [1986]: 74-83) who notes that Cambridge had been
a center for drama from the middle of the sixteenth century. In fact, Elizabeth I viewed
performances in 1564 and “Charles I saw a play at Queens’ in 1632” (Hedley, Sacrifice, 56).
Moreover, D. F. McKenzie has observed that “Trinity and Queens’ [Colleges] seem to have been
the only colleges left in which plays were still performed with distinction” by the late 1630s (“A
Cambridge Playhouse of 1638,” Renaissance Drama 3 [1970]: 270; quoted by Hedley, Sacrifice, 56).
While it does seem probable therefore that Smith was familiar with the early modern English
stage, it is worth noting that his Select Discourses contain no overt references to specific plays,
playwrights, or the like except for his metaphorical use of the stage to describe the imagination.
Moreover, the imagination, while key to divine revelation through prophecy, is clearly
subservient for Smith to the intellect. However, since by the time of his appointment as a Fellow
at Queens’ the Puritans had banned the theater, there may be purely practical reasons for his
relative silence (cf. Hedley, Sacrifice, 56).

104 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 181. “Images” here should be taken simply to mean the
objects of the imagination. They are not limited to the visual for Smith as a prophet often “hears”
divine things too. In principle, any of the five sensory modalities can be represented in the
imagination.
Agent Intellect

In two places in chapter two “Of Prophecy” Smith makes apparent reference to Aristotle’s “active” or “agent intellect”\(^{105}\) in order to account for that which impresses the intellect and imagination of the prophet with divine revelation.\(^{106}\) Now few concepts have been more influential or more controverted in the history of philosophy than Aristotle’s notion of the active intellect.\(^{107}\) Reading the cryptic references to active and passive intellect in \textit{De Anima} III 5 in the light of \textit{Metaphysics} XII 5-7 led some commenters to conclude that the active intellect is external to the individual human mind. Some, beginning with Alexander of Aphrodisias, identified this external active intellect with Aristotle’s

\(^{105}\) Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 179, 185. Also Hedley, \textit{Sacrifice}, 51-3.


Unmoved Mover or God. Later Arabic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes continued to view the active intellect as external to the individual human mind and singular for all rational beings but as an entity proceeding from God rather than identified with God.  

Maimonides, Smith’s primary reason for bringing up the topic in this context, seems to have understood the active intellect to be an emanation from God closest to human beings in the celestial hierarchy and thus the point of contact between God and the human mind. Thus, Maimonides defines prophecy as “nothing else but an influence from the Deity first upon the rational, and afterwards upon the imaginative faculty, by the mediation of the active

---


intellect.””¹¹⁰ In contrast, Smith sees the prophetic influence as *simultaneously* intellectual and imaginative, but in general he agrees with Maimonides here. However, Smith speaks of “the imagination and mind of the prophet” being “made subject wholly to some agent intellect informing it and shining upon it,” implying that whereas Maimonides thinks of there being a single active or agent intellect (“the active intellect”), Smith thinks that there are many (“some agent intellect”).¹¹¹ Since Smith does not explain just what he means by the use of the phrase in this discourse we must turn to his “Of the Immortality of the Soul” chapter eight to get a sense of what he might intend here.

It comes as no surprise that Smith takes up a discussion of Aristotle’s psychology in order to address his view on the immortality of soul. For, many, if not most, commenters have noted that for Aristotle there can be no such thing. Smith is therefore understandably dismissive of the ill-placed praise Aristotle receives by “so many” who “take [him] for the great intelligencer of nature, and omniscient oracle of truth; though it be too manifest that he hath so defaced the


sacred monuments of the ancient metaphysical theology by his profane hands.”

What has caused many to “stumble” with regard to the immortality of the soul is the definition that Aristotle gives of soul as “nothing else . . . but an entelech or informative thing, which spends all its virtue upon that matter which it informs.” Because Aristotle famously gave a basic definition of soul as the form inherent in a living being, it would seem that the soul is mortal just as the body. But, Smith continues, “he intended not this for a general definition of the soul of man” because Aristotle soon thereafter says that “the rational soul is separable from the body, because it is not the entelech of any body.” The mind, unlike those aspects of the soul that are necessarily connected with the body, “seems to be another kind of soul, and that only is separable from the body.”

112 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 107-8.

113 Ibid., 108; citing De Anima II 1.

114 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 109; citing De Anima II 2. Smith cannot resist adding that Aristotle is apparently making a little dig at the Platonists and Pythagoreans – what imprudence! – who, Smith says, believed in the immortality of all kinds of soul. Interestingly, Smith does not deny the truth of such a doctrine.
This first problem posed by a common reading of Aristotle resolved to his satisfaction, Smith goes on to address the “other difficulty with which Aristotle’s opinion seems to be clogged” namely his assertion that the passive intellect is corruptible.\textsuperscript{115} Some have misunderstood Aristotle here to mean by active and passive two distinct faculties when in fact, “he means nothing else by his $\nu\nu\upsilon$ παθητικός [passive intellect], but the understanding in potentia, and by his $\nu\nu\upsilon$ πουητικός [active intellect], the same in actu or in habitu.”\textsuperscript{116} The active intellect, therefore, for Smith (if not for Aristotle), is nothing but the potential for thought realized. After a brief attack on the argument of Aristotle against Plato’s theory of innate ideas\textsuperscript{117} Smith returns to show once again that when Aristotle “distinguisheth between his intellectus agens and patiens, he seems to mean almost nothing else but what out ordinary metaphysicians do in their distinction of actus and potentia.”\textsuperscript{118} Thus, there are as many active intellects as there are thinking

---

\textsuperscript{115} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 111; citing \textit{De Anima} III 5.

\textsuperscript{116} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 111.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 111-2.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 112. Smith’s authority on this point is Simplicius.
beings for Smith. In this, he differs from his chief guide to prophecy, Maimonides, yet Smith seems not to appreciate, or be bothered by, the fact.

The apparent explanation for Smith’s lack of concern over his disagreement with Maimonides on the nature of the active intellect is to be found in Smith’s agreement with the Rambam on the issue as it concerns his discourse on prophecy. That is, with regard to prophecy Smith only makes mention of the “active intellect” in order to refer to that mind, in act, that is the “immediate efficient” cause of “prophetical visions.” On this question, Smith and Maimonides are in basic agreement; the immediate cause of prophecy is not God directly (exceptional cases such as Moses notwithstanding) but rather an angel.119

Smith disputes the details of Maimonides’ position on this however, saying that he “pretends” it to be a settled issue that “there is no prophecy but either in a dream or vision, or by the ministry of an angel.”120 That is, for Maimonides all prophets, except Moses alone, received their prophecy from an angel. However, Nachmanides argued in the opposite direction that any who

119 Ibid., 215-6. How this might possibly be so for Maimonides while he also asserts that prophecy is mediated by the single active intellect is a matter for Maimonidean scholars.

120 Ibid., 218, 217.
“beholds an angel, or hath any conference with one, is not a prophet.”  

However, Smith argues that Nachmanides has overstepped the bounds of tradition in so far as “all antiquity reckoned Zechariah as a prophet” even though “all his visions are perpetually represented by angels.”

Moreover, the Talmud confirms, in a comparison of Numbers 12: 6 and Zechariah 10: 2, that true prophecy has been communicated by angels. This opinion is supported by the views of the rabbis Rami, Jehudah, Bechai, and Albo, but nowhere more convincingly, for Smith (ever the Protestant theologian), than in scripture itself. In particular, Smith draws our attention to Genesis 32: 24, the story of Jacob’s struggle with an angel and his subsequent prophetic dream of a ladder between Earth and Heaven in Genesis 38: 12. In this dream of the ladder “we find angels ascending and descending, to intimate

121 Ibid., 218.
122 Ibid., 219.
123 Ibid., 221-2.
124 Ibid., 222.
125 Ibid., 222-5. Smith cites Hosea 12:4 on the angelic identity of the “man” Joshua wrestled with.
that this scala prophetica, whereby divine influence descended upon the mind of
the prophet, is always filled with angels.”127 That prophetic inspiration is
mediated by angels Smith also asserts on the authority of Philo of Alexandria’s de

_Dreams and Visions_

Having established that prophecy works via the imagination and the
intellect, often by the mediation of an active intellect or angel, Smith proceeds to
elaborate on the “two ways, whereby God would reveal Himself to every other
prophet [besides Moses and the Messiah, who intuit divine truth without
images] – either in a vision or a dream.”129 In both of these cases “visa and
simulacra sensibilia” (presentations and images of sensible objects) are “impressed
[by divine agency] upon [the] common sense or fancy [phantasia, i.e., the
imaginative faculty].”130 This “common sense” is not described in any way,

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., 226-7.

129 Ibid., 183. See Peter Holland, “The Interpretation of Dreams in the Renaissance,” in
_Reading Dreams_, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125-46 on the treatment
of dreams in Smith’s immediate historical context.

130 Ibid., 184.
making Smith’s precise meaning difficult to unravel, but most likely this is a reference to the “higher-order perceptual power that emerges from the unity of the perceptual capacity of the soul,” a faculty that works in connection with the imagination in bringing sensible images to cognitive awareness.¹³¹ Smith’s theological point here is clear however, even if his philosophy is muddled. It is in visions and dreams that the prophet receives revelations as present to his or her understanding, though without external objects of sense.

Of the two, there is for Smith only a circumstantial difference between a vision and a dream. In both, “the representation of divine things by some sensible images or some narrative voice must needs be in them.”¹³² In fact, as Maimonides reports of Abraham, a prophet may fall into sleep from a waking because the “external senses are bound” or shut up in a vision.¹³³ While extraordinary in their power to close off the external senses Smith is quick to note, following Rabbi Bechai, that prophetical visions, and presumably dreams

¹³¹ Pavel Gregoric, *Aristotle on the Common Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 120. My interpretation rests largely on this view being the way Simplicius, an important authority for Smith, reads Aristotle. Alternatively Smith is using the phrase as simply a synonym for the “fancy” or *phantasia*.


¹³³ Ibid., 185. Also Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Part II ch. 45.
as well, are still human visions. The prophet views an image as humans usually do and he “saw like a man, and understood things after the manner of men” as well.134

In visions, which are not limited to visual impressions despite their name, and in dreams, the prophet “sees” or “hears” spiritual things symbolically in the imagination. St. Paul intends just this when he says, “‘Now we see δι’ ἑσόπτρον ἐν αἰνίγματι—by a glass, in riddles or parables’” by which Smith takes him to mean that “the highest illuminations which we have here” in contrast to the “constant irradiation of the Divinity upon the souls of men in the life to come.”135

Smith proceeds in chapter three to give a rather lengthy discussion of the distinctions between various types of dreams met with in scripture. His point here is simply to note that not all dreams are prophetic, a notion that would seem to go without saying except that he acknowledges, with Maimonides, a class of dreams that are true but nevertheless not prophetic. These “smina vera” Maimonides describes as simply an “admonition or instruction . . . given by God

134 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 185-6. R. Bechai is almost certainly Bahye ben Asher ibn Halawa (1255-1340) and not one of the other Bechai’s also from Spain. See “Bahya (Behai) ben Asher ben Halwa,” in The Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-1906), accessed 26 April 2014, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2367.

... in a dream.” As Smith interprets this out of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua in addition to the Rambam, the primary reason such dreams are not counted as prophetic owes to the status of the dreamer. The “partakers of them were unsanctified men; whereas it is a tradition amongst them [the Rabbis], that the spirit of prophecy was not communicated to any but good men.”

A true dream sent by God is “much weaker in their energy upon the imagination.” Whereas a prophetic dream has “strength and force of a divine evidence” the somina vera (or νουθετίκα; admonition) are dull and not obviously of divine origin. This qualitative difference seems to be connected to a difference in the content of the dream as well. A non-prophetic, true dream “ordinarily contained . . . something that was ἀργόν [idle, useless], or void of reality.” In contrast, as Albo has it, “prophecy is a thing wholly and most exactly true.”

Moreover, Smith lays out the opinion of Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE) on this topic as related in his de Somniis. In part Smith’s aim here is to further

---

136 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 187.

137 Ibid., 187. More on this in chapter five below.

138 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 187.

139 Ibid., 188. Smith backs up this point with the Gemara (Babylonian Talmud) and Albo.
expound on his theme but, ever the humanist, he also takes the opportunity to correct the Latin translation of Sigismund Gelenius. For Philo the “proper character” of a prophetic dream is that it be accompanied by “ecstatical rapture” as Smith phrases it. By this he takes Philo to mean little more than that these dreams are powerful and leave a deeper impression on the dreamer as being of divine origin. Philo speaks of three types of divine dreams that one meets with in scripture.

First, when God addresses the imagination, such as the dreams of Joseph, in such a way that the dreamer at first does not know what to make of the dream.140 Second, when the reason is moved with the world soul and predicts things to come in future, which Philo associates with Jacob’s ladder and Laban’s sheep.141 And third, when the soul is moved by itself and the content of the dream is clouded in obscurity and in need of an interpreter as in the case of the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. This last type is thought by Smith to be those identified by Plato too which “cannot be understood without a prophet.”142

140 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 189.

141 Ibid., 190.

142 Ibid., 192. The allusion appears to be to Timaeus 72a. This blending of Judaic and Platonic scholarship is a classic example of Smith’s profound breadth of learning.
In chapter six “Of Prophecy” Smith asks if actions ascribed to prophets should be understood to be real historical events or if they are merely imaginary in the sense that visions and dreams are. Following the lead of Maimonides, Smith suggests that because “the prophetical scene or stage upon which all apparitions were made to the prophet, was his imagination” where the “things which God would have revealed . . . were acted over symbolically, as in a masque,” that “it is no wonder to hear of those things done which . . . have no historical or real verity.”143 What matters is the content of the revelation and not whether or not a prophet actually did what is attributed to him or her.

In this way Smith is able to save Hosea from the untoward act of actually marrying the “harlot” Gomer,144 Abraham from the awkwardness of seeing the stars during the daytime,145 Jeremiah from various unlikely stories,146 and Ezekiel

---

143 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 230. On the question of the “objectivity” of prophetic dreams for Maimonides see Leaman, Maimonides, Imagination, and the Objectivity of Prophecy, 69-80. “The only objectivity which we can discuss here is the objectivity of the relationship between the parable and the state of affairs which as a consequence is made comprehensible to us” (Leaman, 79).

144 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 230.

145 Ibid., 232.

146 Ibid., 232-4.
from actually eating a scroll, among others. All such unlikely events as these are to be understood to be imaginary or symbolic only. As a general rule, Smith proposes, with Abarbanel, that we consider any such story to be imaginary, and therefore as signifying something else, unless there is “some positive declaration to assure us that they were performed in history.”

True and False Prophecy

In chapter four Smith takes up the difference between true and false or demonic prophecy. Since prophecy involves the imagination, and false enthusiasm involves nothing more than the imagination, it is easy to be mistaken about the truth or falsity of a purported prophetic experience. Thus, he sets out to “examine the nature of this false light which pretends to prophecy, but is not.” False prophecy, like the true, is “seated” in the imagination. However, whereas for the true prophet the intellect is also involved, the false has only their imaginative faculty activated.

\[147\] Ibid., 235-6.

\[148\] Ibid., 231.

\[149\] Ibid., 194.
Smith draws on a threefold categorization by Maimonides to illustrate his point. There are, first of all, those who are “wholly intellectual . . . from whence . . . ariseth the sect of philosophers, and contemplative persons.” Second, are those who experience the “rational and imaginative” together, and these include the prophets. Third, there are those who engage the “imaginative only . . . from whence proceeds the sect of politicians, lawyers, and lawgivers . . . also the sect of diviners, enchanters, dreamers, and soothsayers.” These last, of course, are in no sense “prophets” for Maimonides, or Smith. In fact, Smith judges that his own day is much infected with such “enthusiastical impostors” in matters secular and sacred. Against the deluded enthusiast and the tradition of the Renaissance magi Smith shows nothing but contempt. “This pseudo-prophetical spirit, being not able to rise up above this low and dark region of sense or matter,

150 Ibid., 195.

or to soar aloft into a clear heaven of vision, endeavored always, as much as
might be, to strengthen itself in the imaginative part: and, therefore, the wizards
and false prophets of old and later times have been wont always to heighten
their fancies and imaginations by all means possible.”

As if to assure his reader of his knowledge in this matter Smith calls upon the expertise of the Dutch
occultist Johann Weyer (1515-1588) who speaks of witches eating “such food as
they understand from the devil is very fit for” enhancing their imaginations.

Divination of this sort has often been mistaken for prophecy by “weaker
minds” but even the “wiser sort of the heathens have happily found out the
lameness and delusiveness of it”; one need not be a Christian to discern that
these are false prophets. For example, Plato addresses such matters in the
Timaeus, Charmides, and the Phaedrus. Following their master’s lead, “the
Platonists generally seemed to reject, or very much to slight, all this kind of

\[152\] Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 196. We see here the hierarchy of the rational over the
imaginative or sensible that we met with above. For Smith, as for Origen and Plotinus, to remain
fixated on the physical world of appearance is to limit ourselves to a view intrinsically beneath
our proper dignity as rational beings. While in this life sense and imagination are important for
our cognition they are the lower partner with reason.

\[153\] Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 197. Smith knows Weyer as Ioannes Wierus, the author
of De præstigiis daemonum (Basel, 1563).

\[154\] Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 197-9.
revelation.”155 The Stoics too would “scarce allow their wise man at any time to consult an oracle.”156 From this Smith discerns the general principle that the true “prophetical spirit doth never alienate the mind . . . but always maintains a consistency and clearness of reason, strength, and solidity of judgment.” Moreover, this true spirit “doth not ravish the mind, but inform and enlighten it.”157

In contrast then to the comparatively calm temper of mind occasioned by prophecy Smith notes several examples out of antiquity of false prophets displaying mania or melancholy among other alienations of the mind. For example, the Pythian prophetess, Cassandra the sibyl, and the early Christian

155 Ibid., 199. Smith mentions only the eclectic Maximus Tyrius (late 2nd century CE) and the Neoplatonist Porphyry (c.234-c.305) here. Presumably he is intentionally downplaying Platonists such as Iamblichus with their overt embrace of θεουργία (theurgy) by mentioning Porphyry. On this see Gregory Shaw, Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).


157 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 200.
heresy of Montanism, all share a wild and unintelligible experience. Smith cites Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Tertullian (160-220), Eusebius (263-339), and Jerome (347-420) against these “abruptions of mind.” John Chrysostom (c.347-407) says it best, “It is the property of a diviner to be ecstastical, to undergo some violence, to be tossed and hurried about like a madman. But it is otherwise with a prophet, whose understanding is awake, and his mind in a sober and orderly temper, and he knows every thing that he saith.”

While not as wildly “out of mind” as the false prophets, Smith qualifies his argument thus far by noting “that observation of the Jews . . . concerning those panic fears, consternations, affrightments, and tremblings, which frequently seized upon them, together with the prophetical influx.”

---


159 Ibid., 202.

160 Ibid., 203. Smith cites from the 29th Homily on 1 Corinthians (12: 1, 2) which is given by Talbot W. Chambers as “For this is peculiar to the soothsayer, to be beside himself, to be under compulsion, to be pushed, to be dragged, to be haled as a madman. But the prophet not so, but with sober mind and composed temper and knowing what he is saying, he uttereth all things” in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1, vol. 12, ed. Philip Schaff, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005, accessed 27 April 2014, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf112.iv.xxx.html.

161 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 203.
evidence of the exhaustion, fear, and overall impact of having divine disclosure revealed. Smith cites the biblical figures of Daniel, Abraham, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Samuel, Adam, Job, Elijah, and St. John the Divine,\textsuperscript{162} as well as a whole host of rabbinic sources including Maimonides, Albo, Solomon Jarchi, Abarbanel, Jonathan the Targumist, and Nachmanides (Moses ben Nachman Gerondi).\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Qualifications and Preparation for Prophecy}

Smith next turns to a discussion of what he calls the "\textit{qualifications}" needed to become a prophet (chapter eight). In doing so he makes clear that not just anyone can become a prophet. While the ultimate standard is the free choice of God to reveal something to the prophet, this does not happen without due preparation of the would-be receiver of this revelation. This is mirrored in the "old Heathens" as well as being what Smith takes to be the consensus of scripture, the rabbinic tradition, and clear reason. Even the pagan diviners “were

\textsuperscript{162} Daniel 10: 8; Genesis 15: 1, 12; Jeremiah 23: 9, 28, 29; Ezekiel 3: 14, 9: 1, 2: 9; Habakkuk 3: 2; Isaiah 21: 3; 1 Samuel 3: 7; Genesis 3: 8, 9; 1 Kings 19: 11; Job 38: 1; Revelation 1: 10, 4: 1, 6: 1, 8: 5, 10: 3, 9.

\textsuperscript{163} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 204-14.
wont in a solemn manner to prepare and fit themselves for receiving the influx thereof." 164

The rabbinic consensus as Smith reports it is that the qualifications necessary “to render any one habilem ad prophetandum [able or apt to prophecy] are true probity and piety.” 165 Maimonides, who is a constant companion for Smith’s exploration of prophecy, adds to this consensus a threefold requirement of perfection of (1) an “Acquisite or rational” (2) “Natural or animal” and (3) “Moral” type. Differences in these three areas account, for Rambam, for the degrees of prophecy too. All of this leads Maimonides to his conclusion that “all prophecy is the proper result of these perfections, as a form arising out of them all, as out of its elements compounded together.” 166

Smith has in view here the Rambam’s infamous theory of prophecy as a kind of natural faculty subject to development through the diligent perfecting of the moral, physical, and intellectual powers. 167 As Leaman has put it,

164 Ibid., 249. Smith’s source here is Rabbi Albo.

165 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 250. Smith’s Latin appears to have failed him here but his meaning is clearly “able or apt to prophecy.”

166 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 251.

167 Ibid., 252.
“Maimonides . . . seems to treat [prophecy] as a natural phenomenon.” In this, Maimonides parts company with much of his own tradition, which Smith is quick to point out, by downplaying the role of God in making the prophet.

“I know no reason,” asserts Smith in an uncharacteristic use of the first person, “to infer any such thing as the prophetical spirit, from the highest improvement of natural or moral endowments.” Smith is aghast that such a learned authority as Maimonides could fail to see the necessity of divine inspiration for prophecy. Preparation is one thing, that may make it easier to receive a revelation, but God must still send this communication to the prophet. Moreover, Smith contends, with a rather more voluntarist view of the divine will than is typical for him and the other Cambridge Platonists, that God is fully capable to sending this inspiration to anyone God chooses. He is quick to add that this is “not likely” that God would so address the mind of one who was ill.

---


169 “This opinion of Maimonides I find not any where entertained, only by the author of the book Cosri.” Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 252-3. Leaman points out that the roots of this notion are probably to be found in the emanationism of Ibn Sinā (Avicenna). If that is so, it is all the more curious that Smith chooses this place to insist, as a Protestant Christian might be expected, that there is no prophecy without the will of God making it so. Curious, because, as we have seen, Smith is very much at home with Neoplatonic emanation. See Leaman, “Maimonides,” 70-1.

170 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 253.
prepared, but the possibility remains. Smith’s attitude toward the idea that prophecy is a sort of natural phenomenon is nowhere more clear than it is when he begins to take up the topic of the various “schools of prophecy.” He tells us that “anciently many were so trained up in a way of school-discipline, that they might become candidati prophetiae, and were as probationers to these degrees, which none but God Himself conferred upon them”; one may work to become prepared but only God grants prophetic inspiration. Still, overall, Smith agrees with Maimonides that in general a prophet will have true piety, wisdom, an even temper of mind full of cheerfulness.

4.2.4 Mosaic Prophecy

Smith comes to his most detailed discussion of Mosaic prophecy in chapter eleven. Here, his chief concern is to relate just what it is about the prophecy of Moses that makes it the “highest degree of divine inspiration.” In

---

171 Ibid., 253.

172 Ibid., 261. The analogy to the running of a school may hint at our author’s sense of humor. He was a dean at Queens’ College at the time of writing.

173 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 253-61.
this, his most important guide is Maimonides, and drawing on him Smith gives us four “characteristical differences” between the Mosaic and other prophecy.\textsuperscript{174}

First, unlike the other prophets Moses received revelations while completely awake. “Moses was made partaker of these divine revelations \textit{per vigiliam}; whereas God manifested Himself to all the other prophets in a dream or vision.”\textsuperscript{175} This is an important distinction because, as we have seen, lesser prophets receive their communications from God in dreams or visions and thus within their imaginations. Moses, in contrast, encounters divine truth as an intellectual influx.

Second, unlike other prophets “Moses prophesied without the mediation of any angelical power, by an influence derived immediately from God.” This, for Smith is the meaning of the phrase that God spoke to Moses “face to face” but he interprets this in a thoroughly intellectual sense. Moses communicates with God “face to face” in the sense that God reveals God’s self with “clearness and evidence of the intellectual light.” While the others saw in a glass darkly Moses

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 272.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
sees in a glass clearly. That is, where others received divine inspiration by the mediation of an angel within the imagination and the intellect, Moses perceived by an intellectual intuition implanted directly by God.

Third, Moses was “able to understand the words of prophecy, without any disturbance and astonishment of mind.” Notice that while the lesser prophets received divine revelation in images within the imagination, Moses “hears” the Word of God in his mind.

Fourth, Moses, unlike the rest, was able to prophesy when he chose. Other prophets were communicated to when God willed it, and they knew not when that would be, but Moses seems to have “had free recourse to this heavenly oracle at any time.” Or so Maimonides would have it; Smith for his part thinks that the Rambam “here somewhat hyperbolizeth, and scarce speaks consistently with the rest of the Hebrew masters.” All the same, Smith thinks it “most

---

176 Ibid., 273. Smith’s source here is Philo of Alexandria.

177 Ibid., 274. The presentations to the imagination of a prophet is not, of course, limited to visual images however Smith’s preferred metaphor is *visual* for lesser prophets and *auditory* for Moses.

178 Ibid., 272. Also, 274-5.
probable that he [Moses] had a greater liberty of prophesying than any other of the prophets.”

Thus, the “gradus Mosaicus” exceeds all others in prophetic power because it is a “clear, distinct, kind of inspiration made immediately upon an intellectual faculty in a familiar way.” That is, Moses’ greatness lay in his having an intellectual understanding of divinity given by God directly. Smith thinks that this intensity of prophecy was necessarily short lived (i.e., the life of Moses alone) because it was to serve as “the basis of all future prophecy among the Jews.” The other prophets aimed primarily to support the prophetically revealed law of Moses and to clarify the practical means of observing this law.

Moreover, Moses’ prophesy was supported or authenticated by many “signs and miracles done in the sight of all the people.” For example, the turning of his staff into a serpent, the parting of the Red Sea, and the Bath Kol heard by all the people

179 Ibid., 275.

180 Ibid., 275. While it may be merely coincidental, the implied reference here to “clear and distinct ideas” calls to mind Descartes’ famous epistemological formula.

181 Ibid.
at Sinai made sure that Moses’ prophecy would be remembered if not always believed.\footnote{Ibid., 276. See also, Exodus 7: 10, 14; 14: 26-9; 20: 2-3.}

Smith closes his discussion of Mosaic prophecy with a paragraph that reads like the impassioned plea of an excellent preacher, who just happens to also be a great scholar too. In contrast to being convinced by miracles and the like Smith wishes that we might become acquainted with divine truth through “moral arguments” and the inherent reasonableness of the things of God. “I wish this . . . way of becoming acquainted with divine truth were better known amongst us: for when we have once attained to a true, sanctified, frame of mind, we have then attained to the end of all prophecy, and see all divine truth that tends to the salvation of our souls in the divine light, which always shines in the purity and holiness of the new creature, and so need no further miracles to confirm us in it.”\footnote{Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1859), 277.}

Thus, Smith draws his own connection between the “True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge” with its advocacy of a purified will and mind as the preconditions for a proper understanding of divinity and “Of Prophecy”
which accounts for the first revelation of saving truths. Divine knowledge originates in prophecy but it is in a spiritualized life that we attain the end of prophecy for ourselves. And herein lies the explanation for the curious degree of similarity between the “True Way” and Mosaic prophecy. Both the greatest of the original revelators and the recommended path to appropriate the truth of that revelation work by a kind of intellectual intuition. Their difference lies, therefore, not so much in method as in chronology.

Moses is the first in the line of Jewish and later Christian individuals (and in more limited ways pagan philosophers too) to have had an intellectual vision of divine truth. In this, it seems that Smith subscribes to a version of what Moshe Idel has called the “unilinear” theory of the prisca theologia which sees the tradition of true theology as beginning with Moses and extending through later Jewish prophecy, pagan philosophy, and finally the incarnation of Christ and the birth of Christian wisdom.184

Still, Smith is clearly opposed to the naturalized theory of prophecy he encounters in Maimonides, so what are we to make of the strong similarity

---

between the intellectual intuition of the “True Way” and the purely intellectual prophecy of Moses?

First, to be completely free of images in one’s encounter with divine truth is extraordinary in this life. As we saw in our look at the “True Way” our intuition is not without the influence of the imagination until the beatific vision of heaven. In violation of this natural principle, Moses was granted a direct “face to face” revelation of an entirely intellectual kind while he lived. Only the direct action of God can overcome the natural necessity of a sensible image in this life. This, then is what makes the Mosaic revelation special vis-à-vis the method of the “True Way.”

Second, the intellectual intuition recommended in the “True Way” is not entirely “natural” in the usual sense. For, when we turn our purified attention within ourselves to see the vestiges of divine truth enfolded there we become witness to the primordial revelation of God in our very creation. At root, there is nothing that is completely “natural” for Smith, as all things, including especially
our capacities for cognition and volition, derive ultimately from a divine archetype.\textsuperscript{185}

Third, building on this, and in keeping with the spirit of his tutor Whichcote, natural and revealed theology are not, ultimately, distinct in kind at all, but rather in degree. This is why many readers of Smith have suggested that he does not so much offer arguments sufficient to convince the unbiased mind as he discourses upon what he takes to be the clear conclusions of a pious Christian.\textsuperscript{186} Such a view, however, imports an unnecessary and unwelcome gap between philosophy and theology, reason and faith, into its reading of Smith. As Tulloch observed, “All our primary and higher knowledge may in a sense be called revelation.”\textsuperscript{187} Smith, maintains a distinction between natural and revealed

\textsuperscript{185} Thus, his claims against Epicurus and “Epicureans” throughout the Select Discourses ([1859], xxvi-xxviii, 14, 17-9, 22, 44-53, 60, 66, 70-9, 83, 85, 104, 139, 375, 412, 452, 482).

\textsuperscript{186} This tendency would seem to begin with Metcalf who said, “So implicitly does SMITH trust to our intuitive knowledge, that he does not even attempt a proof of so important a doctrine as that of the existence of God” (W. M. Metcalf, “Memoir,” in The Natural Truth of Christianity: Selections from the “Select Discourses” of John Smith, with an introduction by Matthew Arnold, ed. W. M. Metcalf [London: Alexander Gardner, Paisley, 1882], xli, see also xxviii-xxix).

\textsuperscript{187} Tulloch, Rational Theology, 2: 175. This sentiment is Augustinian in most of its Western (Latin) forms and owes much to the theory of illumination which makes all knowledge a kind of revelation. In Smith, this Augustinian sentiment is represented in primarily Greek categories borrowed directly from the Neoplatonists and the Alexandrian Fathers. “A central belief, even assumption, running through the published work of [Henry] More and his fellow Platonists, is
truths, and only the truths of revelation are “saving,” but this distinction does not signal the kind of radical difference in kind that many contemporary readers will expect. As Smith himself says, “It was a degenerous and unworthy Spirit in that Philosophy which first separated and made such distances between *Metaphysical Truths & the Truths of Nature.*”¹⁸⁸ In this, he is thoroughly in keeping with his fellow Cambridge Platonists.¹⁸⁹

4.2.5 *Hagiographi* and the *Bath Kol*

The last degrees of divine inspiration are those of the “*Rauch Hakkodesh*” or Holy Spirit and the *Bath Kol* or a voice out of heaven. Neither of these rise to the level of prophecy proper but share with that gift the disclosure of the Divine Will to humanity. Smith takes up the inspiration of the “Holy Spirit” in chapter seven and the *Bath Kol* in chapter ten.

---

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 434. Given his open hostility toward Aristotle and his causal animosity toward the bulk of the schoolmen, it seems likely that Smith has in view here the Aristotelian approach to philosophy and theology perhaps best exemplified in Thomas Aquinas, even though he traces the historical roots to the Sophists in opposition to Socrates.

The *ruach ha-kodesh* or “holy spirit” is characterized as the inspiration of a writer of a sacred text. For this reason Smith will also speak of this degree as “Hagiographical”. The sacred books of the Hebrew Bible that are not formally prophetic are said to have been inspired by this Holy Spirit but without the mediation of a vision or dream. While the holy writers thus inspired “ordinarily expressed themselves in parables and similitudes . . . they seem only to have made use of such a dress of language to set off their own sense of divine things.” That is, while they express themselves in imagery they do not receive their inspiration as images presented to the imagination directly. There is “no labour of the imagination in this way of revelation.” Indeed, taking his lead from Maimonides, Proclus, Plotinus, and Empedocles, Smith contends that “this enthusiastsical spirit seated itself principally in the higher and purer faculties of the soul.”

This raises the difficulty of distinguishing this degree of revelation from that of the Mosaic degree of prophecy. That this is distinct from the category of “prophecy proper” is clear from the lack of communication in the imaginations

---


191 Ibid., 239. The “higher and purer” faculties are those of cognition and conation.
of the hagiographi. However, as a more purely intellectual disclosure, this

“Spiritus Sanctus” would seem to bear a strong similarity to the prophecy of
Moses. The distinction would seem to rest simply on the authority of the Jewish
tradition of dividing the “Old Testament” books according to the Torah (from
Moses), the Prophets (from the other prophets), and the Writings (from the
hagiographi). The only other distinguishing mark that separates these from the
prophecies of Moses is the subject matter involved. Those inspired by the Holy
Spirit speak, and sometimes sing, with deep wisdom but not of matters given in
a “visum propheticum.”

Prophets, it must be remembered, do not always receive inspiration of the
same degree. When they are inspired to write songs for example they are merely
inspired by the Holy Spirit and not prophesying. In fact, the writing of songs
“was not the proper work of God himself, but the work of the prophet’s own

---

192 The hagiographic writings include: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles,
Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and the two books of Chronicles.

193 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 244. In his attempt to remain true to his sources on
Jewish antiquity and tradition Smith seems to strain to make this degree fit his Neoplatonist
inspired sense of what constitutes higher and lower levels of revelation. He should, I think, view
this more purely intellectual variety as like the Mosaic degree of prophecy in essentials. And
perhaps he would, if it were not for the authority of the tradition that none were greater or even
equal to Moses.

194 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 245.
spirit.” In this, the hagiographer has a higher degree of independence in what she or he relates to others under divine inspiration. They are free to compose imagery of their own to illustrate the divine wisdom they receive without images.

The “lowest degree of revelation among the Jews . . . was their . . . Bath Kol, filia vocis, which was nothing else but some voice which was heard as descending from heaven, directing them in any affair as occasion served: which kind of revelation might be made to one, as Maimonides tells us, that was no way prepared for prophecy.” This phenomenon Smith is more interested to relate out of the New Testament than the Old. He cites as examples the voices heard in John 12: 28-9, Matthew 3: 17, and 17: 5-6. This Bath Kol is external and perceived by the corporeal senses. It has more of the miracle about it than the prophetic revelation in this respect. This externality, and the potential for

---

195 Ibid., 245.
196 Ibid., 246.
197 Ibid., 268.
198 Ibid., 270-1.
empirical observation by many people, makes it less authentic for Smith than true 
prophecy which is a “divine inspiration into the mind of the prophet.”

The End of Jewish and Christian Prophecy

As a kind of colophon to his discourse on prophecy Smith takes up in 
chapter twelve a discussion of the “period of time it was in which this 
prophetical spirit ceased, both in the Jewish and the Christian church.” This is 
important because it signals (and this is otherwise not obvious from his 
descriptions of prophecy) that the period of divine revelation has in fact ended. 
In making this clear Smith is standing in solid opposition to those who would 
argue for a whole host of non-biblical prophecy, up to and including those 
produced in his own day.

Since the Bible is silent on this issue, as one would expect, it being a record 
of prophetic utterances, Smith turns to “such histories as are like to be most

---

199 Ibid., 271. Again, there is a difficulty in consistency here. Speaking as he does of the 
contrast between the Bath Kol and prophecy would include those inspired by the Holy Spirit 
among the prophets. However he is at pains to keep that degree separate from “prophecy proper” 
as we have seen above.

200 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 278.

201 On the “influence of the non-Biblical vernacular prophetic traditions in early modern 
England” see Tim Thorton, Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England (Woodbridge: 
authentical in this business.” 202 While Justin Martyr suggests that John the Baptist was the last Jewish prophet, Clement of Alexandria is a much better guide, as he argues that the line of prophets ends with Malachi. Clement’s case is stronger because he speaks “with the consent of all Jewish antiquity.” 203 Thus, Smith dates the end of Jewish prophecy to time of the Second Temple, the sixth or fifth centuries BCE. 204 At this time the Jews were left with only the Bath Kol remaining for a brief time after. 205 “This cessation of prophecy determined as it were all that old dispensation wherein God had manifested Himself to the Jews under the law, that so, by its growing old and thus wearing away, they might expect that

202 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 278.

203 Ibid., 279. Smith’s authorities here are the Babylonian Talmud, Maimonides, and others (279-80).


205 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 280.
new dispensation of the Messiah, which had been promised so long before, and which should again restore this prophetical spirit more abundantly.”

Thus, with the coming of Jesus Christ, or more precisely the sending of the Holy Spirit among the early Church, the gift of prophecy was renewed. On the basis of the testimony of Eusebius, Justin Martyr, and Origen, Smith concludes that prophecy came to an end in the Christian Church in the second century CE.

4.3 The “True Way,” Prophecy and the Spiritual Senses

In this chapter we have seen that John Smith makes consistent appeal to what we have identified as the spiritual senses in his theory of the source and methods appropriate for coming to theological understanding. In particular, Smith sees natural knowledge of divinity, as well as the appropriation of revealed truth, as a matter of intellectual intuition, but never completely

---

206 Ibid., 281.

207 Smith finds prophetic proof of this in the words of Joel 2: 28. Early Christian prophecy is attested to by Acts 2: 17; Revelation 19: 10; John 8: 39; Ephesians 4: 8; and Acts 19: 2. Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 281.

208 Ibid., 282-3. This dating, Smith remarks, is convenient for dismissing the Montanist heresy since by its rise in the late second century prophecy is said to have already ceased. However, Smith also cites Origen (apparently approvingly) to the effect that prophecy was simply rare after the second century (Ibid., 283). Origen, Contra Celsum 7. 8.
separated from sensible images in the imagination. Implicitly dismissing as wrongly oriented for its task the physically sensible approach of Aristotelian (cosmological) natural theology from the start, Smith recommends the path of moral and spiritual purification leading to affective intellectual intuition with the remains of sensible images while we live. We appropriate Divine truths via our intellect, which gives symbols to our imaginations, when we begin to taste the sweetness of divinity in Christ and we appreciate this transformation sensibly in our reformed lives as well.

Moreover, Smith argues that revealed knowledge of God involves the perception of implanted images in the imagination as well as communication with the human intellect. The most basic form of this revelation is purely sensible in the *Bath Kol* or voice of God heard miraculously in prophetic times. Others are inspired by the *Ruach Hakodesh* or Holy Spirit with the revelation of the Divine Will to the intellect of psalmists, poets, and sages. To the prophets are given influxes of divine truth in the form of images made present in the imagination and ideas in the intellect by the ministrations of an angelic messenger. Finally, with Moses and Jesus Christ alone does God give a purely intellectual revelation
“face to face” in the sense of “mind to mind.” Thus, what begins in sense, reaches new heights in imagination, and is perfected in intellect.209

The content of true religion was thus given to external sense by the miracle of the voice of God, to the inner, spiritual, senses of the imagination by angelic deposition, and the intellect as immediate intuition by the Divine Mind itself. The content of these revelations then became the content of faith, first assented to by clear minds,210 appreciated in purified symbols in the imagination,211 and made sensible in the external world in the life of the “true and sober Christian who lives in Him who is Life itself, and is enlightened by Him who is the Truth itself.”212

---

209 Perfected in our earthly life for Moses and for the rest hereafter.

210 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 16.

211 Ibid., 3, 8-9, 15, 21. One looks in vain for a post-Kantian understanding of the faculties of the soul. While clearly separate from the external senses, the mind, for Smith, is not without a power of representation.

212 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 21. He alludes to the Gospel of John 14: 6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” and to First John 2: 20: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (KJV).
CHAPTER 5: SPIRITUAL SENSE AND SPIRITUALITY

But he was alwaies very urgent upon us that by the Grace of God and the help of the mighty Spirit of Jesus Christ working in us, we would . . . labour after Purity of heart, that so we might see God.¹

John Smith’s Select Discourses are saturated with a rational piety that is virtually unknown today, and was an innovation, or recovery, in his own time. In chapter four we saw the first example of his rationalism in the form of his Christian Platonist account of the source and methods of theology. In chapter six we will see how he attacked the central doctrines of natural theology; above all, the immortality of the soul and the nature and existence of God. In this chapter we explore the role of spiritual sensation in the life of the Christian as Smith understood it. First, we look back to the acquisition of theological understanding to focus more specifically on the preparation and purification Smith thought was essential to that task. Second, the practice of the Christian religion as he taught it is explored. In both respects, Smith calls upon the spiritual senses as an essential component of his account.

¹ Simon Patrick, “A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Mr John Smith . . .,” in John Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 510.
5.1 Purification and Theological Understanding

As we saw in chapter four, theological understanding has two sources for Smith. Specifically Christian theological knowledge originates in prophecy and the life of Christ both of which are perceived spiritually. Natural theology arises from intellectual intuition. In both of these cases however Smith asserts that preparation is necessary. Those who would be theologians, and Smith thinks that all Christians should be divines, must first become purified in their conduct and their intellect.

5.1.1 Preparation for Prophecy

Following the rabbinic consensus, especially Maimonides, and the wisdom of the philosophers Smith argues in chapter eight of his discourse “Of Prophecy” that there are “several qualifications that . . . render a man fit for the spirit of prophecy.” Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 249.

This is important for his conception of theology generally because he is suggesting that such knowledge is practical or experiential even in its origins. Moreover, this practical, experiential, basis is best expressed in terms of the leading of a spiritual life free from obstacles to prophecy. To be a prophet,
and thus to be the medium by which divine revelation is passed on to the people, involves, first of all “true probity and piety.”\(^3\) That is, the would-be prophet must be morally pure and inwardly religious. Smith is vague on just what constitutes moral purity but the overall sense is that it means essentially being self-disciplined, temperate, and not given to sensual indulgence. The whole person of the prophet is sanctified; will and outward behavior as well as mind and inward temper.

The building up of the heart and mind typically involves a great deal of study and effort on the part of the candidate to prophecy. Indeed, Smith speaks often of prophecy as being in some ways akin to the conferral of degrees upon students in a collegiate setting.\(^4\) Still, it is not through study or the natural perfection of human faculties that one becomes a prophet. Without the special intervention of God to inspire the imagination and intellect there is no true prophecy.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Ibid., 250.

\(^4\) Ibid., 261-7.

\(^5\) Ibid., 253.
5.1.2 Spirituality and Exegesis

An understanding of the preparations needed for true prophecy is critical, for Smith, to rightly interpreting scripture. For example, since “‘The spirit of prophecy dwells not with sadness, but with cheerfulness’” King David was denied the prophetic vision while he was full of “sorrow and grief in mind, upon reflection of his shameful miscarriage in the matter of Uriah.” In his dejected state David lost that “free spirit” that is the “temper of mind” most conducive for receiving prophetic inspiration. Knowing this makes one able to rightly interpret the fifty-first Psalm as a prayer asking for “the restoration” of the precondition for prophecy.

Moreover, by understanding how the prophets received their revelations via the inspiration of their imaginations and intellects, or how they perceived divine things by their spiritual senses, one is able to interpret “prophetical writ” profitably. It is only in this context that Smith’s rules for exegeting prophetic passages of scripture are intelligible. For example, his first rule is that reports of

---

6 Ibid., 256. On David, Uriah and Bathsheba see 2 Samuel 11: 3-11, 12: 9-10, and 1 Kings 15: 5.

7 Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 256-7. On this, Smith follows Jarchi, Abenezra, Kimchi, and the “Talmudists” generally (257).

8 This is the topic of the final chapter (13) of the discourse “Of Prophecy” in Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 284-95.
divine revelation be understood to be inspired by God but not dictated word for word. “He imprinted such a clear copy of His truth upon them . . . that it became their own sense . . . so . . . they were able to deliver and represent it to others, as truly as any can paint forth his own thoughts.” Only if one understands that the prophetic inspiration takes the form of a spiritual perception, in the imagination, does this not lead immediately to the idea that the prophets simply “make it up” themselves; a notion that Smith is absolutely opposed to just as much as he opposes a fundamentalist account of the origins of the letter of the biblical record.

Additionally, one looks in vain for “a constant, methodical contexture of things carried on in a perpetual coherence” in prophetic scripture. Indeed, if one were to find too closely consistent and logical a report that would be evidence, for Smith, that it was “a human and artificial contrivance rather than any inspiration.” This is, again, because of the nature of the prophetic experience itself. Specifically, the prophet receives images simply as they come and not

---

9 Ibid., 284.

10 Ibid., 289.
necessarily (or typically) in (chrono)logical order. Thus, Smith’s second rule for reading prophetic scripture rests on the understanding of the experience of inspiration as imaginative rather than discursive.

The third, and final, rule for reading prophecy is that “no piece of prophecy is to be understood of the state of the world to come, or the *mundus animarum* [world of souls]: for, indeed, it is altogether impossible to describe that, or comprehend it in this life . . . therefore, all divine revelation in scripture must concern some state in this world.” This is so, for Smith, because of the limits of our human capacities to receive divine truth. The “state of blessedness in heaven, it is *major mente humana* [greater than the human mind], much more is it *major phantasia* [greater than the imagination].” Some things are simply not communicable to human faculties of intellect or imagination, and since these are the means by which prophetic inspiration is accomplished, eschatology must remain mysterious to us, because of the limits of our spiritual senses.

---

11 Ibid., 290.
12 Ibid., 291.
13 Ibid., 293.
14 In this, Smith is on solid scriptural (cf. Isaiah 64: 4; Matthew 11: 13), rabbinic (“Gem. Berachoth, cap. V. fol. 36 A.”), but not Patristic grounds. Apparently, Smith has no room here
Likewise, Smith recommends as his method of discerning true from false prophets a clear understanding of the role of the mind as well as the imagination in the perception of true divine communication.\textsuperscript{15} The false, either demonic or simply overly “enthusiastical,” prophet speaks of images disclosed to their imaginations but at the expense of reason. This alienation of the intellect does not occur, for Smith, in true prophecy and in knowing this to be an aspect of the experience of inspired authors one can rightly discern divine revelation from those “impostures” that would otherwise easily delude us. In this way, again, Smith calls for the use of an understanding of the nature of prophecy as involving the spiritual senses, both intellectual and imaginative, in the spiritual formation and exploration of his readers.

Of more immediate concern for the right interpretation of scripture are the remarks Smith makes in the “True Way” discourse to the effect that the inner


\textsuperscript{15} Smith, Select Discourses (1859), 183-202.
state of one’s soul is both informed by scripture and enables one to rightly understand what is contained therein. For, while “Divinity” is best understood to be a “Divine life” rather than a “Divine Science” and while the best knowledge of such things comes in the form of a “Christ-like nature,” still one can only come to any knowledge of specifically Christian truth through scripture. Only by an initial acquaintance with Christ in the New Testament (and proleptically in the Old) does one begin to conform to the “life and practice” in which alone one may come to an appreciation of the “inward beauty, life and loveliness in Divine Truth.”

The contrast to the educational practices of contemporary theology departments is illustrative here. Whereas Smith is recommending, with the Patristic and medieval Christian tradition as well as the Greek philosophers, that one first purify one’s behavior, heart, and mind and only then take up and read scripture with renewed spiritual eyes to see with, today students are introduced

---

16 Ibid., 2, 8.

17 Ibid., 8-9.
to the letter of the biblical text and only then to the spiritual practices, traditions, and modes of thought necessary to find living Divine truth in it.  

5.1.3 The “True Way” as a Spiritual Path

Finally, it should be remembered that it is a process of moral and intellectual purification that Smith recommends as the prolegomena to theological understanding. As we have seen, Smith insists repeatedly that divinity is a practical, living enterprise. Because divinity has to do with things of “Sense & Life” it requires “Sentient and Vital faculties.” These “faculties” are the intellect purified of its attachments to the body and to physical matter. By removing our attention from what is “beneath” us it becomes possible for us to return our focus on first ourselves as spiritual beings and ultimately on God.

---


In this way, the intellectual intuition that we cultivate, even as it is the free gift of divine grace, becomes the means by which we arrive at spiritual experience and understanding. In this, Smith relies on Plotinian Neoplatonism and scripture to affirm that “Every thing is best known by that which bears a just resemblance and analogie with it.”

At the same time however this supra-sensible encounter with our purified selves as imago Dei and with the Divine Original is also the goal of our spiritual lives. This is why “our Saviour hath in his Beatitudes connext Purity of heart with the Beatific Vision.” The intellectual intuition that puts us in contact with God also provides the blessed rest and fulfillment that makes one seek the Divine in the first place.

5.2 The Practice of the Christian Religion

Smith did not live to complete his intended discourses on the “Communication of God to Mankind in Christ” leaving only the preliminary

---

21 Ibid. Also Ennead I.8.1., and Proverbs 10 (“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”).

22 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 2.
work “Of Prophecy” to be published by Worthington under that heading. In order to make up for this loss, Smith’s editor published an additional four discourses given in “Some Chappell-Exercises.” These were not originally intended to be included in the work but they help to round out our appreciation of Smith’s theology by discussing justification (“A Discourse Treating of Legal Righteousness, Evangelical Righteousness, or the Righteousness of Faith” and “The Shortness and Vanity of A Pharisaick Righteousness”), sanctification (“The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion”) and eschatology (“The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion” and “A Christians Conflicts with, and Conquests over, Satan”). This section presents Smith’s views on these topics as related to the spiritual senses.

5.2.1 Smith’s Practical Christianity

Rather than setting forth dogma when it comes to the particulars of the Christian religion, Smith emphasizes practice and experience. Still, he is a

---

23 Ibid., 280.

24 Ibid., 281.

25 This limit is important to bear in mind. I have not tried to offer a definitive assessment of Smith’s theology overall, but only those ways in which he employs the spiritual senses as developed in chapter two above.
product of his time. Like Calvin and his English followers among the Puritans, Smith addresses questions of high importance about justification, whether it is by works or by faith, sanctification, if it is sudden or gradual, permanent or temporary, and the fate of humanity in the eschatological future. These were some of the dominant points of theological disputation in the early seventeenth century, and Smith, as a teacher and a divine, could not have passed them by without comment.26 However, while the scholastics, both Protestant and Counter-Reformation Roman Catholic, sought to lay out ever more precious definitions of doctrines Smith pointed to practical and experiential Christian living. “If any . . . will doe his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”27

5.2.1.1 Justification

In his discourse on “Righteousness” Smith begins by rehearsing his account of theological knowledge. “There is a Divine and Spiritual sense which only is able to converse internally with the life and soul of Divine Truth.”28 Right

---


27 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 9; quoting John 7: 17 (KJV).

28 Ibid., 286.
relation with God ("converse") requires therefore (1) a spiritual sense, and (2) an inward orientation. Only an elevated "sense" can convey our communion with God because it is only by a living faculty that one can appreciate "Divine wisdome" which is a "Tree of life to them that find her, and it is only Life that can feelingly converse with Life." 29 Indeed, the "Principles of our Christian Religion . . . is an Influx from God upon the Minds of good men." 30 This is, for Smith, the "great designe and plot of the Gospel, to open and unfold to us the true way of recourse to God; a Contrivance for the uniting of the Souls of men to him, and the deriving a participation of God to men, to bring in Everlasting righteousness, and to establish the true Tabernacle of God in the Spirits of men." 31

These ends were anticipated by "the Law" of the Hebrew Bible but the Gospel has the great advantage that it "so clearly unfolds the Way and Method of Uniting humane nature to Divinity." 32 That is, in the Christian Gospel is revealed the means by which true communion with God, and thus true

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 287.

31 Ibid., 288.

32 Ibid.
righteousness, is to be achieved. The primary difference between the Old Law and the New Gospel then for Smith is that under the Law attention is external, “Moral, Judicial & Ceremonial,” but the Gospel transforms from within, making one anew with a living sense of God through an approximation to the Divine (deification).  

Following standard Protestant readings of St. Paul, Smith relates the merely “external,” “legal righteousness” of the Jewish religion. Of particular importance for us is his association of the Jewish Law with the “External Senses.” The spiritually sensible nature of divine revelation notwithstanding the Jews are portrayed here as reliant for their point of contact with God on a


35 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 291.
Law given to them from without, and thus received as *other*, via the external, physical, senses. One reads, hears, or sees the Jewish Law with physical eyes and ears. Moreover, the performance of these laws are merely formal for Smith too. In language strikingly similar to Luther’s against the “works righteousness” of the Roman Catholic Church, Smith speaks of Jewish religion as little more than a system of earning merit through outward conformity with the Law. Thus, he thinks it clear that Judaism, at least in the form known by St. Paul if not also in his own day, is a “Lean and Spiritless Religion.”

Over against the “Jewish” approach of earning merit through external observance of the Law, or “Legal Righteousness,” Smith sets up what he calls “Evangelical Righteousness” or “the Righteousness of Faith.” Essentially, the difference is this: “That the *Law* was the Ministry of death, and in it self an

---

36 Smith echoes much of the argument we are rehearsing here in his discourse on “The Shortness and Vanity of A Pharisaick Righteousness” (*Select Discourses* [1660], 349-72). However, in this additional discourse Smith associates “Jewish” legalism most strongly with what he elsewhere calls “superstition.” For that reason, we will look at this discourse in chapter six when we take up his arguments against the two natural enemies of religion, superstition and atheism.


38 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 303.

39 Ibid., 308-25.
External and Liveless thing, neither could it procure or beget that Divine life and spiritual Form of Goodness in the Souls of men, which God expects from all the heirs of Glory, no that Glory which is only consequent upon a true Divine life. Whereas on the other side the Gospel is set forth as a mightly Efflux and Emanation of life and spirit freely issuing forth from an Omnipotent source of Grace and Love, as that true God-like vital influence whereby the Divinity derives it self into the Souls of men, enlivening and transforming them into its own likeness, and strongly imprinting upon them a Copy of its own Beauty and Goodness: Like the Spermatical virtue of the Heavens, which spreads it self freely upon this Lower world, and subtly insinuating it self into this benumbed feeble earthly Matter, begets life and motion in it. Briefly, It is that whereby God comes to dwell in us, and we in him."40 Thus, evangelical righteousness makes one inwardly God-like so that we may experience our Divine origin within ourselves, that is, in our hearts and minds via a spiritual perception of God in ourselves as

imago Dei and present to ourselves as the Spirit that enlives and transforms us in grace.41

Concern for outward merit and reward, on the other hand, blinds one to the “light of Divine grace and bounty.”42 Thus blinded, the legally minded can only appreciate the “dead letter” of the Law as being of an “External administration” and thus alien to oneself whereas the Gospel is “Intrinsecal and Vital” and thus more truly one’s own.43 The Gospel is “God’s imprinting his Mind and Will upon mens hearts” so that it may become “living Laws written in the living Tables” thereof.44 The knowledge that results is primarily practical rather than theoretical in the sense that it fuels the righteous living of the true and good Christian. Smith’s Platonism does not lead to the withdrawal from the world but rather a reformation of one’s being in the world.

Where his Antinomian contemporaries, such as John Eaton, as well as more orthodox Calvinists and Lutherans were wont to emphasize the free gift of


42 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 310.

43 Ibid., 311.

44 Ibid., 316.
God’s justification of sinful humanity, Smith readily acknowledges that this must be coordinated with the true state of affairs. That is, God does not judge one acceptable without one actually being so. In this, Smith is rejecting one of the fundamental issues separating the Reformed from Roman Catholicism. Clearly, then, Smith’s reading in the Christian Platonist tradition, including the Greek Fathers more so than the Latin, served to overcome his Puritan context in early seventeenth century Emmanuel and Queens’ after Parliamentary supervision under the guidance of the Westminster Assembly.

In essence, Smith has embraced a view of justification much like synergistic processes advocated by Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox theologians. This is nowhere more clear than in his insistence, against the views

---


46 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 325.

47 See chapter three above.
of Luthereans,\textsuperscript{48} that justification and sanctification are part of the same process of becoming deformed or Christ-like. “God’s justifying of Sinners in pardoning and remitting their sins carries in it a necessary reference to the sanctifying of their Natures; without which Justification would rather be a glorious name then a real privilege to the Souls of men.”\textsuperscript{49} In this Smith anticipates the views of John Wesley and looks back to those of the Greek Fathers and Anglicans like Lancelot Andrewes.\textsuperscript{50}

The righteousness carried by the Gospel finds its roots in the hearts of Christians via faith. In this, Smith is no less Reformed than the hottest sort of Puritan. Faith, for him, is the “powerful Attractive which by a strong and divine Sympathy draws down the virtue of Heaven into the Souls of men, which

\textsuperscript{48} This is clearly expressed in the classic Lutheran formula “\textit{simul justus et peccator}.” See Philipp Melanchthon’s \textit{Apology of the Augsburg Confession} 2.38-41 (in \textit{The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church}, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000]). For a more recent, and more consistent with Eastern Orthodoxy, reading of Luther see Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., \textit{Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

\textsuperscript{49} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 329.

strongly and forcibly moves the Souls of good men into a conjunction with that Divine goodness by which it lives and grows.”51 Justification is thus accomplished by union with God in Christ and this union is faith.

Smith agrees with monergists that faith itself comes from God. “This is that Divine Impress that invincibly draws and sucks them in by degrees into the Divinity.”52 And it is by faith as “something in the hearts of men which, feeling by an Occult and inward sensation the mighty insinuations of the Divine goodness, immediately complies with it; and being first begotten and enlivened by the warm Beams of that Goodness, it alwaies breaths and gasps after it for its constant growth and nourishment.”53

Still, while the initiative is first God’s we are not without a role to play in the process. For we are persuaded by the goodness and loveliness of God to fly away from our previously “benumbed Minds.”54 Smith argues that we “should

---

51 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 333.

52 Ibid.


54 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 336.
work out our salvation in the most industrious manner, trusting in God as one ready to instill strength and power into all the vital faculties of our Souls.” The goal of such labor is nothing less than building up a capacity to “apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Thus, justification by faith involves the perception of God as goodness, beholding “Moses-like” the divine “glory shining thus out upon us in the face of Christ” that we should receive “a Copy of that Eternal beauty upon our own Souls, and our thirstie and hungry spirits would be perpetually sucking in a true participation and image of his glory.” In Christ, perceived through faith, one comes to a vision of the Good. In faith, “we shall goe on from strength to strength until we see the face of our loving, and ever-to-be-loved, God in Sion.”

In a process very much like that recommended in the “True Way” discourse, Smith argues that we come to the confirmation of our justification before God. We apprehend by an intellectual intuition the true, beautiful, nature

55 Ibid., 337. Smith is alluding to Philippians 3 and 1 Corinthians 13:12.

56 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 336.

57 Cf. Plato, Republic, VII (514-520d) and Psalm 34: 8.

58 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 338.
of God as Goodness and thereby “we live in Christ, and . . . he lives in us.” For Smith, then, accompanied by a living sense of the sweetness of God and an image of the beauty of Christ in our (reformed) souls, we come to be transformed; declared just and made so too.

5.2.1.2 Sanctification

As we have seen, for Smith, justification comes hand in hand with sanctification. There cannot be one without the other. Nevertheless, Smith addresses sanctification explicitly in “The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,” since, the religious life is synonymous with becoming deified. In eleven short chapters Smith presents an account of the origin of religion as well as its nature, properties, progress, and end. Of these it is the discussion of

59 Ibid., 339.

60 Ibid., 377-451.

61 Ibid., 380-4. To the account that we have already seen in chapter four above this section adds a reference to what Calvin called the semen religionis. “Religion is an Heaven-born thing, the seed of God in the Spirits of men” (Ibid., 381). Cf. Henry More, “That this Word of God, which is the Seed of the Soul, is a living and everlasting Word” (“The Purification of a Christian Man’s Soul,” in C.A. Patrides, 209). See also Paul Helm, “John Calvin, the Sensus Divinitatis, and the Noetic Effects of Sin,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 43 no. 2 (1998): 87–107.

62 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 385-92.

63 Ibid., 392-439.
the nature and properties that most clearly bear upon Smith’s employment of spiritual sensation.

In describing the nature of the “Nobleness of Religion” Smith stresses that it is in opposition to the “narrow prison of Sensual and Corporeal delights.”

He goes so far as to cite, approvingly, the saying of Porphyry’s that Plotinus “seemed ashamed of being in the body.” Whereas “Wicked men bury their Souls in their Bodies,” the religious man rises above such merely physical things to converse with the eternal and divine.

Additionally, the religious person lives a life that is consist with reason; “he lives at the height of his own Being.” This “height” is intellectual and not

---

64 Ibid., 439-43.
65 Ibid., 443-51.
66 Ibid., 386.
68 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 386.
69 Ibid., 387.
conative as in most accounts of synderesis. Moreover, Smith has nothing but disdain for the notion that “Religion should extinguis

“Religion makes it more illustrious and vigorous.” Indeed, “they that live most in the exercise of Religion, shall find their Reason most enlarged.”

Finally, the “good man,” for this is simply another way of naming the person “informed by True Religion,” is raised into an intimate communion with God. In so doing, the religious man “moves in a larger Sphere than his own Being, and cannot be content to enjoy himself, except he may enjoy God too, and himself in God.”

Thus, the nature of true religion is, for Smith, totally in keeping with the etymology of “religion,” coming as it does from the Latin, religare (“to bind together”). Religion, then, is the process of being united to the Divine and this communion is accomplished through and accompanied by “an inward sense of

---


71 Ibid., 388.

72 In contrast, the “more feeling and comfortable sense” of Divine goodness that is available in true religion is lacking for “Wicked men” for whom “God is not present” (Ibid., 391).

73 Ibid., 389.
Divine sweetness.”74 That is, the exercise of religion itself involves a spiritual sensation of the delectable nature of God.

Smith discusses seven properties or effects of the nobleness of religion. Most of these are primarily moral. For example, the first property and effect is “That it widens and enlarges all the Faculties of the Soul, and begets a true Ingenuity, Liberty and Amplitude, the most free and Generous Spirit, in the Minds of Good men.”75 However, even with this emphasis on the purification and restoration of the will Smith addresses the noetic effects of religion often too. For, in “being purified and spiritualliz’d” the soul becomes not just morally better but also “more and more” remade “into the glorious Image of God.”76 Indeed, Smith speaks directly of θεωσίς (theosis) or deification as the result of growth in religion.77 As the perversions of self-love and self-will pass away “the Spirit of true Religion”

74 Ibid., 391. Also an “inward touch” (Plotinus, Ennead VI.1.9).

75 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 393.


steers and directs “the Mind and Life to God, makes it an Uniform, Stable and quiet thing.”78

This process of deification is accompanied, for Smith, with contentment, joy, and pleasure.79 “Religion is no sullen Stoicisme or oppressing Melancholie . . . but it is full of a vigorous and masculine [i.e., active] delight and joy.”80 This is so because true delight and joy are the result of “some discerning Faculty with its proper Object” and the “proper Objects for a Mind and Spirit are Divine and Immaterial things.”81 That is, the soul delights in the intellectual intuition of the Divine made ever clearer through the process of becoming a better image of, and home for, God.82

Implicitly drawing on the analogy of the sun and the Allegory of the Cave, Smith suggests that “There is an Inward sense in Mans Soul, which, were it once awaken’d and excited with an inward tast and relish of the Divinity could better

78 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 406.
79 Ibid., 412.
80 Ibid., 416-7.
81 Ibid., 416.
82 See Ibid., 408 on the “Good man” as a “Tabernacle” wherein the “Divine Shechinah” resides (Hebrew: “divine presence,” associated especially with the Temple).
define God to him then all the world else.”83 Here again, we see the spiritual sense of the soul playing the critical role of bridging the divide between discursive reason and the actuality of the Divine presence.

A “sincere Christian” is one that “tasts and sees how good and sweet the Lord is” and this fills her with joy, peace, and hope.84 The good or religious person “views” eternity “transacted upon the inward stage of his own Soul.” By “reflecting upon himself he may behold a Heaven opened from within, and a Throne set up in his Soul, and an Almighty Saviour sitting upon it, and reigning within him.”85

Like Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers before him, Smith understands the process of deification as an unending one.86 His inspiration for this view,

83 Ibid., 426-7. Cf. Ibid., 434-5.

84 Ibid., 427. Smith is here referencing Psalm 34: 8 and Romans 15.


86 The notion would seem to be implicit in Origen’s (supposed) doctrine of the apotheosis of all souls (see De Principiis, 3.4.3 in P. Koetschau, ed. [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913], trans. G.W. Buttwerworth, [London: SPCK 1936; reprinted Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973]). The doctrine of epektasis (roughly “perpetual deification”) is especially associated with Gregory of Nyssa. See his Life of Moses 2.225-30 (in Gregory of Nyssa, trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson [New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978]). Also, Rowan Williams, The Wound of
however, is as much pagan as Patristic. Smith sees in Plotinus’s “flight of the alone to the alone” an example of just this sort of unending growth in union with the Divine. Smith sees in Plotinus’s “flight of the alone to the alone” an example of just this sort of unending growth in union with the Divine. The soul is alone for Smith in the sense that it is centered upon itself and acts freely not in the sense of being isolated from others. And this ever expanding conformity to, and apprehension of, God Smith equates with Heaven. For, “Heaven is not a thing without us, nor is Happiness any thing distinct from a true Conjunction of the Mind with God in a secret feeling of his Goodness and reciprocation of affection to him, wherein the Divine Glory most unfolds it self.”

---


87 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 423; citing Plotinus, Ennead VI. 9. 11. Smith gives the Greek and his text (perhaps translated by Worthington) gives also “flight of the Soul alone to God alone.” On the connection between Plotinus on this point and Gregory of Nyssa and others see, Kevin Corrigan, “‘Solitary’ Mysticism in Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius,” The Journal of Religion 76 no. 1 (1996): 28-42. Far from being an example of the stereotypical “character of pagan mystical thought: self-absorbed, solitary, narcissistic, and world-renouncing” (28) Corrigan reads Plotinus as having a “pronounced affinity” with Proclus, as we would expect, but also Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius too (30). For “‘To be alone’ in the sense of ‘solitary,’ ‘isolated,’ or ‘abandoned’ in Plotinus means to be in, or to belong to, something else (‘to be of it’) so that one is alienated (allotrion) from oneself. To be ‘in oneself,’ by contrast, is to be ‘alone’ in a different sense, that is, self-gathered and self-dependent” (32). This is, I think, also Smith’s meaning here.

88 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 410.
5.2.1.3 Eschatology

The final aspect of the excellency and nobleness of religion discussed by Smith is the “*Terme and End of it.*”\(^8\) And this end is “nothing else but Blessedness it self in its full maturity.” However, he is uncharacteristically shy about explaining this particular of his topic; “yet I may not here undertake to explain, for it is altogether άρρητόν τί [something inexpressible], nor can it descend so low as to accommodate it self to any humane style.”\(^9\) Still, following the author of the First Letter of John, Smith is not content to leave this topic without giving “some glimpse of it” for “οἱμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”\(^10\) Notice that the eschaton is simply the *perfection* of the progress of the spiritual senses and the process of deification that marks the religious life at all its stages.

Still, the end of true religion is difficult to apprehend and we cannot know what there “may be from God upon Souls in Glory, that may raise them into a state of Perfection surpassing all our imaginations.”\(^11\) However, it will be

\(^8\) Ibid., 444.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid., citing 1 John 3: 2.

\(^11\) Ibid., 445. Notice the role of the imagination in anticipating the beatific vision.
enjoyable in the highest degree, not despite the loss of our bodies as the Epicureans argue, but in part because of it.93 Likewise, the happiness of the soul is more than Stoic apathy too; it is not merely the elimination of disturbances but the presence of something truly wonderful.94

Smith is clear that the heavenly end of the true Christian is something to be only anticipated while in our earthly lives and bodies. Yet, he is also adamant that Heaven and Hell are characters of the souls of human beings, and not “places” or “containers” for them. “Hell is rather a Nature then a Place: and Heaven cannot be so truly defined by any thing without us, as by something that is within us.”95 That is, Heaven and Hell are states of the soul. Moreover, “the Devil is not onely the name of one particular thing, but a nature” and “it is the difference of a name rather than any proper difference of natures that is between the Devil and Wicked

---


94 Ibid.

men. Wheresoever we see Malice, Revenge, Pride, Envy, Hatred, Self-will, and Self-love, we may say Here, and There is that Evil spirit.”

The good, religious, person will have a foretaste of the Heavenly bliss in as much as they attend to divine things. Likewise, the foolish, bodily minded person will find themselves so consumed in the realm of death and despair that they too can be said to taste of Hell in this life. Thus, “the Tyranny of the Devil and Hell is not so much in some External things, as in the Qualities and Dispositions of mens Minds.”

Interestingly, Smith opposes the theory put forward by Augustine, and accepted by many Western theologians, of the inheritance of original sin from Adam and Eve. “I fear the grounds of most mens Misery will prove to be a second fall, and a Lapse upon a Lapse . . . It will not be so much because our First parents incurred God’s displeasure, as because we have neglected what might have been done by us.”

---

96 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 463.

97 Cf. Ibid., 462-9.

98 Ibid., 464.

99 Ibid., 449-50.
Above all it is the "Unreasonableness or the smothering and extinguishing the Candle of the Lord within us" that has "no piece of Religion, nor advantageous[ness] to it." Yet, what Smith fears most is that speculation about our ends might "exercise mens Wits" more than it causes them to "reform their lives." For all his emphasis on the mystical experience of suprasensible union with the Divine, Smith’s religion remains eminently practical and directed at leading a moral life here and now. His otherworldliness, constantly contrasting "religion" and "goodness" with the body and the physical senses, serves not an escapist retreat from the world but a transformed orientation to living a life in it. Smith’s religion is one that remains in the world but avoids being of the world.

As he closes this discourse on the excellency of religion: “Let us therefore labour to purge our own Souls from all worldly pollutions; let us breath after the aid and assistance of the Divine Spirit, that it may irradiate and inlighten our Minds, that we may be able to see Divine things in a Divine light: let us endeavor to live

---

100 Ibid., 448. The “candle of the Lord” is a well-known, often-used, phrase among the Cambridge Platonists to indicate the divine nature of human reason. Its source however is biblical, Proverbs 20: 27.

101 Ibid., 449.

102 Romans 12: 2.
more in a real practice of those Rules of Religious and Holy living commended to
us by our ever-Blessed Lord and Saviour: So shall we know Religion better, and
knowing it love it, and loving it be still more and more ambitiously pursuing
after it, till we come to a full attainment of it, and therein of our own Perfection
and Everlasting Bliss.”103

5.3 The Spiritual Senses and Making Sense of Spirituality

Largely on the basis of his account of the origin of theological
understanding, Smith argued for a rational faith expressed in inner reflection,
moral purity, and deification. In so doing he made intellectual intuition and the
imaginative reception of symbols of the divine central to the life of true Christian
piety. Smith’s use of what we have identified as the spiritual senses tradition was
therefore both descriptive and prescriptive.

For Smith, only those who have been transformed through purification of
their affections, intentions, and thoughts are capable of perceiving divine things.
There can be no disinterested theologian for Smith. The ways of purification,
illumination, and union are how he accounts for the fact that divines and

103 Ibid., 451.
prophets have had theological understanding even as he recommends this same path to his reader if they would seek to know God.104

Conspicuous in its absence in the Select Discourses are references to prayer, worship, and liturgy. Smith makes no mention of the sacraments, not even baptism. There is never more than passing mention of prayer.105 However, if by “prayer” one includes contemplation, then Smith clearly echoes the patristic wisdom summarized by Evagrius Ponticus, "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian."106


105 Patrick records that Smith did pray (“Funeral Sermon,” 515) but Smith does not speak of it in a positive way in his Select Discourses. His references to prayer are always negative, showing what not to do.

CHAPTER 6: SENSE, SYSTEM, AND APOLOGETICS

To this point we have seen that, like the long Christian tradition before him, Smith employed the spiritual senses of the soul in his account of theological knowledge, both natural and revealed, as well as in his description of the spiritual life. In this chapter we show how Smith looks to the spiritual senses in his natural theology and how this consistent reliance helps to draw his thought together into a unified whole. It is, in part, by using the concept of spiritual sense that Smith presents his readers with a systematic theology. Moreover, this system is intended to offer a critique of early modern naturalism and an apology for traditional Christian Platonism.

The first five of the Select Discourses form a unified whole, relating John Smith’s natural theology.1 Of these only two treat positive doctrines as such; discourse four, “Of the Immortality of the Soul,” and discourse five, “Of the Existence and Nature of God.” However, these are prefaced by discourses upon “The True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,” “Of Superstition,” and “Of Atheism.” With these first three discourses, Smith sets the

---

scene for his arguments for the immortal soul and God, which together constitute the first two of his three “great principles of religion.”

6.1 Smith’s Natural Theology

As we saw in chapter four above, Smith’s “True Way” discourse is concerned with the epistemology and methodology of theology. Drawing on biblical, Patristic, and ancient philosophical sources, Smith argues for a form of emotionally charged, and partly imaginary, intellectual intuition as the means by which one comes to know divine things. After establishing this, Smith goes on to discuss what he takes to be the two primary challenges to true, natural and revealed, religion: superstition and atheism.

6.1.1 Superstition

The first of these “Anti-Deities” taken up by Smith is superstition, which he defines as “that Temper of Mind which the Greeks call Δεισιδαιμονια... an overtimorous and dreadfull apprehension of the Deity.” Indeed, following Hesychius

---

2 The third is the “communication of God to mankind through Christ” or revealed theology, which we have explored in chapters four and five above.

3 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 1-21.

(5th century CE) Smith argues that δεισιδαιμόνια is synonymous with φόβοθεία or fear of the Gods. This mistaken affective orientation to the Divine makes one think of God as “dreadfull and terrible,” “rigourous and imperious,” “austere and apt to be angry, but yet impotent and easy to be appeased . . . by some flattering devotions, especially if performed with sanctimonious shewes and a solemn sadness of Mind.” By understanding God as something external and negative the superstitious person does not apprehend the “Goodness of God” and this leads him or her to “attribute their [own] impotent passions and peevishness of Spirit to him.” That is, having an incorrect notion of God prompts the superstitious to create and then project their own weaknesses on to this idolatrous notion.

Citing Porphyry, Smith claims that superstition leads to the urge to “bribe the Deity” and this he finds in the rites of “the Jews” as well as nominal

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 27.

8 Smith’s point here is that a moral and psychical failing on the part of some people leads to the creation of false deities, such as the “superstitious” one that is feared and prompts efforts at appeasement. In this regard, his theory of a form of bad or false religion is strikingly similar to Freud’s theory of religion in toto. See Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. W.D. Robson-Scott (London: Hogarth Press, 1928).
Christians. This form of superstitious religion Smith especially associates with what he elsewhere calls “Pharisaick Righteousness.” In this stereotypical account of Jewish righteousness by works under the law Smith contrasts the “Pharisee” who by a “bare External appearance of Religion” pretends to have earned “true Blessedness.” And like all forms of superstition, the “Pharisaick” are fueled by a mistaken sense of God, lacking in an apprehension of the divine goodness that fosters love not servile fear.

Smith recognizes grades of superstition. Indeed, against Plutarch he argues that polytheism, which he equates to daemon worship, is but “one branch” of superstition rather than the sum total thereof. Others are driven to superstition by strong apprehensions of their own guilt, which they project as

---

9 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 29. On Jewish “superstition” Smith is following Plutarch, but only so far as their rites and ceremonies are concerned.

10 Ibid., 349-72.

11 Ibid., 353.

12 Ibid., 361-6.

13 Ibid., 29.

14 Ibid., 30. The relationship is rooted in the common origin of both in fear.
divine judgment upon themselves.\textsuperscript{15} Still others, are brought to fear and thus superstition by a lack of understanding of the forces of nature that makes them seek out a divine agent both quick to anger and easy to appease.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, fear reinforces mistaken notions that support rites and rituals which again fuel further superstitious ideas. Sometimes the process leads to “\emph{Magick} and \emph{Exorcismes}, other times into \emph{Pandanticall} Rites and idle observations of Things and Times.”\textsuperscript{17} The pious person is a friend of God while the superstitious is a flatterer, being of a “base and slavish” temperament.\textsuperscript{18} Unlike his fellow Cambridge Platonist Henry More, who would make much of stories of ghosts and the like as evidence against a purely materialist philosophy, Smith dismisses talk of “\emph{Spectres} and frightfull \emph{Apparitions} of Ghosts and\textsuperscript{19} Mormos” as examples of the delusions of “weak minds.”

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 31-2. Here, Smith is implicitly dismissing the so-called “God of the gaps.”

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 32.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 34, 33.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 32. On More’s occultism see A. Rupert Hall, \textit{Henry More and the Scientific Revolution} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82-103, 128-45. “Mormos” is a reference to Mormo a spirit that bit misbehaving children in Greek mythology. It has essentially the meaning of our “bogeyman.”
Smith’s discussion of superstition is eminently practical in orientation. In this respect, his discourse here is as much concerned with “spirituality” as anything else. In fact, it is not immediately obvious that it plays any clear role in Smith’s natural theology at all. However, his concern here is, above all, with a kind of “false piety” which makes an appreciation of theology, even natural theology, impossible. That is, unless one is prepared to let go of her or his emotionally charged attachments to a basically wrong-headed notion of God one cannot fully see the truth of what Smith has to offer about the immortal soul or the existence and nature of the true Deity. Most importantly, Smith’s inclusion of this bit of spiritual wisdom in a prolegomena to his natural theology indicates to us that he does not fully separate the two. The end of natural religion and revealed truth is one and the same; union with God as the Supreme Good.

6.1.2 Atheism

In much the same vein, Smith takes up his discourse “Of Atheism” in order to demonstrate the practical roots and errors of not believing in God. In

---

20 Ibid., 36; Superstition, like the darkness in the prologue to the Gospel of John, “comprehends not the true Divine good that ariseth to the Souls of men from an internall frame of Religion” (Ibid.).
fact, he argues that superstition and atheism are closely related and deeply similar in that “as Superstition is engendered by a base opinion of the Deity as cruell and tyrannicall . . . so also is Atheism.”

No less an authority than Plato is brought to bear on this point, who suggests in *The Laws* that there are three temperaments toward God: total atheism, partial atheism (the denial of providence or what we might call Deism), and the superstitious “perswasion . . . that they [the Gods] are easily won by sacrifices and prayers.”

Moreover, it is superstition that opened the way for atheism in that “it could not so easily have banish’d the Belief in a Deity, had not that [superstition] first accused and condemn’d it as destructive to the Peace of Mankind; and therefore it [atheism] hath alwaies justified and defended it self by Superstition.”

Drawing on Simplicius and Dionysius Longinus, Smith sums up these two “anti-deities”:

---

21 Ibid., 42.


23 Ibid. In this one is immediately reminded of the “New Atheists” of our own time (Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, etc.) whose attacks on theism are nearly always directed at the grossest sorts of anthropomorphism in religion (thus “superstition” by Smith’s standards). On this see Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
If the Superstitious man thinks that God is altogether like himself . . . the Atheist will soon say in his heart, *There is no God*; and will judge it not without some appearance of Reason to be better there were none . . . .

Smith notes that the great epicurean poet Lucretius (first century BCE) rejected the Gods, in part, because of the monstrous superstition that they were appeased by Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia.

6.1.2.1 Epicureanism

His train of thought having brought him to the Epicurean school of philosophy in the supportive example of Lucretius, Smith next takes up an extended discussion of the “secret Atheists of the Epicurean sect.” For Smith, Epicurus and his followers were too careful to admit their atheism but neither can they hide it since “when they would seem to acknowledge a Deity, [they] could not forget their own beloved Image which was always before their eyes; and therefore they would have it as careless of any thing but its own pleasure

---

24 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 43. Quoting Psalm 14: 1 “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”


26 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 46.
and idle life as they themselves were.” Thus, the Epicureans fell in with the “Anthropomorphitae.”

Smith sets out to relate the contours of the epicurean school out of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* but in actuality relies seldom on this source. After demonstrating that Lucretius is a faithful follower of Epicurus on the basis of his “prologue” in praise of the master of the Garden, Smith notes that the poet argues that superstition has arisen from observations of nature. The mysteries of the natural world have led people to imagine Gods that might be appeased. For this reason, says Lucretius, he seeks to unfold the secrets of nature so that superstition may be put away. This, Smith interprets as a challenge to the doctrine of creation, and thus upon the nature and existence of God.

27 Ibid.


29 While Smith does clearly know Lucretius, he relies much more consistently on anti-epicurean sources from Cicero and Plutarch.

30 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 46.
This attack upon the notion of the divine creation, and sustaining, of the world is rooted in the atomic physics of Epicurus and his school. Smith pokes fun of the lack of originality in Epicurus by calling his school merely the “foster-father” of atomism; Democritus gets credit, or more accurately blame, for being the “father” of this form of physics. Nevertheless, Epicurus’s “master-notion” is laid out by Smith as the familiar summary of atoms and the void (“empty space”). He remains somewhat vague on the particulars of Epicurus’s theory at first, suggesting that his audience could be expected to know the basics. Smith’s full understanding of Epicurean philosophy does not come into view until his digression on it comes to a close.

Description gives way to apologetic argument as Smith offers a version of the design argument against the epicurean view that the complexity of nature is the result of mere chance. Even Aristotle, he admits begrudgingly, had to recognize the need for a First Mover. If Aristotle, who is himself no friend to

---

31 Ibid., 47. Smith is being a bit snarky here. He wants to dismiss the view as fundamentally wrong-headed but also heaps scorn on Epicurus for not coming up with the idea himself. He may also be taking this up from other ancient sources as it was a common criticism of Epicurus.

32 Ibid.
religion for Smith, can admit of God then what gross errors must be at play in the philosophy of Epicurus?33

Even if one were to grant, against Aristotle and good sense, that material nature has the power of motion itself, there remains the problem of persistence over time for Epicurus. If, merely by chance, things come together to form complex new forms, what keeps them from immediately falling apart again if not a Divine influence over the whole?34 Moreover, from whence does the order we so clearly observe in nature come? Smith is clearly doubtful that atoms, void, and the “swerve” are enough to account for the radical coincidences represented by trees, hills, and human beings.35

More importantly, even if Epicurus is correct about physics, his theological conclusions are not borne out. While Smith does not subscribe to Epicurean physics, he does agree that one’s study of nature rests on empirical observation. Science begins with the physical senses but requires interpretation by an incorporeal soul. In order to embrace the epicurean denial of providence,

33 Ibid., 48.

34 Ibid.

which amounts to atheism for Smith, one must be morally and spiritually disposed toward this view by attachment to matter and the objects of physical sense. That is, in order to find atomic physics compelling on theological issues, such as the nature of God’s relationship to the world, one must first be the type of sensualist that has his or her reason so tangled with physical sense that they cannot come to a knowledge of first principles.

Thus, the Epicurean is so far from the “True Way” of coming to a proper understanding of metaphysical truth that Smith thinks it unworthy, even if some truth may be had by it in the realm of physics. Moreover, he is doubtful that anyone can be so completely ignorant of the true nature of God as would seem to be required to assent to a system that is entirely “natural” like the Epicurean philosophy. For there is “a Natural Sense of God that lodges in the minds of [even] the lowest and dullest sort of vulgar men.” This natural sense of God would appear to be similar to what Calvin calls the sensus divinitatis in that both work “like a natural instinct antecedent to any mature knowledge” providing

---

36 Ibid., 49.

37 Ibid., 17.

38 Ibid., 49-50.
grounds to know that there is a Deity. However unlike the Reformer’s version of the spiritual senses, Smith thinks of this sense of God as also functioning as a kind of innate knowledge, “being indeed the First principle of” mature or experiential knowledge.

Clearly then, Smith is concerned to combat what he takes to be the errors of Epicureanism. However, it might justly be wondered why he, or anyone, would see in this ancient school of thought a living challenge to “true religion.” Smith makes much of it because in his day Epicureanism was on the rise across Europe and at home in England. Worthington tells us, in a reference to Hobbes among others, that Smith “lived not to see Atheism so closely and craftily insinuated, nor lived he to see Sadduceism and Epicurism so boldly owned and industriously propagated, as they have been of late.” Still, this renewal of Epicurean principles was only relatively more frequent and more bold in the

---


41 John Worthington, “To the Reader,” in Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), xx. The reference to the Sadducees (known primarily from the New Testament and Josephus) is another way of referring to those who deny the immortality of the soul, resurrection, and final judgment.
years after Smith’s passing. For already in the mid-fifteenth century there were printed editions of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* beloved by Humanists across Europe, including Erasmus and Thomas More. Diogenes Laertius too was published in 1472, bringing his account of the *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, including Epicurus, to a wide public. At the very end of the sixteenth century, Giordano Bruno came under the suspicion that would ultimately lead to his death by fire in the Campo de’ Fiori in part because of his embrace of epicurean principles.

By the time of the publication of Descartes’s *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641, Pierre Gassendi was already working toward his own system of Christian Epicureanism. In his contribution to the *Objections and Replies*...
published along with the *Meditations*, Gassendi offers significant criticism of Descartes’s view of the self as mental and therefore non-corporeal.\(^{46}\) Thomas Hobbes too in his *Objections* raises the notion that the mind is merely a kind of movement of a body.\(^{47}\) By the 1640s, Walter Charleton (1619-1707), a friend of Hobbes, had begun to bring explicitly Epicurean philosophy to England, notably in the form of adaptations of the work of Gassendi.\(^{48}\)

Thus, Epicureanism, or at least a form of physicalist naturalism at least nominally similar to that ancient school, was a living possibility among the intelligentsia of Europe. In so far as this entailed a denial of divine providence, the immortality of the soul, or the existence and nature of God, the presence of


\(^{47}\) Fourth Objections, in *Philosophical Writings*, 2: 138-78.

\(^{48}\) Charleton was physician to Charles I during the Civil War. It is possible that this helped to fuel hostility on Smith’s part to Epicurean ideas, being, as they were, associated with the Royal Court. Robert Kargon, “Walter Charleton, Robert Boyle, and the Acceptance of Epicurean Atomism in England,” *Isis* 55 no. 2 (1964): 184-92.
Epicurean philosophy signaled the spread of atheism for Smith. Thus, Smith responded much like Henry More in his *Treatise of the Immortality of the Soul*, and the *Antidote against Atheism*.49

6.1.2.2 The Spiritual Effects of Atheism

Following Plutarch, Smith sets two further points before his reader concerning atheism. The first, that while superstition is "unlovely" it is still "more tolerable then Atheism."50 This is because atheism offers "the greatest violence to mens Souls that may be" in weeding out the roots of our innate notions of God.51 That is, while superstition may lead to false religion, that is still to be preferred to no religion at all. Second, Smith avers that atheism is a "most ignoble and uncomfortable thing" in itself.52 Here he is turning the great virtue of the


50 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 51.

51 Ibid., 52. The agricultural metaphor is Smith's ("pulling up . . . which have spread their Roots").

52 Ibid. Here he follows Plutarch and Cicero against "Colotes the Epicurean" (c.320-c.268 BCE).
“Epicureans,” namely pleasure, against them by suggesting that attending to merely physical pleasures is not nearly as enjoyable as one might expect. For one thing, one cannot achieve the “Highest Happiness,” communion with God, by way of a “corporeal touch.” This is in contrast, of course, to the “Intellectual touch” by which Smith teaches we may come to know God in the “True Way” discourse. In addition, a rightly spiritual enjoyment of the eternal things of God is everlasting, whereas physical enjoyment is a fleeting, momentary matter at best. Above all however, Smith’s objection to Epicurean hedonism is basically aesthetic and moral. “I dare say that all those that have any just esteem of humanity, cannot but with a noble scorn defy such a base-born Happiness as this is, generated onely out of the slime of the earth.”

---

53 From the context here and elsewhere it is clear that Smith follows most ancient, medieval and early modern critics of Epicureanism in thinking of it as a school of pure hedonism in the positive sense rather than the more accurately negative hedonism of Epicurus and Lucretius that seeks to avoid disturbance (ataraxia). Eugene O’Connor, “Introduction,” 9-14.

54 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 52.

55 Ibid., 3.

56 Ibid., 52-3.

57 Ibid., 53. One wonders what Smith would make of modern evolutionary science with its theory that all life arose out of just this “slime of the earth.” Given his friendly embrace of Platonic and Cartesian dualism, I suspect that Smith would not resist our science, provided that room remains for the immaterial soul.
and beneath the dignity of human beings made in the *imago Dei* to think that we are merely “dust,” fine particles of lifeless matter.

6.1.2.3 Materialist Naturalism

Late in his discourse on atheism Smith refers in passing to a central doctrine of Epicureanism as itself being the take-home point for atheism in general. Namely, he equates the atomic materialism of the Epicureans with the whole “portion of Atheism.” In so doing he confirms what his reader must suspect from the outset; that “atheism” is essentially identical to materialist naturalism. Epicureanism is atheistic for Smith because it is reductively materialistic (all is *merely* atoms and the void) and entertains only natural causes. Likewise, atheism is epicurean in so far as it leaves no room for spiritual substance and action. Against this Smith suggests (with the Stoics) that in order to account for the world one must admit both God and providence. “Remove *God* and *Providence* out of the world, and then we have nothing to depend upon

---

58 Ibid., 53.

59 In addition to the Stoics we might add also the Puritans, always keen to stress divine providence, as well as those natural theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, who have argued from the “governance of the world” to the existence of God.
but *Chance* and *Fortune.*” Such a world is both physically impossible and psychologically intolerable for Smith.

6.1.3 The Immortal Soul

In his discourse on the “Immortality of the Soul” Smith makes four arguments; two negative against Epicureanism, and two positive, all drawing on Platonism. He concludes his discussion with the additional resolution of two potential difficulties in accepting the immortality of the soul; one from Aristotle directly, and the mind-body problem.

While he goes on to give what he takes to be solid rational grounds for admitting the immortality of the soul, Smith opens by apologizing for taking up the notion in the first place. The Epistle to the Hebrews lays out the principal doctrines of religion, which are (1) that God exists, (2) that God rewards those who seek Him, and (3) the communication of God to humanity through Christ. To this second principle, Smith adds the immortality of the soul as a necessary accompaniment, in a classic display of his erudition, on the authority of Ficino,

---

60 Ibid., 54.

61 Ibid., 54-5.
Simplicius, Jewish tradition, the New Testament, the Delphic Oracle, Plutarch, Cicero, and Clement of Alexandria. Thus, both scripture and reason show these three (or four) principles to be the foundations of true religion. And since the chief natural way to know God, for Smith, is by first knowing the soul, he begins his discussion of natural theology with the immortal soul.

Having given sufficient reason to take up a topic that he otherwise takes to be uncontroversial among any one he respects Smith next offers three premises upon which his arguments about the soul will rest. An appreciation of the argumentative force of Smith’s discourse rests profoundly on keeping these premises in mind. Without them, his arguments may seem to beg the question, making him seem more a casual apologist than philosophically astute theologian.

Smith’s first premise, if it can be so called, is that the immortality of the soul does not, properly speaking, require demonstration at all. It is, suggests Smith, an entirely natural notion that has been accepted by “all Nations” across history. In an utterly pragmatic (even democratic) bit of reasoning Smith offers

---

that the immortality of the soul has been accepted even by the most “Idiotical sort of men” and only a few “unskilful Philosophers” have questioned it.63

The second premise goes to the very heart of Smith’s approach to theology and philosophy. In order to rightly understand his arguments, he suggests that one must already have had “converse” with their own soul.64 That is, in order to appreciate the truth of what he will argue one must be able to recognize his demonstration as reflecting what one has already come to know by first-hand experience. Only one who has thus seen has eyes to see the truth of his case. To this extent, Smith has established as a premise for his arguments the reality of the spiritual perception of the *imago Dei* he sets out as the defining characteristic of his theological epistemology in the “True Way.”65

The third and final premise is more directly philosophical, and thus absolutely essential to the arguments that follow if one is looking for reasoning that is apt to convince the skeptic. Smith asserts that no substantial and

63 Ibid., 63.

64 Ibid., 65-6.

65 Ibid., 1-21.
indivisible thing ever perishes.66 This premise has the great strength that even his opponents, the Epicureans, grant its truth, for it is on this basis that they argue for the eternity of atoms.67 Moreover, this principle is supported by Smith’s allies, above all Plato and Plotinus, but even Aristotle too.68

6.1.3.1 Arguments against the Epicureans

Smith’s first formal argument, actually a set of related arguments, is that the soul is not corporeal, directed against Epicurean philosophy which argues that, like everything else, the soul is simply a collection of atoms. He is thus attempting to reason to a position consistent with his third premise, which even his opponents grant, that what is indivisible cannot pass away. Smith’s approach is a form of informal *reductio ab absurdum* wherein he shows that the Epicurean position is inconsistent with known facts and thus false.69

---

66 Ibid., 66-8. Ben Lazare Mijuskovic calls this the “simplicity” argument and he traces it through its Platonic roots to Kant in *The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments* (The Hague: Martinus Mijhoff, 1974).

67 Ibid., 66. Note that Smith again is taking up this ancient school of philosophy as a living threat to the fundamental principles of religion.


69 Ibid., 69. While the success of Smith’s argument rests upon the degree to which he finds actual absurdities in the thesis of his opponents for our purposes we are interested primarily in
The Epicurean theory, as Smith knows it, is that the soul is a corporeal entity and that just as the body passes away at death so too therefore does the soul. This is the basis for the famous Epicurean argument against the fear of death. As Epicurus himself puts it in his Letter to Menoeceus, “Death . . . is nothing to us, since while we exist, death is not present, and whenever death is present, we do not exist.” Thus, for the Epicurean the material soul necessitates the mortality thereof and this is why Smith seeks to show that the soul is immaterial as an essential step toward his demonstration of the soul’s immortality. Moreover, regardless of attempts at terminological refinement, the Epicurean principle remains; the soul is a body.

Smith asks immediately however how one can arrive at a rational soul from mere body. The solution offered by Epicurus, here represented above all by Lucretius, is that like all other phenomena in the cosmos rationality is the result
of atoms in motion through the void of empty space. But this account raises many difficulties, including the question of the origin of motion.

Smith notes that there is nothing in the definition of body that necessitates motion. Something may be extended in space without also being subject to motion. Thus, it would seem that some explanation is required to account for the movement of atoms. In a convenient truce with his sometime enemy Aristotle, Smith brings the Peripatetic principle “that Motion cannot arise from a Body” alone to bear against the Epicurean physics. Epicurean physics seems therefore to require an efficient cause to set the system in motion that is expressly ruled out by that very system.

In addition to this deep flaw in Epicurean physics, there is the more specific matter of the origin of perception. For even a bodily Epicurean soul must be able to perceive, that being one of the essential tasks of a soul. Lucretius suggests motion as an explanation of perception. However, at best the motions of bodies can produce the variety of objects various in magnitude, position, figure,

---

73 Ibid., 71.

74 Ibid., 71. Smith’s reference is to Aristotle’s De Caelo (On the Heavens) but the principle is ubiquitous in his philosophy.

75 Ibid., 72.
and motion that makes up the objects of perception (the “phanomena,” or as the Epicureans call them, “eventa”). But to perceive is to sense these phenomena; to have them as objects. Thus, this power cannot come from these bodily phenomena themselves any more “then Vision can rise out of a Glasse.” That is, bodies and their interactions are what is seen (i.e., objects) and at most that by which we see (the sense organs, etc.) but in no way are bodies to be identified with our act of seeing.

Additionally, appeals to infinitesimally small “corpuscular” bodies (atoms) are no help to the Epicurean cause either. Atoms themselves do not have the power of sense, and therefore, argues Smith, neither can any combination or motion thereof. This otherwise curious denial of the possibility of what today would be called “emergent properties” rests on the principle, well attested by both Platonists and Aristotle, that an effect cannot have something that was not given it by its cause. Therefore, atoms in motion cannot account for perception.

---

76 Ibid., 72.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 73.
As supplementary support for this conclusion Smith notes the apparent difficulty that even Lucretius seems to have in holding to the theory of the corporeal soul.\textsuperscript{79} Taking his lead from Plotinus, Porphyry, and Plutarch, Smith adds that interactions of atoms cannot be sensitive to their own motions because that would be like musical instruments hearing their own vibrations. Sensation is not motion or impressions caused by motion but the recognition of those motions by a faculty of a different sort altogether.\textsuperscript{80}

Moreover, even if it were possible sense perception alone would be insufficient to account for knowledge. If sense were all that one had we could not know some rather important things. For example, we could not know \textit{that} we know.\textsuperscript{81} Judgment is needed to make sense of sensory information as well but this is accomplished via innate ideas already contained in the reasoning faculties.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 73-5.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 76. Alan Gabbey has suggested that it may have been Smith, rather than Cudworth or More, who first took up the attack upon “mechanical religion.” “Cudworth, More and the Mechanical Analogy,” in \textit{Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England 1640-1700}, ed. Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 109-27, here 121, 127 n.50. See also Simon Patrick, \textit{The Parable of the Pilgrim} (London, 1688), 195, 204, 210; cited by Gabbey (127 n.50).

\textsuperscript{81} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 77. Smith adds this additional bit of argument because sense perception does indeed involve the body and that gives a degree of plausibility to the Epicurean theory.
of the soul. Thus, along with Aristotle, Smith argues that judgment and reason are not faculties or powers of sense. They are how we are able to distinguish between hallucinations and proper perceptions, and thus they are not themselves perceptual.

In addition, if there is no higher principle of knowledge than sense one could not know, for example, that the sun is actually much larger than it appears because an understanding of that sort rests on immaterial mathematical reasoning. Pure empiricism therefore is not enough even for an accurate apprehension of the physical world. Thus, Smith concludes, there is a more noble power in the soul that judges and reasons upon the data provided by sense and this cannot be a body. In this way, Smith argues, to his own standards of proof, that there is at least a higher aspect of the soul that is immaterial and thus immortal.

Three particulars follow from these arguments. First, the mental faculty by which we discern and judge is not a body and must therefore remove itself from

---

82 Ibid., 70.

83 Ibid., 79.
bodily concerns to “nakedly discern truth.”\textsuperscript{84} This is in keeping with Smith’s generally ascetic approach to spiritual aesthetics as we have seen in chapters four and five above.

Second, we must have a faculty that “collects and unites all the Perceptions of our several Senses, and is able to compare them together: something in which they all meet as in one Centre” for as Plotinus suggests “That in which all those several sensations meet as so many Lines drawn from several points in the Circumference and which comprehends them all, must needs be One.”\textsuperscript{85} While Smith does reference Aristotle’s \textit{de Anima} in his discussion of this unitive sense faculty he does so only to back up the general principle “That must be one that judges things to be diverse.”\textsuperscript{86} Curiously, Smith does

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 80.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 82. Smith cites \textit{Ennead IV.7.6} but the idea originates with Alexander of Aphrodisias, \textit{De Anima}, 8-13 (A.P. Fotinis, \textit{The De anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias} [Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), cited in Plotinus, \textit{Ennead IV}, trans. Armstrong, vol. IV, 355, n.1. Mijuskovic suggests an anticipation of Kant in Smith’s argument “that only an immaterial simple can serve as a ‘transcendental’ condition for the unity of consciousness” (\textit{Achilles}, 65). However, Smith’s reason for bringing this up is not epistemological but rather to shore up his case against Epicureanism by suggesting that the simple (indivisible) soul is also immaterial. After all, the Epicurean atom too is indivisible (and thus eternal in its own way).

\textsuperscript{86} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 82; translating from Aristotle, \textit{De anima}, 3.2.
not name this faculty the κοινή αἰσθησις or sensus communis, but it is clear that this is the faculty he has in mind.87

Smith’s third particular is that remembering and predicting (“Prevision”) cannot be bodily processes. Essentially, he is asking what could possibly unite the past, present, and future together as our mental faculties do if they were not in some sense participants in eternity themselves?88 If conversant with eternity, if only in its shadow cast upon memory, present awareness, and prescience, then surely the soul has no truck with the body and is itself immortal.

Where this first argument prominently displays Smith’s Platonism, his second against the Epicureans demonstrates his knowledge of the new science of his day. Essentially, his argument is that the body and soul can act without each other.89 There are actions that arise without any mental effort or attention and there are those that are deliberate and against bodily demands, as when we delay eating even when feeling hungry.

87 However, given the relative paucity of explicit uses of the phrase in Aristotle, its absence in Smith is perhaps not surprising. Still, the label would have made for much more readable prose in Smith’s discussion.

88 Ibid., 82-3.

89 Ibid., 85.
Spontaneous bodily actions, including emotional reactions without external causes, originate in the body but are felt by the soul. For this reason there must be a close connection or relation between the soul and the body. The “machina” of the body cannot perceive and so there must also be an immaterial soul for that purpose.\textsuperscript{90} However, most bodily motions are unconscious, what we would call “autonomic functions” that we do not perceive or initiate such as breathing, heart beating, pupil dilation, etc. All of this leads Smith to conclude that the body and soul must be distinct things.

The parallel to Descartes here is very strong. Both argue that body is primarily defined by extension and soul primarily by active mental functions.\textsuperscript{91} Descartes calls these mental events “thought” while Smith maintains distinctions like perception, judgment, reasoning, and the like but their points are the same. Body occupies space and cannot actively respond to the world, soul (or mind) does not occupy space and can actively respond to the world in perception, judgment, and intellection.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 87.

\textsuperscript{91} Mijuskovic calls this the “simplicity” argument and he traces it through its Platonic roots to Kant in \textit{The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments} (The Hague: Martinus Mijhoff, 1974).

\textsuperscript{92} Descartes, \textit{Meditations}, 6, in \textit{Philosophical Writings}, 2: 50-62.
Smith also follows Descartes and other contemporary natural philosophers in arguing that the human body operates through various material forces carried by spirits, blood, and humors throughout our anatomy. Many of these processes are basically hydraulic or pneumatic in character and they represent the ways one part of the body can influence the others and how physical motions can lead to emotional passions too.\textsuperscript{93} Like Descartes, Smith is arguing that the body operates like a machine but something additional is needed to come to an awareness of these mechanical actions. This something more, is, for Smith, the soul.

Smith also brings up volitional acts as evidence of the superiority of the soul over the body. Not only are they distinct, as we can see from the fact that we are not always conscious of subtle bodily motions, but the soul is able to dictate to the body which actions it will take.\textsuperscript{94} The soul becomes aware of bodily needs (showing, again, that the soul is not the body) but the soul, or more precisely the


\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 88-91.
will, can postpone or deny these actions (showing that the soul is in control).

Displaying little interest in the ordering of the faculties that had so dominated scholastic psychology and would come to prominence again in modern philosophy, Smith is content to merely note the understanding and the will as vital powers and therefore carried out by the soul.

Furthermore, the soul is free from astral or astrological influences for Smith as well. Just as he dismisses other forms of occult science (witchcraft, etc.) as superstitious nonsense, Smith has no time at all for astrology, at least when it comes to predicting the course one’s soul might (or must) take.95 Along these same lines, Smith is dismissive of Lucretius’ view that all motion, including human action, originates in an initial “Motion of declination” or what Greenblatt has recently (and famously) called a “swerve.”96 For, the purely physical

---

95 Ibid., 89. Smith was clearly interested in astronomy and so he would most likely not be opposed to what is called “natural astrology” but only “judicial astrology” which sought to discern the inclinations of the heart and fate. In this he is a bit unusual for his day but less so among Puritans; Calvin had written against astrology in An admonicion against astrology iudiciall and other curiosities, that raigne nowv in the vvorld, trans. G.G. (London, 1561).

96 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 90. The theory is given by Lucretius in De Rerum Natura 2.215-24. Atoms moving through an infinite void “swerve a little” and thus start off the chain of collisions that leads to more complex objects like rocks, trees, and human souls. Without this “change of course” atoms would simply fall in a straight line and never meet. Lucretius, The Nature of Things, 42. Greenblatt’s The Swerve, documents the rediscovery of Lucretius’s poem and the change in course this helped to inspire in the early modern period (toward the modern secular world of today).
interaction of bodies according to mechanical laws leaves no room for the
exercise of free will. By introspection he thinks that we can see clearly that our
souls are not constrained by the “rigid laws of Matter” and in so noticing we
apprehend our souls to be immaterial. Our soul, says Smith in a remarkable
passage from one so soon to come to bodily death, “feels it self able to preserve it
self from the forrein force of Matter, and can say of all those assaults . . . as the
Stoick did, all this is nothing to me, who am yet free and can command within,
when this feeble Carkass is able no longer to obey me; and when that is shattered
and broken down, I can live any where else without it; for I was not That, but liad
only a command over It, while I dwelt in it.”

97 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 91. Clearly then Smith subscribes to a view not unlike
that of Descartes, and arguably Plotinus, whereby personal identity is associated with soul/mind
and the body is essentially something that this spiritual substance has and inhabits (like a ghost
in a machine). Eyjolfur Emilsson has argued to the effect that Plotinus was essentially a Cartesian
on the issue of the mind and body (Plotinus on Sense-Perception [Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2008]; “Plotinus and Soul-Body Dualism,” in S. Everson, ed., Psychology,
Companions to Ancient Thought, vol. 2 [Cambridge, 1991]) and John Dillon has argued that
Plotinus was the first Cartesian (“Plotinus, the First Cartesian?,” Hermathena 149 [1990]: 19-31).
While this has been challenged ably by Donald L. Ross (“Plotinus, the First Cartesian?,”
Hermathena 169 [2000]: 153-67) it is clear that Smith thought this to be the case. Or, more
accurately, that both Plotinus and Descartes had, in this respect, discovered the “true religion” he
associates with the ancient philosophers, essentially the prisca theologia of the Renaissance
Platonists.
6.1.3.2 Platonic Arguments

With his third argument Smith turns his attention away from the Epicureans and seeks to offer a positive demonstration of the immaterial nature of the soul by a consideration of the power of mathematical reasoning. In classic Platonic fashion Smith uses mathematics as his prime example of those functions of the soul that do not depend or even relate to the body at all.98 Mathematical notions, in particular basic concepts in geometry such as the point, line, plane, equality, symmetry, and divisibility, are contained within the soul but crucially they cannot be “buried in Matter.”99

In fact, our mathematical reasoning can easily perform operations that when attempted in the physical world are impossible. For example, in geometry it is an easy thing to divide an arch into as many parts as may be without losing any of the arch in the process but when one tries to cut a physical object of that shape some material must be lost in the cutting.100 We also find that “in these

98 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 93.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid., 93-4. A far more typically erudite example comes in the form of a reference to the doubling of the cube, supposed to have been asked of the Delians by the Delphic Oracle who consulted Plato who interpreted the task as an indication that they should study mathematics to purify their minds. While Smith has his story a bit mixed up (he reports Athenians rather than Delians) the important point is that by the use of the geometers tools, a compass and straightedge,
Geometricall speculations . . . our Souls will not consult with our Bodies,” thus the mental substance performing these tasks cannot be a body. Moreover, as St. Augustine ("Austin") argued some “Archetypal Ideas” are present in our souls such as quantity which we employ in making judgments about sense objects but which are not themselves the product of any sensible experience. These immaterial notions therefore “must needs be immediately ingraven upon an Immaterial Soul.”

For his fourth and final argument Smith looks to the fourth degree of knowledge he first introduced in the “True Way” discourse. Borrowed from Proclus, and ultimately Plato, Smith divides all human knowers into four degrees. The lowest rely on “Sensible impressions” alone. The second, achieves a “Miscellaneous kind of knowledge arising of a collation of its Sensations with its own more obscure and dark Idea’s.” Third, is the level of “Discourse and Reason” including mathematical knowledge. Finally, the fourth level involves the “naked intuition of Eternal Truth which is alwaies the same” such as “the

---

101 Ibid., 94. Smith is referencing *De Quantitate Animae*, 13.22-14.23.

102 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 96-7.
Archetypall Idea’s of Justice, Wisdome, Goodness, Truth, Eternity, Omnipotency, and all those Morall, Physicall, or Metaphysical notions, which are either the First Principles of Science, or the Ultimate complement and final perfection of it.”

Being the home of such immaterial and eternal principles, the soul too is not a body and thus immortal.

Interestingly, rather than leave his argument in the capable hands of the Platonists alone Smith draws on Cartesian distinctions as well to further support his cause. This is not all that surprising, given that Smith read Descartes as, essentially, a Christian Platonist rather than the harbinger of secularism that he became to Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. Smith reports that self-reflection shows that we know our soul better than we know our body just as Descartes had argued in the Second Meditation. Indeed, while unnamed, Smith’s words could just as easily be Descartes’s own: “the notions which we have of a Mind, i.e. something within us that thinks, apprehends, reasons, and discourses, are so clear

---

103 Ibid., 97. While Smith’s stated source here is Proclus’s commentary on Plato’s Timaeus (76A-F) the degrees match the Divided Line (Republic, 509D–513E) too. See In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii, ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig, 1903-1906).

104 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 98. Cf. Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, 2, in Philosophical Writings, 2: 16-23. We know from the list of works donated by Smith upon his death that he owned a copy of the Meditations on First Philosophy, almost certainly in the original Latin. See Saveson, “Catalogue,” 17.
easily conceive that if all Body-Being in the world were destroyed, yet we might then as well subsist as now we doe.”
105 Moreover, the “Immediate motions” of the mind (i.e., thoughts) do not involve extension or divisibility as corporeal things do. Thus, the mind is immaterial and what is immaterial cannot pass away. Therefore, the mind is immortal.106

Being immaterial, the mind intuits immaterial intelligible things, such as wisdom, power, eternity, goodness, justice, mercy, etc., without the involvement of the body. And since these Ideas are eternal so too must be the mind that perceives them. In fact, in an anticipation of his arguments for the existence of God, Smith suggests that all these intelligibles converge in our understanding in a “greater Oneness” or “Unity.”
107 That is, the realm of the multiplicity of unchanging intelligibles (i.e., Plato’s Forms) are intuitively known to proceed from a higher Unity, which, like Plotinus, Smith identifies with the Good itself.108

105 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 98.
106 Ibid. Cf. Descartes, Meditations, 6, in Philosophical Writings, 2: 50-62.
107 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 99.
108 Ibid.
Plotinus’s “sober ecstasies” provide further, experiential proof that the soul (or mind) is superior to and distinct from body of any kind.109 However, Smith is quick to offer a word of caution on our human capacity to achieve pure or perfectly clear knowledge of “true Being.”110 The limit placed on the understanding even of an immaterial soul is a residual multiplicity. Just as in the “True Way” Smith suggests that a purely intellectual intuition, without any imaginative aspects, is not to be expected in this life, so too in this his retelling of the Allegory of the Cave are we to hold out as an ideal the perfected intuition of the One even as our knowledge is accompanied by (ever more purified) images.111 Indeed, only a very few will be capable of the degree of abstraction from material images to proceed very far on this scale of perfection in intellection.112 Still, only our “highest speculations” will give to us a “true sense” of divine goodness. This intellectual intuition is apprehended by the “Intellectual eye” alone as God grants a perception of God’s own Goodness. But, God would

109 Ibid., 100. Smith is calling attention to Ennead IV.8.1 and also Proclus’s In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii, ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig, 1903-1906), II.

110 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 101.

111 Plato, Republic, 7, 514a- 521d.

112 Ibid.
not raise up the mind to “such Mounts of Vision, to shew it all the glory of that heavenly Canaan flowing with eternal and unbounded pleasures, and then tumble it down again into that deep and darkest Abyss of Death and Non-entity.” The allusion here to the view of the Promised Land by Moses from Mount Nebo is especially important since it is to the prophet to whom all theological knowledge is first revealed. Smith is essentially arguing that God would not reveal such anticipations of eternity to the minds of prophets and philosophers unless the soul truly were immortal.

Smith’s argument is experiential but not in the democratic sense common in contemporary philosophical arguments. He does not say that we all have an experience of x, therefore y. Instead, his claim is that since sages like Plotinus and prophets like Moses have had the experience of intuiting eternal truths, therefore the human soul is immortal. The logic is participatory; in these extraordinary men and their experiences we gain proleptic insight into the common fate of all. In this respect, Smith’s argument here mirrors the effect of the incarnation of the Logos in Christ, who is for Smith above all a prophet, teacher, and in that sense,

---

113 Ibid., 103.

114 Numbers 27: 12-4; Deuteronomy 3: 23-8.
savior. Thus, Smith’s final “natural” argument for the immortality of the soul rests on an ultimate convergence of the rational and the revealed in intuition; reason and revelation transformed into a living sense.115

6.1.3.3 Other Difficulties

Having given his arguments for the immortality of the soul Smith proceeds to clear up two potential remaining obstacles. First, in chapter eight, he discusses Aristotle’s view on the immortality of the soul. On the strength of a brief reference in *De Anima* 2.1 Smith concludes that for Aristotle the “Rational Soul” (the only sort of “soul” that concerns Smith) is “separable from the Body . . . because it is not the Entelech [actuality] of any Body.”116

---

115 It should be noted however that Smith is arguing for a view of the immortal soul arguably more consistent with late antique philosophy than Christian scripture. For Smith, as for the Neoplatonists, the soul is immortal by its very nature. There is no question here of God’s additional grace in making the soul immortal, nor does Smith entertain the orthodox Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body at the final judgment. Indeed, in mentioning such a view his proof text in opposition is Plotinus (Ennead IV.7.10) to the effect that what is divine is also necessarily immortal (103-4). Still, Smith reads this as entirely consistent with scripture. On the philosophical issues involved in the doctrine of the resurrection see Georg Gasser, ed., *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). I assess some of the essays in my review, “Personal Identity: How do we Survive Our Death?,” *The Heythrop Journal* 54, Issue 20 (2013): 330-1.

116 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 107. Smith’s text offers this citation, Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.1, however in this place Aristotle makes much more strongly the opposite point that the soul cannot be separated from the body. His only real concession to Smith’s agenda is to note that there might be beings (presumably non-human) for which the soul is not the actuality of a body. Either Smith is being deliberately cheeky with his scholarship here or he is following the lead of
The second difficulty to clear Smith addresses in chapter nine is a variety of the mind-body problem that was to become a pressing issue in Smith’s day and even more so thereafter. Against the objection to the immaterial soul raised on account of the relationship between the soul and the body in perception and motion Smith argues that this relationship amounts to merely a mutual relation between them. That is, “the Sympathy of things is no sufficient Argument to prove the Identity of their essences.” Basically, his argument is that just because the body affects the soul and the soul directs the body does not necessitate that they are of the same kind of substance. In support of this view Smith brings in considerations drawn from Plotinus to the effect that the close relationship between soul and body is entirely to be expected for “to make such a Complex things as Man is, it was necessary that the Soul should be so united to the Body as to share its passions and infirmities so far as they are void of


118 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 113.
sinfulness.”119 Led by Proclus’s notion of “a spiritual kind of vehicle” transporting information back and forth between the soul and body, Smith takes up a rather lengthy discussion of the psycho-physiology of the passions obviously indebted to Descartes.120

Almost certainly drawing on his French copy of The Passions of the Soul, although he makes no explicit mention of it here, Smith notes that the point of contact and interaction between the soul and body has been discovered by a “late sagacious Philosopher.”121 No longer concerned with mere “sympathy” between the soul and the body, Smith describes the location of this interaction as “that part of the Brain from whence all those Nerves that conduct the Animal spirits

---

119 Ibid., 114; citing Plotinus, Ennead IV.8.1.


121 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 115-6. Saveson’s “Catalogue” of Smith’s library reports a copy of “Cartesius de passionibus. Gallice.” (17). This is most likely a reference to the French edition of The Passions of the Soul published in Paris (1649 or 1650), Amsterdam (1650), or Rouen (1651). While neither myself nor Saveson found the volume in the Old Library at Queens’ I think it most likely that Smith’s was an early edition from Paris; all the more reason to note that it is “Gallice” in the donation manuscript. On Descartes’s theory of mind-body interaction via the pineal gland see Gert-Jan Lokhorst, "Descartes and the Pineal Gland.”
up and down the Body take their first Original.”\textsuperscript{122} This seems plausible for
Smith because, “we find all Motions that first arise in our Bodies [i.e., sensations],
to direct their course straight up to that . . . and there only to be sensated.”
Likewise, it is from this location in the brain that “all the imperate motions of our
Wills issuing forth from the same consistory.”\textsuperscript{123} In other words, Smith accepts
the (notoriously bad) Cartesian explanation that the mind and body interact in a
specific location within the brain. The body is used for perception and operated
like a great machine by the soul from this location “in some mysterious way.”\textsuperscript{124}
While (understandably) fuzzy on the details, Smith has the confidence of an early
adopter that it is from this mysterious bodily throne that the animal spirits are
registered and manipulated as a puppeteer pulls upon the strings.\textsuperscript{125} How, one
wonders, it could escape his notice that an immaterial, and thus non-spatial, soul
could not interact in these ways with a material, and thus extended, body
remains unknown. Perhaps, and this is speculation upon a lack of evidence,

\textsuperscript{122} Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 116.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 116-7. Smith even speaks of nerves as “Chords” that once pulled make the
muscles move (117).
Smith was groping after a notion of extended spirit such as we meet in Henry More.\textsuperscript{126} However, if that were the case, surely Smith would tell us, since More’s correspondence with the “sagacious philosopher” must surely have been an important enough event to warrant notice.\textsuperscript{127}

The sympathetic reader may wish that Smith had kept his discussion of the mind-body issue limited to his distinction between sympathy and identity. Nevertheless, having presented arguments against materialist naturalism (Epicureanism), for Platonic-Cartesian dualism, and clearing away two remaining issues, Smith had demonstrated to his own satisfaction the immateriality, and therefore immortality, of the souls of human beings.

Most importantly for our purposes is the fact that in his arguments Smith leans heavily on the spiritual senses he developed in his treatments of the source and methods of theology as well as the rational piety he recommended to Cambridge scholars and rustic country folk alike. The reason for the denial of


immortality is that some have not experienced their own souls. As Smith states in his second premise to the arguments for the immortality of the soul, one must be able to recognize the truth of what he says within oneself. Even where he offers his most philosophically rigorous arguments, Smith relies on his reader “seeing” the truth thereof by intuition. His demonstrations are like a narrative of a geometrical proof, guiding his reader to the realization of his conclusion for themselves.

6.1.4 The Existence and Nature of God

Smith’s discourse on the “Existence and Nature of God” is a curious text. Unlike countless other attempts to demonstrate the Deity then and now, Smith’s arguments do not rest on observations about the world outside us. Rather, Smith, predictably, perhaps, looks within the soul for his evidence. In the process he presents two arguments, both thoroughly psychological. Moreover, Smith does not rest content with showing simply that there is a God. Rather, he seeks to show as much of the nature of this God as can admit of rational argument too.
6.1.4.1 The Argument from Self-Reflection

The first of Smith’s arguments for the existence of God is less an argument than an invitation to reflect upon one’s own soul with him. For, the best way to know that there is a God is by reflecting on the soul within where God is pictured. Importantly, Smith weeks “not so much [to] demonstrate That he is, as What he is.” Thus, his arguments for God’s existence are not of the type most commonly seen in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. Smith does not even try to offer irrefutable logical proofs. Instead, he follows the lead of Plato and Plotinus in suggesting that “we may best learn from a Reflexion upon our own Souls.”

Introspection is the way to know that there is a God and also who this God is because it is in the immortal, incorporeal soul of the human being that God has left the greatest imprint of God’s self. Smith’s metaphor is of the soul as

---

128 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 123. Here Smith is drawing on the Platonic image of the soul as a mirror that was central to medieval treatments of the spiritual senses such as one finds in Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, 4. On spiritual vision as like a flawed mirror in this earthly life see Dallas G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 101-13, 169-70, esp. 106. See also Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 109.

129 Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 123.
a statue where “the lovely Characters of Divinity may be most easily seen and
read of all men within themselves.”

His example is illustrative here; the great “Statue of Minerva” (Athena) in
the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens.130 As the famous icon of the Goddess
of Wisdom made Her present to the Athenians, so too does the Divine Image in
the soul make present the one God. But whereas Minerva was crafted by the
human hands of Phidias, the “Impresse of Souls is . . . nothing but God himself,
who could not write his own name so as that it might be read but onely in
Rationall Natures.”131 As supremely rational, God can only properly be depicted
in similarly rational images like the soul of human beings. Thus, “whenever we
look upon our own Soul in a right manner, we shall find an Urim and
Thummim,” the instruments of ancient Israelite divination “by which we may
ask counsel of God himself.”132

Explicitly drawing on his arguments on the immortality of the soul, Smith
suggests that the “dismall and dreadfull thoughts” of our own mortality darkens

130 Ibid., 124.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.
our ability to see beyond “the compass of corporeal dimensions” of time and space.\textsuperscript{133} Those who do not know themselves to be immortal souls – images of the Eternal God – cannot apprehend the Deity where God has placed “the most clear and distinct copy of himself.”\textsuperscript{134} This blindness is both caused by, and occasions, the “black Opinions of Death and the Non-entity of Souls (darker then Hell itself)” and causes one to “shrink up the free-born Spirit which is within us.”\textsuperscript{135}

When our souls are properly attuned they are instead “dilating and spreading” themselves “boundlessly beyond all Finite Being” to the intellection of the unlimited Forms.\textsuperscript{136}

When removed from the limited realm of the corporeal – where things come to be and pass away; a kingdom of death – the soul sees “beyond Time and Matter” and “finds no more ends nor bounds to stop its swift and restless motion.” Ascending ever more into the “\textit{θειὸν σκότος}” (divine darkness) the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{list}{\textsuperscript{\arabic{enumi}}}{\setlength{labelwidth}{0pt}\setlength{labelindent}{0pt}\setlength{itemindent}{0pt}}
\item IBid.\textsuperscript{133}
\item IBid., 125.\textsuperscript{134}
\item IBid., 124. Smith is describing the hopelessness of nihilism.\textsuperscript{135}
\item IBid., 124-5.\textsuperscript{136}
\end{list}
\end{footnotesize}
soul becomes “swallowed up in the boundless Abyss of Divinity.” 137 When we
“rest and bear up” ourselves on the contemplation of the “Immaterial centre of
Immortality within” we find ourselves able to proceed from “self-reflexion into
the contemplation of an Eternall Deity.” 138 We are able to spiritually perceive
God in and through viewing God’s image in ourselves. 139

While there is a copy of God’s “Perfections in this conspicable and
sensible World” we must have “some interpreter within” in order to perceive
it. 140 We best understand “that copie which we find” in the “externall
appearances” of the universe when we compare it to the “copie which we find of
them within our selves, with that which we see without us.” 141 Thus with
unnamed “Schoolmen” Smith distinguishes between the “Vestigia Dei” found in


138 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 125.

139 Cf. Bonaventure, Itinerarium mentis in Deum, chs. 3 and 4. Unlike Bonaventure,
however, Smith makes no reference here to the necessity of grace to overcome the epistemic
obstacle posed by original sin. In this, Smith demonstrates his more “Eastern” style of theology;
Augustine’s theory of original sin is a very limited influence on him. Though, not absent (cf.
Smith, Select Discourses [1660], 136; “Ever since our Minds became so dim-sighted . . . .”).

140 Ibid., 125.

141 Ibid., 126.
external sensible theology and the “Faciem Dei” found in internal symbolic theology when reflecting on the Image of God in one’s own soul.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, coming to know one’s self most truly presents one with the intuition of God.

This introspection does more than simply suggest to us that there is a God. It also leads us, Smith says, to a knowledge of the Divine unity, omniscience, omnipotence, love, goodness, eternity, omnipresence, and freedom. For example, when we reflect on our own “Idea of Pure and Perfect Reason” in addition to knowing that we do not measure up to it, we notice that this notion “points us not . . . This or That Particular, but something which is neither This or That, but Totall Understanding.”\textsuperscript{143} Thus there is a “One Infinite source of all that Reason and Understanding” in which our finite minds participate.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 126.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 126, 127. Cf. Descartes, Meditations, 2.

\textsuperscript{144} Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 128. Smith connects this argument to the “old Metaphysical Theology” which spoke of an original “Móvax or Unity” as the transcendent source of all “Particularities and Numbers” (Ibid.). He is referring to the Pythagorean and Platonic One. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, “A Thematic Investigation of the Neoplatonic Concepts of Vision and Unity,” Hermathena No. 157 (1994): 43-56.
Smith argues in very much the same way for the rest of the divine attributes classically associated with theism. The key service provided by the knowledge of the soul’s immortality, from a philosophical perspective, would seem to be that it removes the tendency to place boundaries on our thought, opening the way to the contemplation of our basic concepts in a pure, and thus eternal and infinite, sense. These notions (such as reason) lead to the idea of their perfection and source in God Who is these very Perfections. Thus from our rationality we are lead to intuit the unity and omniscience of God.

6.1.4.2 The Argument from Morality

The second of Smith’s arguments for the existence of God is recognizable, even today, as a live strategy in the philosophy of religion. For here he argues that the motion of our wills toward supreme and infinite goodness suggests that

---

145 It is well worth noting that Ralph Cudworth coined the English term “theist” in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), I. 4. IV

146 From these basic notions Smith goes on to “deduce” five additional things about the Divine Nature. 1. “That all Divine productions or operations that terminate in something without Him, are nothing else but the free Effluxes of his own Omnipotent Love and Goodness,” (140) 2. “That that Almighty Wisdome and Goodness which first made all things, doth also perpetually conserve the govern them,” (144) 3. “That all True Happiness consists in a participation of God arising out of the assimilation and conformity of our Souls to him,” (147) 4. That the “Notion of the Divine Justice and scope whereof is nothing else but to assert and establish Eternal Law and Right,” (151) 5. “That seeing there is such an Entercourse and Society as it were between God and Men, therefore there is also some Law between them, which is the Bond of all Communion” (154).
there is, in fact, a Supreme Good. And that, every good Christian Platonist at least, knows to be God.

Smith begins by observing that human beings are perpetually restless. We crave “some Supreme and Chief good” and we “will not be satisfied with any thing less then Infinity it self.”\(^{147}\) We find nothing in the corporeal world to be ultimately satisfying. This is why even “when men most of all flie from God, they still Seek after him.”\(^{148}\) As Augustine put it, “our hearts are restless” until they rest in God.\(^{149}\)

All this suggests, for Smith, that God is this Supreme Good that we seek. But the finding is an aesthetic experience more than an intellectual one. “He is not onely the Eternal Reason, that Almighty Mind and Wisdome which our Understandings converse with; but he is also that unstained Beauty and Supreme Good which our Wills are perpetually catching after: and wheresoever we find true Beauty, Love and Goodness, we may say, Here or there is God.”\(^{150}\) Moreover,

---

\(^{147}\) Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 135.

\(^{148}\) Ibid., 137.

\(^{149}\) *Confessions*, I.1: “... inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.”

\(^{150}\) Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660), 137.
just as our minds cannot apprehend God without some “primitive” intuition thereof, so too do our wills need a “latent sense” of God “whereby they can tast and discern how near any thing comes to that Self-sufficient good they seek after.”\textsuperscript{151} Thus, Smith posits an “internal sensating Faculty” that is distinct from outer sense and the intellect and is attuned to goodness. It is by this faculty that one comes to know God as the Supreme Good.\textsuperscript{152}

### 6.2 The Unity of Natural & Revealed Theology

This chapter has demonstrated how Smith’s natural theology relies on just the same sorts of spiritual senses as his revealed theology. Just as one comes to be a prophet via intellectual intuition so too does the theologian come to know the immortality of her or his own soul. Just as moral purification is required to appropriate the truths of revelation for oneself, so too does one come to appreciate that there is a God. Smith does not offer extensive, logical, arguments for the immortal soul or the existence and nature of God, not because he cannot do so, but because to do so would be to distort the very things he wishes to

\footnote{\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 138. Cf. Henry More’s “Boniform Faculty,” which is also distinguished from the intellect. \textit{An Account of Virtue (Enchiridion Ethicum)}, ch.4, in Cragg, \textit{The Cambridge Platonists}, 265, 267.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{152} Following Plotinus and Simplicius, Smith thinks that “the Good” is the preeminent name for contemplating God, above Being and even the One (Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} [1660], 139).}
demonstrate. Only in the living apprehension of divine truth can that truth be properly appreciated. To reduce divinity to a series of discursive arguments would be, for Smith, to cease to speak of the Divine. All “things of Sense & Life are best known by Sentient and Vital faculties,” and “he that wants true Vertue, in heavn’s Logick is blind, and cannot see . . . .”

The only way to be convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, as Smith understands it, is to “taste and see” the goodness, beauty, and truth thereof for oneself. This capacity is both natural to us as rational creatures made in the image of God, and the result of God’s grace freely given to all. The spiritual senses are, for Smith, both natural and supernatural. Natural in the sense that they are proper to our true nature and present in all to one degree or another. Supernatural in the sense that they are the result of the free influx of the Spirit of God in us. Thus, his arguments against superstition and atheism make

153 Ibid., 2, 4.

154 Mark T. Mealey has suggested that Smith is far more a Platonist than a Christian (“Taste and See that the Lord is Good: John Wesley in the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Sensation” [PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2006], 25-6). However, this raises more difficulties than it clears. First, it presupposes that one can only be one or the other. One need look no further than Augustine to see the mistaken assumption in that conclusion. Second, it suggests that a concern for “doctrine” in the sense of creedal orthodoxy is the standard by which one ought to judge the “Christianity” of an author. Moreover, Smith is no less “biblical” in his theology for all his love of Platonism. Only, again, if one assumes from the start a contradiction between the Platonic and the Biblical traditions does he look more like a Platonist than a
appeal, not so much to demonstrations of their errors in logic, as to the great
benefit to the soul of following the true path of the clear minded, yet passionate,
Christian Platonist. And above all, in every argument that Smith makes, he
appeals to the spiritual sensation, by his reader, of what he is discoursing upon.
Whether it is by intellectual intuition, a conative sense of the Good, or the
imaginary visions of the prophets, one must “see” and “hear” the truth, “taste”
and “smell” the goodness, and “touch” the eternal being of one’s soul
continually remade in the image of God. It is in and through the repeated appeal
to varieties of the spiritual senses, therefore, that Smith’s theology forms a
systematic whole.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This final chapter rehearses the results of our exegetical work above. In so doing it sets out the ways in which John Smith employs the spiritual senses in his theology. The chapter also looks ahead to avenues for future research by tracing his influence on selected figures in the centuries since his death in 1652.

7.1 Smith’s ‘Spiritual Senses’

Smith developed two basic sorts of “spiritual sense” in the Select Discourses. The first, and most common, is a kind of intellectual intuition (cognition as “sense”) which Smith employed in his accounts of the source and method of divinity, spirituality, and as a central bit of argument in his systematic theology. As it was for the other Cambridge Platonists, religion is an eminently rational matter for Smith. But this rationality is not of the cold, distant, calculating kind. Rather, like Plato’s philosopher rapt in the vision of the Good, religious reason is a matter of personal encounter with the Author of all truth. Knowing God is more like vision than data processing.

Second, and far too often ignored, Smith made frequent appeal to the imaginative perception of divine truths in the same range of accounts. For all his
emphasis on the rationality of religion Smith is equally clear about the positive role played by the purified and inspired imagination. Through sensible images, above all the Image of God that is the human soul, one engages with Divine Realities with all one’s heart as well as all of one’s mind.

These two forms of spiritual intuition are what the “spiritual senses” are for Smith. Where many have emphasized either a metaphorical or an allegorical form of spiritual sensation he combines the two. Some spiritual sensation is a matter of sense-like intellection. But some spiritual sensation is far more literally “sensible” as it functions in and through the human capacity to make present images that are not (and in this case cannot be) also present to the physical senses.

However, as argued above, the uses to which he puts there spiritual sense are far more telling. For Smith brings his varieties of spiritual sensation to bear in order to give an account of other, larger, considerations. That is, Smith uses the spiritual senses to explain himself on the nature of theology and spirituality. Because he often uses intellectual intuition and the imagination to account for

\[1\] See chapters two, four, five, and six above.
other key aspects of his theology, just as his predecessors in the tradition did, the best way to summarize his doctrine is to review the functions it performs.2

7.1.1 Source & Method

Smith made consistent appeal to the spiritual senses in his theory of the source and methods of theology. Even as his contemporaries were searching the globe and reforming science and philosophy he too searched for an experimental foundation for divinity. Natural knowledge of the Divine, as well as the appropriation of revealed truth, is a matter of intellectual intuition. However, this “intellectual touch” is never completely separated from sensible images in the imagination too. For Smith, one appropriates Divine truths via the intellect but this also gives symbols to the imagination by which one begins to taste the sweetness of divinity in Christ for example. This signifies that whereas later modern philosophy (especially Kant), and medieval Aristotelianism, maintained rather strict borders between sensible and intellectual faculties, Smith does not do so. It would be anachronistic to hold him to Kantian standards of course but he did know the late scholastic perspective on this issue and simply rejects it as

2 See chapter two above.
unfit for divine philosophy (i.e., theology). Instead of the clear categories and distinctions of his scholastic forbearers and their early modern imitators, Smith appeals to an older, Platonic aesthetic that sees perception and feeling as central to thought and that views intellection as essentially sense-like. In this Smith anticipates the Romantics with their insistence that imagination and feeling are mediums of divine relation. As Descartes based his metaphysics on the immediate intuition of the thinking self, Smith rooted his theology in the immediate intuition of the soul as *imago Dei*. Smith, as a late Renaissance figure, thus stands between medieval sense and modern sensibility.

Revealed knowledge too involves the perception of images implanted in the imagination by God (mediated by angelic beings) as well as communication with the human intellect in prophecy. To some was given a purely sensible revelation in the form of the *Bath Kol* or voice of God heard miraculously in prophetic times. Poets and sages were inspired by the *Ruach Hakodesh* or Holy Spirit in intellect so that their psalms sing God’s own self-praise and their wisdom echoes the Divine Logos in and through human hearts and voices. Prophets received influxes of divine truth in images revealed to the imagination and ideas to the intellect, all by the mediation an angelic messengers. And for
Moses and Jesus Christ alone, God gives a purely intellectual revelation “mind to mind.” Thus, what begins in sense, reaches new heights in imagination, and is perfected in intellect.

7.1.2 Spirituality

Developing his account of theological understanding further, Smith argued for a rational faith expressed in inner reflection, moral purity, and deification. In so doing he made intellectual intuition and the imaginative reception of symbols of the divine central to the life of true Christian piety. This way of purification, illumination, and union is how Smith accounts for the fact that divines and prophets have had theological understanding even as he recommends this same path to his reader if they would seek to know God. Only one who has been transformed through purification of his or her affections, intentions, and thoughts is capable of perceiving divine things, either

---

3 Perfected in his earthly life for Moses and for the rest hereafter. Theological knowledge for non-prophets too begins in sense with the reading of scripture and the hearing of sermons, etc. It proceeds in imagination through the lovely images of the reformed soul and the graciousness of Christ. And it reaches perfection in the intellectual vision of the Good.

4 See chapter four above.
intellectually or imaginatively. Thus, there can be no disinterested theologian for Smith. For him the spiritual senses are both descriptive and prescriptive.\textsuperscript{5}

7.1.3 System

Perhaps most unexpectedly, given the role of the spiritual senses in revelation, Smith’s natural theology too relies on just the same sorts of spiritual perception. Just as one comes to be a prophet via intellectual intuition so too does the natural theologian come to know the immortality of her or his own soul. Just as moral purification is required to appropriate the truths of revelation for oneself, so too does one come to appreciate that there is a God.

Smith does not offer extensive logical arguments for the immortal soul or the existence and nature of God, not because he cannot do so, but because to do so would be to distort the very things he wishes to demonstrate.\textsuperscript{6} Only in the living apprehension of divine truth can that truth be properly appreciated. To

\textsuperscript{5} See chapter five above.

\textsuperscript{6} This is not to say that Smith is without philosophical refinement however. He most likely precedes, and may have contributed to, similar arguments in the other Cambridge Platonists (especially Cudworth and More). He also clearly anticipates arguments for the unity of the judgments of consciousness. For a sense of the sophistication of Smith’s arguments in a philosophical perspective see Ben Lazare Mijuskovic \textit{The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments} (The Hague: Martinus Mijhoff, 1974), esp. 23-7 and 63-5.
reduce divinity to a series of discursive arguments would be, for Smith, to cease to speak of the Divine, for all “things of Sense & Life are best known by Sentient and Vital faculties,” and “he that wants true Vertue, in heavn’s Logick is blind, and cannot see . . . .”

The only way to be convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, as Smith understands it, is to “taste and see” the goodness, beauty, and truth thereof for oneself. This capacity is both natural to us as rational creatures made in the image of God, and the result of God’s grace freely given to all. The spiritual senses are then both natural and supernatural for Smith. Natural in the sense that they are proper to our true nature and present in all to one degree or another. Supernatural in the sense that they are the result of the free influx of the Spirit of God in us.

In every argument that Smith makes, he appeals to the spiritual sensation, by his reader, of what he is discoursing upon. Whether it is by intellectual intuition, a conative sense of the Good, or the imaginary visions of the prophets, one must “see” and “hear” the truth, “taste” and “smell” the goodness, and “touch” the eternal being of one’s soul continually remade in the image of God. It

---

7 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 2, 4.
is in and through the spiritual senses, therefore, that Smith’s theology forms a systematic whole and offers an account not just of God but of one’s true self as well.8

7.2 The Legacy of a Living Library

It is easily overlooked that Smith was among the first members of the group we know as the Cambridge Platonists. As such, he was in a position to influence not only his contemporaries but those who would follow after him well into the twentieth century and beyond. In this concluding section I offer a broad, but highly selective, overview of the reception, and influence, of John Smith’s life and work.9 It marks more of a call for future research than as an authoritative presentation of Smith’s legacy.

8 See chapter six above.

9 This section began as a paper, “John Smith’s Lasting Influence: The Transatlantic Reception of a ‘Living Library’” read at the “Revisioning Cambridge Platonism: Reception and Influence” workshop at Clare College, Cambridge, 1 June 2013. My presentation there as here is necessarily selective. Mention could also have been made of Smith’s influence upon John Howe, Samuel Hartlib, John Worthington, Lord Hailes, Henry Scougal, Matthew Arnold, and John Tulloch, among many others.
7.2.1 Immediate Reception

Smith is closely associated with Benjamin Whichcote among the Cambridge Platonists for the good reason that he was his student. Less well appreciated is the likely role that Smith played in recording the work of his mentor. If Samuel Salter’s reports can be trusted, Smith took down many of Whichcote’s sermons, thus preserving his work for eventual publication.\(^\text{10}\) The degree of collegial cooperation, if any, between them must remain a matter of (irresistible) speculation for lack of clear records. But it may be that their relationship was collaborative in the way that professors and advanced graduate students often are in our time. In any case, there is a close affinity between many arguments and even phrases used by Whichcote and Smith.\(^\text{11}\)

Smith was almost certainly an influence on the most prominent Cambridge Platonists, Cudworth and More. Alan Gabbey has suggested that it may have been Smith, rather than Cudworth or More, who first took up the attack upon “mechanical religion.”\(^\text{12}\) Still Smith’s importance for them is less a


\(^\text{11}\) Many of these have been noted above.

matter of shared doctrines but of a general approach to philosophy and theology.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, Smith’s spirit, if not the letter of his work, can be clearly seen in the ease with which Cudworth and More see reason and religion as compatible if not ultimately identical. This comfort with philosophical religion, and the “philosophy of religion,” a phrase coined by Cudworth, can be seen in Damaris Masham’s correspondence with John Locke as well.

Masham, Cudworth’s daughter, discussed the “power of reason to attain knowledge of God” with the great empiricist drawing from Smith’s Select Discourses in so doing.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, unlike Whichcote (often called the “founder” of the movement) it is in Smith, More, and Cudworth that references to Plotinus appear on the scene in mid-century Cambridge, suggesting at least a

\textsuperscript{13} As D.C. Gilman, H.T. Thurston, and F. Moore (eds., New International Encyclopedia [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1905]) have aptly put it (under “Smith, John”).

mutual affinity for the great Neoplatonist if not a causal influence between them on each other.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Queens’ College Library}

Upon his death in 1652 the impressive collection of books that Smith had collected, primarily from Continental authors and presses, was left to the Library of Queens’ College. The only record of his collection as it existed in his lifetime is a manuscript list of the volumes accepted by the College which lays out the nature of the bequest as well.\textsuperscript{16} As we have seen above, this list is of central importance but it does not, unfortunately, record the complete contents of Smith’s library. Only those volumes that the librarian thought worth adding to the College collection are now known.

Suspicious in their absence are editions of the works of many of the great Platonists Smith clearly knew well. Of the antique Platonists Smith’s collection is only known to have included Plato’s \textit{Timaeus}, Proclus’s \textit{Platonic Theology}, Porphyry’s works against killing and eating animals (\textit{De abstinentia ab esu}


\textsuperscript{16}Queens’ MS 47, Queens’ College Donation List (17th century), digital copy available at http://issuu.com/03776/docs/qunsdonors, accessed 4 April 2014
animalium and De non necandis ad epulandum animantibus), and Iambilchus’s Vita Pythagorae and his Exhortation to the Study of Philosophy (Protrepticae Orationes ad Philosophiam). Nevertheless, Smith’s known collection is remarkably broad in the range of interests it reveals in its collector; history, geography, languages, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and science all mingle together in the sort of eclectic mélange one would expect from a late Renaissance scholar.

Significantly, Smith’s bequest is still remembered among the very most important of the early contributions to the academic life of the College and it marked a vast improvement in the Library’s holdings at the time; a poor substitute for the loss of the “living library” at such a young age, but an abiding consolation in the immediate aftermath of his untimely death and a significant contribution to the scholarly life of the College ever since.

---


Simon Patrick and Latitudinarianism

The Cambridge Platonists have long been closely associated with the so-called Latitudinarian movement. The latitudinarians were members of the Church of England who nonetheless viewed specific doctrines (especially Calvinist predestination), liturgical practices, and polities as of minor importance compared to what C.S. Lewis called “mere Christianity.” Smith’s relation to the “new sect of latitude men” is nowhere more clearly seen than in the case of his eloquent eulogizer, and first observer of this liberal movement, Simon Patrick.

Patrick, who eventually went on to become bishop of Ely among other high offices in the Church, began his studies as a sizar at Queens’ within weeks of Smith’s appointment as a Fellow there in 1644. While Smith was not Patrick’s tutor, the two did study closely together during the latter’s student days and

19 Indeed, several figures such as Whichcote, John Wilkins, and Simon Patrick, overlap the standard lists of both groups; depending on whom one includes in each, somewhat anachronistic “group” or “movement.”

they remained close friends when Patrick joined Smith as a Fellow. In his *Autobiography* Patrick speaks with obvious affection for Smith. In particular, Patrick credits Smith with helping him to “remove doubts” he had in “certain religious subjects” that never again troubled him.\(^{21}\) It may be safely assumed that this theological mentorship played a significant role in establishing Patrick on the trajectory toward his long career as a cleric in the Church of England.

In Smith, Patrick found a role model for the central place of morality in religious piety over ritual or doctrine that came guide the latitudinarians. Comparing his departed master to Socrates, Patrick remarks “that he could say nothing about the Gods and such like . . . but . . . he was continually busied and employed; instructing of their Youth, amending of their Manners and making them truly virtuous . . . Such an one was the party deceased.”\(^{22}\) And “he was always very urgent upon us that by the Grace of God . . . we would endeavor to purge out the corruption of our Natures and . . . to labor after Purity of heart, that so we might see God.”\(^{23}\) Likewise from Smith, Patrick learned to trust in

\(^{21}\) Henry Griffin Williams, “Memoir of the Author,” in *Select Discourses* (1859), x.

\(^{22}\) Patrick, “Funeral Sermon,” 491-2.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 510.
human reason as a guide in all things religious. “If he was not a Prophet like
Elijah, yet I am sure he was . . . an Interpreter of the Spirit.”

Thus, it can scarcely be imagined that Smith’s rational religion, containing
as it did a latitudinarian’s appreciation for adiaphora, did not have a major
impact on Patrick. While he is but a single well-known latitudinarian, Smith’s
impact on this significant movement in late seventeenth and eighteenth century
Anglicanism is certain and worthy of specialized research.

Mathematics at Cambridge

One of the less well known influences of Smith was on the development of
mathematics at Cambridge. As we have seen in chapter three above, he began
teaching mathematics in a university lectureship founded by John Wollaston in
1648. In this capacity Smith may have taught Isaac Barrow, the discoverer of the
fundamental theorem of calculus who became the first Lucasian Professor of
Mathematics in 1663. Barrow, of course, was famously a teacher of Isaac Newton
who would finish his work toward calculus as well as taking up optics like
Barrow and the study of prophecy like Barrow and Smith (albeit in less orthodox

24 Ibid., 484.
ways than his teachers). The connection is not absolutely sure for lack of good records about the teaching of mathematics at Cambridge in the seventeenth century but it is very likely that Smith (as well as Cudworth and More) stands among those “giants” upon whose shoulders’ Newton stood.25

_Early Colonial America_

The still relatively new phenomenon of publishing philosophical and theological works in English helped Smith’s influence spread across the North Atlantic to the British colonies of New England and Virginia. Review of the library catalogues of the extant colonial colleges of America (now basically the Ivy League universities) shows that they all have seventeenth century copies of Smith’s *Discourses* (Harvard, William & Mary, Yale, Princeton, UPenn, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth). Smith and the other Cambridge Platonists were well known, if not always approved, in colonial Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston. In fact, by the early eighteenth century Smith

---

formed a key part of the inspiration for a divine working on the frontier of European settlement in western Massachusetts named Jonathan Edwards.

7.2.2 Eighteenth Century Reception

While Smith’s memory continues today mostly as an ancillary curiosity or source of contextual (or rhetorical) leverage for the study of the more famous Cambridge Platonists, Ralph Cudworth and Henry More especially, in the more immediate aftermath of his brief career, Smith exerted a profound influence on many divines.26 This was especially the case in the eighteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. Of particular interest here is a deep affinity between Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley on the “spiritual senses” and way both drew upon Smith for their theories.

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is “widely acknowledged to be America’s most important and original philosophical theologian.”27 He was born into a family of Congregational ministers in East Windsor, Connecticut in 1703. In 1716 Edwards enrolled at Yale where he read Newton, Locke, Malebranche, and the Cambridge Platonists. After briefly ministering to congregations in New York and Bolton, Connecticut, Edwards returned to Yale where he completed his Master of Arts and became senior tutor in 1724. He was chosen to succeed his grandfather as minister of the church in Northampton Massachusetts in 1725 where he oversaw and commented definitively on the religious revivals of 1734 and 1740–41, the latter of which came to be known as the “Great Awakening.” Edwards’ defense of the revivals, and criticisms of its excesses, culminated in his first major treatise, the *Religious Affections* in 1746.28

---


Disputes over qualifications for church membership (Edwards called for public profession of saving faith, unlike his more laxed grandfather) led to his dismissal from his ministry in 1750. Instead of accepting offers to preach elsewhere in North America and Scotland, Edwards took up work at the Indian mission at Stockbridge where he had charge of two congregations, supervised a boarding school for Indian boys, and completed his last major works. Edwards was appointed President of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1757 but died from complications arising from a smallpox inoculation on 22 March 1758, less than five weeks after taking up the post.

As Wainwright has demonstrated, Edwards’s writings stress two themes above all, “the absolute sovereignty of God” and the “beauty of God’s holiness.” Divine beauty is discussed “in accounts of God’s end in creation, and of the nature of true virtue and true beauty.” Divine creation “manifest[s] a holiness which consists in a benevolence which alone is truly beautiful. Genuine

---


30 Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards." Divine sovereignty is most clearly defended in Edwards’ occasionalism. He argued that God is “the only real cause or substance underlying physical and mental phenomena.” Ibid.

31 Ibid.
human virtue is an imitation of divine benevolence and all finite beauty is an image of divine loveliness. True virtue is needed to discern this beauty, however, and to reason rightly about ‘divine things’.” 32

References to the influence of Smith abound in the massive literature on Edwards. Four areas of this influence have been identified; spiritual sensation, deification, morality, and Edwards’ rhetoric all draw heavily on Smith and the other Cambridge Platonists.

Smith was an important, and widely cited, source for Edwards’ doctrine of the “sense of the heart.” 33 However, while noting this, scholars have been overly tentative in asserting a clear line of influence. As Brad Walton puts it, “all commentators since John E. Smith have recognized that John Smith’s own discussion of the ‘spiritual sensation,’ presented in the first chapter of the Select Discourses, constitutes a clear anticipation of Edwards, and probably exercised a

32 Wainwright, “Jonathan Edwards.”

direct influence on his own thinking.” This merely “probable” case for Smith’s influence is rooted in the mistaken notion that it is only in the first Discourse that Smith discusses “spiritual sensation.” As has been made clear above, this ignores the role of spiritual or intellectual sense in Smith’s arguments for the basics of theism, his account of prophecy, and the role of sensibility in practical religion as well. Far from merely a likely influence, Edwards drew directly and definitively from Smith’s Discourse on “The Shortness of a Pharisaick Righteousness” and even quotes him at length on the “inward sense of the Divine goodness.”

Edwards also quotes at length the closing passage of this Discourse on the “boiling up of the imaginative powers” and comments that it is a “remarkable passage.”

Moreover, since as we have shown, Smith employs the spiritual senses throughout his theology we would be wise to look more broadly than “religious experience” in Edwards for his influence on the American Evangelical. Edwards has received significant attention in recent years for his theory of sanctification or

---

34 Brad Walton, Jonathan Edwards, 121.


36 Walton, Jonathan Edwards, 121.
deification. Brandon Withrow especially has noted the strong resemblances between Edwards’ view and those of patristic and later Orthodox theologians (such as Origen, the Cappadocians, and Gregory Palamas). While the similarities are striking, there is however little to “no evidence that Edwards had access to these writings.” McClymond and McDermott have more recently argued that Edwards’ theory of divinization should be read “against the backdrop of Renaissance and early modern Neoplatonism, and specifically the writings of the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists” including Whichcote, Cudworth, More, and especially John Smith. In particular passages from Smith such as “God is the First Truth and Primitive Goodness: True Religion is a vigorous Efflux and Emanation of Both upon the Spirits of men, and therefore is called a participation of the divine Nature” display a profound similarity to expressions used by Edwards. Indeed, many passages in Edwards’ End of

---


39 Ibid., 413-4.

40 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 377-451.
Creation are anticipated by Smith in both argument and even phrasing.\(^{41}\) The influence of Henry Scougal’s *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677) on Edwards, and the connections between Scougal and Smith, are also likely sources of the New Englander’s concerns for the inner life of Christian piety too.\(^{42}\)

Additionally, “Edwards’s moral reflections were . . . shaped by his reading of the Cambridge Platonists, especially John Smith and Henry More.”\(^{43}\) Like the Platonists, Edwards too rejected the harsh and arbitrary portrayal of God in mainstream Calvinism and like Smith he argued that God is “fundamentally goodness and love.”\(^{44}\) Moreover, just as Smith had argued that “God judges creatures not by an arbitrary will but by his own internal goodness” so too did Edwards. In particular one can find remarkable similarity in Smith and Edwards’s views that “everything good in the created world is an emanation from God.”\(^{45}\) This is of course classic platonic doctrine but Edwards’ source for

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 142, 147, 155; Edwards, *End of Creation*, ch. 1 sect. 3.


\(^{43}\) McClymond & McDermott, 534.

\(^{44}\) Micheletti, *Il pensiero religioso*, 327

\(^{45}\) McClymond & McDermott, 534.
this ancient wisdom seems to have been Smith and the rest of the Cambridge Platonists rather than the original authors themselves.  

Finally, Smith seems also to be connected to Edwards’ rhetorical style. Compare for example the following passage from Smith and the proceeding from Edwards.

God does most glorifie and exalt himself in the most triumphant way that may be ad extra or out of himself . . . when he most of all communicates himself . . . And we then most of all glorifie him when we partake most of him.  

As there is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God . . . and as this fullness is capable of communication, or emanation ad extra; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams. . . . They are all but the emanation of God’s glory; or the excellent brightness and fullness of the divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word, existing ad extra.

Since Edwards is the first great New World philosopher in English and “America’s Evangelical” there is great interest in understanding his sources and

---


47 Smith, Select Discourses (1660), 142.

48 Edwards, End of Creation, ch.1, sect. 4; ch.2, sect. 7.
Moreover, it may well be that a lasting echo from Smith persists today in and through the continued appeal of Edwards. For all these reasons, future research on the influence of John Smith on Jonathan Edwards is needed, especially with regard to the spiritual senses.

*John Wesley*

In addition to his connection to the first great American theologian, Smith’s influence can be traced to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism as well. Wesley was born near London in 1703. In 1723 he enrolled at Christ College, Oxford where he earned both a Bachelor’s before and a Master’s after being ordained a deacon in the Church of England in 1726. Wesley served as a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford while beginning to minister to the parish of Wroote. In the 1730s Wesley began to meet with a small group, including his brother Charles, to pray and study scripture that was dubbed the “Holy Club” by opponents who saw this as unjustified “enthusiasm.” It was around this time that others began to refer to the Wesley’s as “Methodists” a name originally

---

meant to signify their over-eagerness in spiritual matters but which was
eventually co-opted by followers.⁵⁰

John Wesley’s major teachings include the possibility of Christian
perfection and the denial of Calvinist predestination, both sentiments that
resonate well with the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians of the
Church of England.⁵¹ While Wesley himself never left the Anglican Church, his
movement, “Methodism,” is today a major branch of Protestant Christianity
which has itself given rise to the Holiness Movement as well as Pentecostalism.

Most relevantly for our purposes, Wesley’s own doctrine of the spiritual
senses owes much to his reading of John Norris, an “Oxford Platonist,” who was
deeply influenced by Smith’s circle, especially Henry More, in addition to
Malebranche.⁵² Moreover, in addition to publishing an abbreviated edition of

⁵⁰ Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003),
12-42, 95-100.

⁵¹ Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley’s Teachings*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012-
2014), vols. 1 & 2; and Don Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*

⁵² John C. English, “John Wesley’s Indebtedness to John Norris,” *Church History* 60, no. 1
(1991): 55-69. Also, Mark T. Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good: John Wesley in the
Christian Tradition of Spiritual Sensation” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College,
Toronto, 2006), 20.
Smith’s *Select Discourses* in his *Christian Library*, Wesley may also have drawn on Smith’s version of the spiritual senses in formulating his own approach.53

As Isabel Rivers has aptly shown, John Wesley was among a significant group of clerics in the 18th century to use various means at their disposal to promote the Cambridge Platonists.54 In Wesley’s case and relative to Smith in particular this took the form of publishing selections from Smith’s *Discourses* in a *Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts From and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, in fifty volumes (the first in 1750). Wesley included selections from the Preface by Worthington and from all ten of the *Discourses*, thus making for essentially the publication of an abridgement of the *Select Discourses*.55

---


Whereas the “philosophical avant-garde” in the eighteenth century (e.g., Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Reid) developed notions of moral and aesthetic sensation Wesley’s spiritual senses stand far more closely in the tradition of the “various heart-religion movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”56 In this, one can appreciate Smith as standing chronologically before and conceptually between Shaftesbury and Wesley with his intellectual, imaginative, and affective versions of spiritual sense. Like Smith too, Wesley draws from the Greek Patristic Fathers, especially Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and others.57

Mealey suggests however that Wesley’s “doctrine . . . resembles the Macarian homilies much more than it does, say, John Smith the Cambridge Platonist.”58 This judgment, however, ignores the deep similarities between Smith’s doctrine and the Greek spirituality found in Pseudo-Macarius. For example, both the Cambridge Platonist and the monk emphasize the role of the

57 Ibid., 28.
58 Mealey, “John Wesley,” 256.
spiritual senses in discerning one’s path through life.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, both authors speak of progress by degrees in the perception of divine things.\textsuperscript{60} Wesley may have been particularly drawn to the Macarian corpus but the themes therein are not wanting in Smith either.

Nevertheless, Mealey is correct that care should be taken to distinguish between the influences of others, including Smith, and Wesley’s unique development of this theme in his own particular way.\textsuperscript{61} Clearly then, additional careful study of the similarities, and important differences, between Smith’s and Wesley’s spiritual senses is necessary.

\textit{Le Clerc and the Prophecy Discourse}

In addition to Wesley’s influential abridgement in the 1750s an additional edition was printed in Edinburgh 1756; further evidence of the continued interest


\textsuperscript{60} Pseudo-Macarius, “Homily 50,” 244-6; and Smith, \textit{Select Discourses} (1660), 17-21.

\textsuperscript{61} Mealey, “Taste and See,” 29-30
in Smith’s *Select Discourses* in the English speaking world.Earlier in the century however and after two complete editions in English, Smith’s lengthy discourse in thirteen chapters on prophecy was translated into Latin for an international readership. This translation was appended to Jean Le Clerc’s (1657-1736) *Commentary on the Prophets*, part of his massive commentary project on the entire Bible. It seems especially fitting that Le Clerc, a pioneer in the critical exegesis of scripture with special attention to the historical context and purpose of biblical books, included Smith’s essay. In “Of Prophecy” Smith includes long passages from Jewish authors, especially Maimonides among others, bringing their native insights to bear on Old Testament prophecy rather than simply reading it through a Christian lens. In this way, Smith contributed, albeit in a roundabout way, to the development of modern critical biblical scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

---

62 For full and abridged editions of the *Select Discourses* (excluding twentieth century and newer anthologies) see “Editions of John Smith’s *Select Discourses*” in the Works Cited below.

Indeed, “Of Prophecy” remained an important resource for biblical scholars well into the mid-nineteenth century when it was recommended by John Kitto among others.\(^6^4\) William B. Collyer too cites Smith as an authority on prophecy in his Lectures on Scripture Prophecy.\(^6^5\) Even in our time, Smith has been cited as an important commentator on prophets and prophecy.\(^6^6\) It remains to be seen, however, the degree to which Smith’s version of the spiritual senses found a receptive audience through his work on prophecy.

7.2.3 Nineteenth Century Reception

Smith’s influence in the English speaking world continued apace well into the Victorian era as his Discourses appeared in print several times and his thought stimulated some of the great minds of the 19th century on both sides of

\(^{64}\) John Kitto Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1845), 2: 568. Kitto’s work was a valuable resource among evangelical bible scholars resistant to newer “liberal” scholarship for nearly a century.

\(^{65}\) William B. Collyer, Lectures on Scripture Prophecy (London: Williams and Smith, 1809), 20, 79.

the Atlantic.\footnote{On nineteenth century English Platonism in general see part V in Platonism and the English Imagination, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201-67.} In fact, there was hardly a generation without a new edition or significant abridgement of the Discourses from the middle of the 18th through the end of the 19th centuries. This alone speaks to the continued appeal of Smith’s thought among philosophers, moralists and divines.

Coleridge

The appreciation that the great English Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834) had for John Smith is well documented. Coleridge commented favorably on a number of Smith’s Discourses in several places including his Aids to Reflection\footnote{Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character on the Several Grounds of Prudence, Morality, and Religion: Illustrated by Select Passages from our Elder Divines, especially from Archbishop Leighton (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1825), 246.} and in his Literary Remains.\footnote{Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Literary Remains, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London: William Picering, 1836-1839), I: 213-4; III: 415-9.} On a trip to Sicily, Coleridge “gratefully noted” Smith’s thoroughly platonic observation that as “the eye cannot behold the Sun . . . unless it be Sunlike . . . neither can the Soul of man,
behold God . . . unless it be Godlike.” This language of participation in God on analogy with light and the sun remained consistent throughout Coleridge’s literary career.

Smith was also an important source for Coleridge’s conception of Christian philosophy as a spiritual discipline. Like Smith, Coleridge is highly critical of mere speculation in philosophy and theology. Common notions such as the platonic commonplace of the soul as a mirror and more specific images such as the Christological heart of morality too may well find their roots in Coleridge’s reading of Smith. Finally, in his distinction between the merely external nature of the Jewish Law and the inward transformation of Gospel

---


73 Ibid., 225, 281.

74 Ibid., 109, 175.
righteousness Coleridge follows not just the Apostle Paul but also John Smith, the “most eloquent of the Cambridge Platonists.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Emerson}

Both Coleridge and Smith exerted a deep influence on Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882), the founder of American Transcendentalism. Thus, the Cambridge Platonist’s legacy extends to the second noteworthy moment in the history of American philosophy after Jonathan Edwards. Notably, the third, C.S. Peirce and William James’s Pragmatism, too is a New England development, born of learned Puritan ancestry, first at Smith’s Emmanuel College and later at Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts. While Emerson drew on a far wider range of sources than the Cambridge Platonist was in a position to (i.e., Indian texts and traditions), he found in Smith inspiration and confirmation of the lasting significance of critical thought in religion and of Platonism in particular.

A quotation from “Plato; or, the Philosopher” in \textit{Representative Men} (1850) gives something of the flavor of this influence upon Emerson and his school.

How many great men Nature is incessantly sending up out of night, to be his men,- Platonists! the Alexandrians, a constellation of genius; the

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 190, 284.
Elizabethans, not less; Sir Thomas More, Henry More, John Hales, John Smith, Lord Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Ralph Cudworth, Sydenham, Thomas Taylor . . . . 76

Here John Smith takes his place in the Transcendentalist pantheon beside Plato, Plotinus, Jeremy Taylor, and Thomas Taylor. Clearly then, Smith was an important representative of the Platonic tradition in nineteenth century America.

7.2.4 Twentieth Century Reception & Beyond

The twentieth century saw a proliferation of publications that selected, extracted, and collected texts from the Cambridge Platonists. 77 Among these collections several of Smith’s _Discourses_ almost always appeared, including especially the first on the “True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge.” The editors of the many collections of texts from the Cambridge Platonists in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have played an absolutely invaluable role in keeping the attention of new generations of scholars

---


fixed on the group as a whole and Smith specifically. In particular, Campagnac, Cragg, Patrides, and Taliaferro and Teply have helped keep texts in the hands of successive generations (including myself). However, contemporary assessments of Smith are frequently colored by the selection process. Too often the Discourses are treated as standalone texts when most were actually intended to form a whole larger work.

In 1979 the entire first edition of Smith’s Select Discourses was reprinted with a brief introduction by C.A. Patrides. This edition has since been the go-to version of the text despite the many errors corrected in the second, third, and fourth editions (to say nothing of the helpful annotations added by various editors in those later editions too). With the advent of the internet and especially the scanning of entire books by Google and scholarly projects like Early English...

---


Books Online access to the *Discourses* has become as widespread as it is currently possible to imagine.\(^80\)

Most noticeable by its absence in 20th and 21st century work on Smith is a modern critical edition of the *Select Discourses*. The availability of digital copies of previous editions is a great help to the scholar, and perhaps also for a certain kind of eccentric, but nothing can replace a clean, modern text, with scholarly annotations for guiding students and potentially interested professionals alike through what is difficult territory. In fact, more time has now passed without a new edition of the *Select Discourses* than at any other time since Smith’s passing.\(^81\)

A new critical edition of the *Select Discourses* is now a project worthy of the considerable labor required as there is no single edition that has *both* a consistently reliable text and accurate annotations.

There was a distinct turn in the disciplinary attention paid to Smith in the twentieth century toward literature and criticism, no doubt owing to the references to him and his circle in the works of figures like Coleridge and Emerson. Indeed, it is not among the theologians or philosophers that one finds


\(^{81}\) Either 155 (1859) or 129 years (1885) if abridgements count.
the most enthusiastic (and knowing) readers of Smith, but instead among the poets, critics, and historians of English literature. Cudworth and More have enjoyed a far better reception among philosophers and theologians in recent decades but ironically when one wants to make one of their points clearly and briefly it is often a good idea to quote Smith instead.

Nevertheless Smith did not go unnoticed among twentieth century philosophers and theologians. Indeed, there have been a several notable promoters of Smith in the century just passed. In particular, William Inge in Britain and Rufus Jones in the United States kept alive a historical and philosophical appreciation for the Cambridge Platonists in general and Smith in particular.

William Ralph Inge (1860 – 1954) wrote widely and frequently on Neoplatonism and Christian mysticism.82 Dean Inge was born in 1860, educated at King’s College, Cambridge and became successively Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London. He is perhaps best known today for his Gifford Lectures on Plotinus (published in

---

82 Adam Fox, *Dean Inge* (London: John Murray, 1960) contains a helpful biography and bibliography.
two volumes in 1918) but he also keep alive an interest in Christian Platonism in 
the early twentieth century. While Whichcote appears to be his favorite
Cambridge Platonist, Inge’s early *Christian Mysticism* makes frequent approving 
references to Smith.83 *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* opens with an adaptation 
from Smith, “Such as men themselves are, such will God appear to them.”84 Such 
references continued throughout Dean Inge’s career. Perhaps most importantly, 
Inge had a natural understanding of the practical rational piety of Smith. “A 
study of . . . Smith’s *Select Discourses*, may not make the reader a better Catholic 
or a better Protestant, but they cannot fail to make him a better Christian and a 
better man.”85 The impact of Inge’s “Smithian” outlook had a profound impact 
on Anglican theology that can still be felt today.86

Rufus Jones (1863 – 1948) was born (not far from my hometown) in central 
Maine and he is one of the best known Quakers of the 20th century. He “was

---


among the organizers of the Quaekerspeisung after World War I. In 1938 he traveled to Berlin seeking a personal meeting with Hitler after Kristallnacht. His efforts as a peacemaker were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for the American Friends Service Committee in 1947.87

Jones was also a noted historian and theologian as well as philosopher who singled out Smith as one of two examples of the “spirit of Cambridge Platonism” (the other was Whichcote) and dedicated an excellent chapter to him in his *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th & 17th Centuries* as well as making passing use of him throughout his twenty-two books and many articles.88 Given the importance of the relationship between Henry More and Anne Conway, and since the controverted nature of Quaker religion lies at the heart of that relationship in its later stages, it would seem that Cambridge Platonism and the Society of Friends had a significant influence upon each other.89 Nevertheless, the influence of Smith on modern Quakerism is in need of additional research.

---

87 Claus Bernet, *Rufus Jones (1863-1948)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 3-17.


Smith has remained an important influence upon some strands of contemporary work in philosophy and theology too. Pierre Hadot, for example, placed Smith in the historical context of the reception of Simplicius’ important Commentary on the Manuel of Epictetus. More recently, Charles Taliaferro, Sarah Hutton and Douglas Hedley have contributed to the historical appreciation of Smith and also made constructive use of his thought too. Charles Taliaferro and Douglas Hedley have contributed to the historical appreciation of Smith and have also made constructive use of his thought in works such as Taliaferro’s Evidence and Faith; Philosophy and Religion Since the Seventeenth Century as well as Hedley’s Coleridge, Philosophy, and Religion and his trilogy

---


92 Douglas Hedley, Coleridge, Philosophy, and Religion (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98-9, 109, 175, 190, 225, 281, 284.
on the religious imagination. Sarah Hutton too has helped to keep alive an appreciation for Smith with her entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (2005) as well as an important paper on Smith’s theory of prophecy. (Hutton 1984, 73-81).

7.3 Directions for the Future

When one begins to look John Smith appears as a consistent, and significant if sometimes subtle, influence across the modern North Atlantic world. He played an important, even if peripheral, role in the development of theology (Latitudinarianism, American Evangelicalism, and Methodism), philosophy (Platonism, Cartesianism, and Transcendentalism), literature (Romanticism), and mathematics (calculus). His understanding of prophecy too was long held in high esteem across Europe. Indeed, Smith was a ubiquitous authority among eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars in Britain and the

---


United States. With the close of the Victorian era Smith began to fade from favor as various forms of positivism, existentialism, and scientism came to displace the idealist and romantic modes of thought that had been so congenial to his own unique brand of Christian Platonism. However, through consistent publication of selections from his *Discourses* and the regular historical study and constructive use of his thought Smith’s influence has never vanished.

The task before us now that Smith’s place in the Christian tradition of the spiritual senses has been laid bare is to trace his influence on later figures. A preliminary review shows that his impact was clear and distinct upon two founding figures in major theological traditions today. Through Jonathan Edwards, something of Smith’s experiential piety passed to American Evangelicalism. Through John Wesley Smith’s insistence on the unity of reason and experience passed to Methodism. Additionally, Smith seems to have had a lasting impact on Anglican and Quaker thought that deserves far more scholarly attention than he has received.

Along with these issues of historical and textual interpretation the theological and philosophical viability of Smith’s system requires careful constructive attention. This dissertation has only commented in passing on the
truth, or more minimally plausibility, of the accounts of human nature, God, knowledge, and morality offered by Smith. However, our period would appear poised to benefit from the lessons Smith has to teach about faith and reason generally, and religion and science in particular.

Smith speaks exactly to our situation with the apparent conflict between piety and rationality brought on by superstitious anthropomorphic conceptions of God. Perhaps by purging religion of these false idols born of all-too-human fear and turning instead to the transcendent Divinity of Smith’s brand of Christian Platonism the tired conflicts between “religion” and “science” can be overcome. Such a development would require movement on the part of many religious people and perhaps most scientific naturalists, but the prize to be won is a more humane worldview that lacks neither rigor nor living existential power.

In personal spirituality and communal worship too Smith’s appeal to essentials in religion provides a potential calming voice for our time. Against the secular relativistic approach to religions that makes them all equal in their
irrelevance, Smith offers genuine friendship based on actual unity in essentials and an eagerness to tolerate adiaphora in the name of that essential unity.95

Since the themes of systematicity, spirituality, and the foundations of theological understanding all depend, critically, upon the spiritual senses for Smith, renewed attention to, and development of, that traditional way of thinking and being Christian is called for as we continue to navigate and (co-)create our world; seeking to be at home, whole, and aware of otherness and transcendence too.96 A renewed Christian Platonism, at once theological and humanistic. A theology that lets us think what we feel and binds us to the Good that we may be God’s hands and feet in the world. These are the tasks to which Smith’s doctrine of the spiritual senses calls us today. And they are exactly the tasks that the Christian tradition of the spiritual senses has given to each generation for nearly two-thousand years.97

95 “In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas.” Marco Antonio de Dominis, De Repubblica Ecclesiastica Libri X (London, 1617), 676


97 “Ruusbroec withdrew into mysticism, to create a radical spiritual response to the crisis in his own times caused by the decline and opaqueness of the institutional, Christian religion, which was in his judgment rooted in a lack of taste-experience (smaken) in religious matters”
(Pyong-Gwan Pak, “The Relevance of Mystical Spirituality in the Context of Today’s ‘Spirituality Phenomenon’,” Logos 15 no. 3 [2012]: 117.)
APPENDIX

The Contents of the Complete Editions of the *Select Discourses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To the Reader,” Worthington</td>
<td>iii-xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge</td>
<td>1-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ I 1-13</td>
<td>§ I 1-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ II 13-7</td>
<td>§ II 13-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ III 17-21</td>
<td>§ III 17-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Atheism</td>
<td>39-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the Immortality of the Soul</td>
<td>57-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.1 59-62</td>
<td>Ch.1 54-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.2 63-8</td>
<td>Ch.2 58-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.3 68-84</td>
<td>Ch.3 63-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.4 85-92</td>
<td>Ch.4 80-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.5 93-6</td>
<td>Ch.5 88-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.6 96-101</td>
<td>Ch.6 91-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.7 101-5</td>
<td>Ch.7 96-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the Existence and Nature of God</td>
<td>121-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.1 123-6</td>
<td>Ch.1 118-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.2 126-34</td>
<td>Ch.2 121-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.3 135-9</td>
<td>Ch.3 130-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.4 140-4</td>
<td>Ch.4 135-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.5 144-7</td>
<td>Ch.5 139-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.6 147-51</td>
<td>Ch.6 142-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.7 151-3</td>
<td>Ch.7 146-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.8 154-8</td>
<td>Ch.8 149-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.9 158-61</td>
<td>Ch.9 153-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.10 162-5</td>
<td>Ch.10 157-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of Prophecy</th>
<th>167-280</th>
<th>161-273</th>
<th>179-301</th>
<th>169-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ch.1 169-75</td>
<td>Ch.1 162-8</td>
<td>Ch.1 181-8</td>
<td>Ch.1 171-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.2 176-83</td>
<td>Ch.2 169-76</td>
<td>Ch.2 188-96</td>
<td>Ch.2 178-86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.3 183-9</td>
<td>Ch.3 176-82</td>
<td>Ch.3 197-203</td>
<td>Ch.3 186-93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.4 190-209</td>
<td>Ch.4 183-202</td>
<td>Ch.4 204-25</td>
<td>Ch.4 193-215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.5 210-9</td>
<td>Ch.5 203-12</td>
<td>Ch.5 226-236</td>
<td>Ch.5 215-27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.6 220-9</td>
<td>Ch.6 213-22</td>
<td>Ch.6 237-46</td>
<td>Ch.6 227-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.7 229-39</td>
<td>Ch.7 222-32</td>
<td>Ch.7 247-58</td>
<td>Ch.7 237-48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.8 240-51</td>
<td>Ch.8 233-44</td>
<td>Ch.8 258-71</td>
<td>Ch.8 249-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.9 252-7</td>
<td>Ch.9 245-50</td>
<td>Ch.9 271-6</td>
<td>Ch.9 261-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.10 257-60</td>
<td>Ch.10 250-3</td>
<td>Ch.10 277-80</td>
<td>Ch.10 268-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.11 261-7</td>
<td>Ch.11 254-60</td>
<td>Ch.11 281-7</td>
<td>Ch.11 272-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.12 267-72</td>
<td>Ch.12 260-5</td>
<td>Ch.12 287-93</td>
<td>Ch.12 278-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.13 272-80</td>
<td>Ch.13 265-73</td>
<td>Ch.13 293-</td>
<td>Ch.13 284-93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertisement (JW) 280-1</td>
<td>Advertisement (JW) 273-4</td>
<td>301 Advertisement (JW) 302-3</td>
<td>Advertisement (JW) 294-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of the Difference</strong></td>
<td><strong>283-346</strong></td>
<td><strong>275-338</strong></td>
<td><strong>305-74</strong></td>
<td><strong>297-360</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between the Legal and</td>
<td>Ch.1 285-88</td>
<td>Ch.1 277-80</td>
<td>Ch.1 307-10</td>
<td>Ch.1 299-302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Righteous</td>
<td>Ch.2 288-96</td>
<td>Ch.2 280-8</td>
<td>Ch.2 311-20</td>
<td>Ch.2 302-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.3 297-307</td>
<td>Ch.3 289-99</td>
<td>Ch.3 320-32</td>
<td>Ch.3 311-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.4 308-25</td>
<td>Ch.4 300-17</td>
<td>Ch.4 332-51</td>
<td>Ch.4 323-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.5 325-32</td>
<td>Ch.5 317-24</td>
<td>Ch.5 351-8</td>
<td>Ch.5 341-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.6 332-42</td>
<td>Ch.6 324-34</td>
<td>Ch.6 359-70</td>
<td>Ch.6 347-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.7 343-6</td>
<td>Ch.7 335-8</td>
<td>Ch.7 371-4</td>
<td>Ch.7 357-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of the Shortness and</strong></td>
<td><strong>347-72</strong></td>
<td><strong>339-64</strong></td>
<td><strong>375-402</strong></td>
<td><strong>361-84</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vanity of Pharisaick</strong></td>
<td>JW Note 373</td>
<td>JW Note 373</td>
<td>Ch.1 377-81</td>
<td>Ch.1 363-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Righteousness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.2 381-5</td>
<td>Ch.2 367-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.3 385-90</td>
<td>Ch.3 370-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.4 390-5</td>
<td>Ch.4 374-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.5 395-402</td>
<td>Ch.5 379-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of the Excellency</strong></td>
<td><strong>375-451</strong></td>
<td><strong>365-440</strong></td>
<td><strong>403-87</strong></td>
<td><strong>385-459</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Nobleness of True Religion</td>
<td>Intro. 377-9</td>
<td>Intro. 366-8</td>
<td>Intro. 405-8</td>
<td>Intro. 387-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.1 380-4</td>
<td>Ch.1 369-73</td>
<td>Ch.1 408-13</td>
<td>Ch.1 390-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.2 385-92</td>
<td>Ch.2 374-81</td>
<td>Ch.2 413-21</td>
<td>Ch.2 395-402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.3 392-6</td>
<td>Ch.3 381-5</td>
<td>Ch.3 422-6</td>
<td>Ch.3 403-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.4 397-403</td>
<td>Ch.4 386-92</td>
<td>Ch.4 427-33</td>
<td>Ch.4 407-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.5 403-11</td>
<td>Ch.5 392-400</td>
<td>Ch.5 434-42</td>
<td>Ch.5 413-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.6 412-23</td>
<td>Ch.6 401-12</td>
<td>Ch.6 443-55</td>
<td>Ch.6 421-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.7 423-9</td>
<td>Ch.7 412-8</td>
<td>Ch.7 456-62</td>
<td>Ch.7 432-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.8 429-35</td>
<td>Ch.8 418-24</td>
<td>Ch.8 463-8</td>
<td>Ch.8 438-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.9 435-9</td>
<td>Ch.9 424-8</td>
<td>Ch.9 469-73</td>
<td>Ch.9 443-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.10 439-43</td>
<td>Ch.10 428-32</td>
<td>Ch.10 474-8</td>
<td>Ch.10 447-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.11 443-51</td>
<td>Ch.11 432-40</td>
<td>Ch.11 478-87</td>
<td>Ch.11 451-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of a Christians Conflicts with, and Conquests over, Satan</td>
<td>453-80</td>
<td>441-68</td>
<td>489-519</td>
<td>461-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.1 455-8</td>
<td>Ch.1 443-6</td>
<td>Ch.1 491-4</td>
<td>Ch.1 463-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.2 458-62</td>
<td>Ch.2 446-50</td>
<td>Ch.2 495-9</td>
<td>Ch.2 466-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.3 462-9</td>
<td>Ch.3 450-7</td>
<td>Ch.3 499-506</td>
<td>Ch.3 470-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.4 469-74</td>
<td>Ch.4 457-62</td>
<td>Ch.4 506-11</td>
<td>Ch.4 476-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch.5 474-80</td>
<td>Ch.5 462-8</td>
<td>Ch.5 512-9</td>
<td>Ch.5 481-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral Sermon, Patrick</td>
<td>481-526</td>
<td>469-512</td>
<td>521-57</td>
<td>489-521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editions of John Smith’s *Select Discourses*


———. *Select Discourses*. Abridged by John King. With a Memoir of the
Author by Lord Hailes. London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1820.


**Manuscripts**


Smith, John. “A Common Place Book.” Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.ix.44.

**Print Sources**


Aquino, Frederick D. “Maximus the Confessor.” In *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving*


Caussin, Nicholas. *De Eloquentia Sacra et Humana Libri XVI.* Cologne, 1634.


Gabbey, Alan. “Cudworth, More and the Mechanical Analogy.” In *Philosophy,*


Hauck, Robert J. “Like a Gleaming Flash”: Matthew 6:22-23, Luke 11:34-36 and


———. “The Prophetic Imagination: A Comparative Study of Spinoza and the


Kärkkäinen, Pekka. “Synderesis in Late Medieval Philosophy and the Wittenberg


Lossel, Josef, and John W. Watt, eds. *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.


———. *Divine Dialogues . . . the three first dialogues treating of the attributes of God and his providence at large.* London: J. Flesher, 1668.

———. *Divine Dialogues . . . the last two dialogues, treating of the kingdom of God within us, and of his special providence through Christ over his church from the beginning to the end of all things . . . .* London: J. Flesher, 1668.


———. *Enthusiasmus triumphatus, or, a discourse of the nature, causes, kinds, and cure, of enthusiasm . . . and prefixed to Alazonomastix His Observations and reply . . . .* London: J. Flesher, sold by W. Morden, Cambridge, 1656.


Norris, John. “Reason and Religion, or the Grounds and Measures of Devotion


Ravven, Heidi M. “Some Thoughts on What Spinoza Learned from Maimonides


Rogers, G. A. J. “John Locke and the Cambridge Platonists on the Nature of the


Salter, Samuel. “Preface to this New Edition.” In B. Whichcote. Moral and


Searle, William George. The History of the Queens’ College of St Margaret and St Bernard in the University of Cambridge: 1560-1662. Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1871.


———. “Stoics Against Stoics in Cudworth’s A Treatise of Freewill.” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 no.5 (2012): 935-52, and


Simmons, Daniel. “‘We shall be like him, for we shall see him’: Augustine’s De Trinitate and the Purification of the Mind.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15 no. 3 (2013): 240-64.


Smith, Charles Kay. “French Philosophy and English Politics in Interregnum


Twersky, Isadore. Rabad of Posquières: A Twelfth-Century Talmudist. Cambridge,


Vita

Derek Michaud
75 Western Ave.
PO Box 486
Fairfield, Maine 04937

EDUCATION

PhD, Theology, Boston University, 2015

STM, Philosophy, Theology, & Ethics, Boston University School of Theology, 2003

MA, Theology, Bangor Theological Seminary, 2001

BA, Psychology, University of Maine, 1999

EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern Maine, 2012-present

Adjunct Instructor of Philosophy, Middlesex Community College, 2011-2013

Adjunct Instructor, “20th Century Humanities,” Thomas College, 2002