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JAMES E. PEDLAR

*Sensing the Spirit: Wesley's Empiricism and His Use of
the Language of Spiritual Sensation*

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between John Wesley's empiricism and his use of the language of "spiritual sensation." Through a close reading of Wesley's own espousal of empiricism, as well as his use of the language of the spiritual senses, it will be argued that Wesley, while committed to empiricism as a natural epistemology, views the experience of the Spirit as something which is known intuitively. His references to the spiritual senses are therefore best understood as an analogy for this intuitively known experience of the Spirit. While Wesley's discussions of spiritual sensation are not simply an extension of his empiricism, he does, at times, try to integrate his account of theological knowledge with his empiricism. The paper concludes by addressing challenges that Wesley's use of the language of spiritual sensation poses for both the coherence and the adequacy of his theology.

Key Words: John Wesley, 1703-1791; John Locke, 1632-1704; Peter Browne, ca. 1666-1735; Holy Spirit, Empiricism, spiritual senses

James E. Pedlar is a doctoral candidate in systematic theology at the Toronto School of Theology and an adjunct faculty member at Tyndale Seminary.

Although the language of “spiritual sensation” are found throughout the writings of John Wesley, interpreters of Wesley prior to the late 20th century did not give much attention to the topic. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to delve into the issue, and the literature has raised a number of questions regarding the relationship between Wesley’s empiricism and his use of the language of the senses in describing the experience of the Spirit. Are his references to the spiritual senses a modification of empiricism, or do they reflect other influences from Christian tradition? Does his theological epistemology comport with his natural epistemology, or is there an incoherence in his thought?

In attempting to establish the coherence of Wesley’s epistemological vision, many have focused on tracing the lineage of the language of spiritual sensation. Mark Mealey, in his 2006 doctoral dissertation, has provided a helpful discussion of the language of spiritual sensation in ancient and modern sources.¹ The language, strange as it may seem to us in the twenty-first century, was in wide use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and can be found in sources as diverse as the Cambridge Platonists, Francis Hutcheson, and various advocates of the “religion of the heart” from pietist, puritan, and Catholic traditions, such as Zinzendorf, Arndt, Edwards, and Pascal.² Wesley of course, was certainly familiar with these sources.³ The question as to where Wesley fits in relation to the modern and pre-modern traditions of spiritual sensation, Mealey notes, has normally elicited one of two answers: it is either a function of his empiricism, slightly modified, or it is an appropriation of Christian Platonism.⁴ Mealey argues that the mistake in these interpretations is to view spiritual sensation as a philosophical category, whereas for Wesley it is “a strictly theological category,” and should not be interpreted through either Lockean or Platonic lenses.⁵ I will attempt to make a contribution to this question by engaging in a close reading of Wesley’s own espousal of empiricism, as well as his use of the language of the spiritual senses. I will argue that Wesley, while committed to empiricism as a natural epistemology, views the experience of the Spirit as something which is known intuitively.⁶ He uses the language of spiritual senses as an analogy for this intuitively known experience of the Spirit. While Mealey is correct to argue that Wesley’s talk of the spiritual senses is not an extension of his empiricism, I would suggest that he does, at times, try to integrate his account of theological knowledge with his empiricism. I will also address challenges that Wesley’s use of the language of spiritual sensation poses for both the coherence and the adequacy of his theology.

Wesley’s Relationship to Locke and Browne

John Wesley studied at Oxford during a time when John Locke’s empiricist epistemology was gaining influence.⁷ While it is clear that the early Wesley was

influenced by Lockean epistemology, it seems that this influence came through secondary sources, such as Peter Browne's *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding*, to be discussed shortly.⁸ The mature Wesley provides us with an explicit testimony to his views on Locke in his published *Remarks upon Mr. Locke's "Essay On Human Understanding."*⁹ Here Wesley speaks approvingly of Locke's foundational assertion that there are no innate ideas,¹⁰ and affirms that Locke has firmly established that "all our ideas come from sensation or reflection."¹¹ For Wesley, this excludes any suggestion of an innate notion of God "stamped on the soul," and so he claims that "the little which we do know of God (except what we receive from by the inspiration of the Holy One,) we do not gather from any inward impression, but gradually acquire from without."¹² However, after affirming these foundational principles found in Locke's *Essay*, Wesley goes on to provide a litany of errors and defects in the work. Generally, these relate to what Wesley perceives to be Locke's "violent spleen against" and "total ignorance of"¹³ Aristotelian logic.¹⁴ After such statements it is somewhat surprising to find Wesley stating that none of the mistakes in Locke's *Essay* are of any importance, and that "It might, therefore, be of admirable use to young students, if read with a judicious Tutor."¹⁵ In sum, Wesley agrees with Locke that the mind is a *tabula rasa*, and that the origin of all ideas is found in sensation and reflection, but he views Locke's logic as inferior to standard Aristotelian logic.¹⁶

It is odd that Wesley's assessment of Locke's *Essay* passes over chapter nineteen of Book Four. This is Locke's treatment of the topic of enthusiasm, which he believes is found "in all ages," whenever people have "flattered themselves with a persuasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications with the divine spirit."¹⁷ Locke believes that such claims to direct communication with God inevitably discount reason and scripture in favour of "the conceits of a warmed or over-weening brain," which are taken to be illuminations from the Spirit, and are therefore followed and obeyed with vigour, however odd or extravagant they may be.¹⁸ Locke draws upon language of sensation in describing the invincible certainty of the enthusiasts:

Reason is lost upon them, they are above it: they see the light infused into their understandings, and cannot be mistaken; 'tis clear and visible there; like the light of bright Sunshine, shows itself, and needs no other proof, but its own evidence: they feel the hand of GOD moving within them, and the impulses of the spirit, and cannot be mistaken in what they feel... what they have a sensible experience of admits no doubt, needs no reprobation... When the spirit brings light into our minds, it dispels darkness. We see it, as we do that of the Sun at noon, and need not the twilight of reason to show it us...¹⁹

Locke is clearly skeptical of such claims to have an “awakened sense,”²⁰ but in the end he allows that God may communicate directly to humans, and that such internal “feelings” can be counted true if they conform to the external standards of reason and scripture.²¹

Wesley was always defending himself against the charge of enthusiasm, and so it is interesting to question the degree to which he might consider Locke to be a helpful advocate. Wesley would no doubt assert that he was not guilty of promoting enthusiasm in the sense of following after unscriptural and unreasonable guidance from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, akin to Locke, Wesley defines enthusiasm as a “religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God.”²² However, Wesley’s understanding of the Spirit’s work goes well beyond anything Locke would support. While Locke acknowledges that “GOD can, or doth sometimes enlighten men’s minds . . . by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit,”²³ Wesley will make the sensible experience of the Spirit foundational to his soteriology, and therefore indispensable for anyone who would claim saving knowledge of God. Thus, while Wesley might claim that he is not inconsistent with Locke’s views on enthusiasm, we might expect that Locke would be tempted to label Wesley an enthusiast of sorts.

Wesley was less reserved in his esteem for the version of empiricism proposed in Peter Browne’s *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*.²⁴ Like Wesley, Browne questions about Locke’s logic,²⁵ but affirms the two basic tenets of Locke’s epistemology, namely that humans “are not furnished with any *Innate* Ideas of things material or immaterial,”²⁶ and that the senses are “the only *Source* and *Inlets* of those Ideas, which are the intire *Groundwork* of all our Knowledge both *Human* and *Divine*.”²⁷ It is in respect to the last part of this claim - that all our knowledge of God is built upon the five physical senses - that we will see Wesley departing radically from Browne. In outlining the way in which revelation is communicated to us, Browne writes:

It is not reasonable to imagine that this should be performed by giving us any *Faculties* intirely *New*; or by any total *Alteration* of those we *Already* have; for this would be a kind of *Second Creation*, and not any *Information* or *Revelation* . . .²⁸

No; *Divine* Information gives us no *New* *Faculties* of Perception, but is adapted to those we *Already* have.²⁹

The *Mind* of Man . . . hath no *Direct* Perception, or *Immediate* Consciousness beyond things sensible and human.³⁰

Wesley, it is true, might find ways of reconciling what he is claiming about the experience of the Spirit with Browne’s brand of empiricism. As was the case with Locke, however, we might suspect that Browne would not wish his views to be used to support some of the claims that Wesley is making.

Mealey is most definitely correct in emphatically rejecting any notion that Wesley's language of spiritual sensation is derived from Locke.³¹ However, this does not mean that we should see no relation between his commitment to empiricism and his use of the language of spiritual sensation. Although Wesley sees the experience of the Spirit as beyond explanation, his commitments to empiricism do in fact influence the particular way in which he speaks of the spiritual senses, and the way he attempts to integrate his account of theological knowledge with his empiricism.

The Spirit, Spiritual Sensation and the Knowledge of God

For Wesley, the Holy Spirit is, above all, God's gracious and empowering presence.³² As the effectual and Personal presence of God, Wesley insists that the Spirit works immediately upon the human person.³³ It is in attempting to describe the reality of this immediate work that Wesley employs the language of the spiritual senses.³⁴ Moreover, Wesley speaks of the experience of spiritual sensation when addressing three distinct doctrines: faith, new birth, and assurance.³⁵ I will proceed to give a general account of the language of spiritual sensation in Wesley and its relation to the knowledge of God, before addressing how spiritual sensation is related to faith, new birth, and assurance.

One of Wesley's earliest and most detailed explanations of the spiritual senses comes in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, written in 1743. Here Wesley argues that, if anyone is to reason justly of "the things of God," he must make true judgments on the basis of clear apprehension, meaning "that your ideas thereof be all *fixed, distinct, and determinate*."³⁶ Further, because "our ideas are not innate, but must all originally come from our senses, it is certainly necessary that you have senses capable of discerning objects of this kind."³⁷ Further, because the natural senses are "altogether incapable" of discerning spiritual things, we must have "*spiritual* senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil."³⁸ They are "a new class of senses opened in your soul," "avenues of the invisible world," which "furnish you with ideas" which the physical senses are incapable of detecting.³⁹ It follows that one cannot have any apprehension of divine things until these "internal senses" have been "opened" by the Holy Spirit, because "the ideas of faith differ *totò genere* from those of external sensation."⁴⁰ With the spiritual senses thus opened, "enlightened reason" is able to "explore 'even the deep things of God' God himself 'revealing them to you by his Spirit.'"⁴¹ Similar statements can be found in various places in Wesley's writings.⁴²

So, Wesley believes that God and the things of God must be communicated by means other than the physical senses, and he uses the language of spiritual sensation in describing God's self-communication to individual human beings.⁴³ But what exactly does Wesley intend by his use of the language of spiritual sensation? When he is pressed, it becomes clear that Wesley is drawing

on his empirical account of natural knowledge as an analogy to describe something which he considers to be beyond explanation. While strongly asserting the *reality* of God's communication to humans in the experience of the Spirit, Wesley is reticent to attempt any explanation of the *manner* of such communication. The analogy of the physical senses is simply the best he can offer.

This is clear in *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1746), when Wesley offers a response to a tract written against him by Thomas Dockwray, entitled, *The Operations of the Holy Spirit Imperceptible, and How Men may Know when they are under the Guidance and Influence of the Spirit*.⁴⁴ In answer to Dockwray's charge that "the operations of the Spirit are not subject to any sensible feelings," Wesley writes, "By 'feeling' I mean being inwardly conscious of. By 'the operations of the Spirit', I do not mean the *manner* in which he operates, but the *graces* which he operates in a Christian."⁴⁵ Wesley later clarifies that it is by "figure of speech" that "we are said to feel this peace and joy and love; that is, we have an inward experience of them, which we cannot find any fitter word to express."⁴⁶ We find similar qualifications being made in other writings by Wesley from the mid-1740s onward. We can sense the frustration in Wesley as he writes, in 1760, that he is speaking,

Not in a gross, carnal sense, as the men of the world stupidly and willfully misunderstand the expression; though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more nor less than this: He feels, is inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart.⁴⁷

So also, in 1790, he speaks of the language of "taste," "sight," and "feeling" as "figurative expressions."⁴⁸

Clearly, Wesley is not proposing an actual set of faculties, to augment the physical senses. His above explanations which drew close parallels between the physical senses and the spiritual senses are analogies, which he is employing to describe the theological reality of the Spirit's presence. Wesley simply wants to claim that, somehow, the Spirit is directly experienced, and the human being who has experienced the Spirit has definite knowledge of it:

... suppose God were now to speak to any soul, "Thy sins are forgiven thee,"—he must be willing that soul should know his voice; otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is able to effect this; for, whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it: That soul is absolutely assured, "this voice is the voice of God." But yet he who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to one who hath it not: Nor indeed is it to be expected that he should.⁴⁹

Wesley cannot but affirm that God wills to "speak" his promises to his adopted children, and that what God has willed, must be so. Still, given his adherence to the sense-origin of all ideas, he has no way to explain how he knows it.

In the end, Wesley's claim is that the knowledge of the experience of the Spirit is intuitive. There is an "inherent, essential difference" between the "light wherewith the Sun of righteousness shines upon our heart" and our own presumption of the Spirit, and that difference "is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed."⁵⁰ Such basic truths are known, not as the conclusion to an argument, but simply and immediately, as surely as we know the difference between light and darkness.

Of course, by presenting the spiritual senses in this way, and holding that those who do not have an awakened spiritual sensorium are unable to understand the phenomenon, he presents an invincible logic, just the kind of argument that Locke was criticizing as enthusiasm.⁵¹ Indeed, late in life Wesley acknowledges to his faithful readers that this is the inevitable reality of their situation:

... when you speak your experience, they immediately cry out, "Much religion hath made thee mad." And all that you experience, either of the invisible or of the eternal world, they suppose to be only the waking dreams of a heated imagination. It cannot be otherwise, when men born blind take upon them to reason concerning light and colours. They will readily pronounce those to be insane who affirm the existence of those things whereof they have no conception.⁵²

Wesley, of course, would insist that what the Spirit communicates to the believer is neither unreasonable nor unscriptural, and as we will see, he does leave room for rational reflection as a secondary confirmation of the Spirit's presence.

To summarize, Wesley employs the language of spiritual sensation in order to describe the reality of the inward experience of God and the things of God, an experience he acknowledges to be beyond explanation. Those who have not experienced the Spirit cannot understand this reality. This general sketch of spiritual sensation can be filled out and clarified through an examination of Wesley's use of this vocabulary in relation to three of his key soteriological concepts: faith, the "new birth," and the "witness of the Spirit."

Spiritual Sensation as Faith, New Birth, and Assurance

Throughout his career, Wesley increasingly came to identify faith with a spiritual experience, expressed in the language of the spiritual senses. A line of development in his thought can be traced, in which he begins with a standard Protestant understanding of faith and moves increasingly toward a description of faith as a spiritual experience. Particularly in the early Oxford sermons, we find Wesley employing the Reformation understanding of faith as *fiducia*, a sure trust and confidence in the *pro me* of the gospel.⁵³ However, by 1744, Wesley is introducing what will become his key term for faith: *evidentia*, which he usually translates "evidence."⁵⁴ This experiential definition of faith,

based on Hebrews 11:1, is of a “divine, supernatural *elenchos*, *evidence* or *conviction*, “of things not seen,” not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, present, or future: It is a spiritual sight of God and the things of God.”⁵⁵ Since the *elenchos* is not discoverable by the bodily senses, it is described in the language of spiritual senses. Faith, as a supernatural *elenchos*, is “with regard to the spiritual world, what sense is with regard to the natural.”⁵⁶ The Spirit overcomes the limits of natural human understanding by imparting this divine evidence. “It is where sense can be of no farther use, that faith comes in to our help; it is the grand *desideratum*; it does what none of the senses can; no, not with all the helps that art hath invented.”⁵⁷ Of course Wesley never contradicts the traditional Protestant understanding of faith as sure trust and confidence in the merits of Christ, however, he tends to place increasing emphasis on the divine *elenchos* as the essence of faith.⁵⁸

This experience of the Spirit as a divine conviction is accompanied, in Wesley’s *via salutis*, by the “new birth,” which, as it relates to the language of spiritual senses, denotes a radical opening of the capacities for spiritual sensation.⁵⁹ Faith and the new birth are distinguished logically, but not temporally by Wesley, such the new birth takes place contemporaneously with the first instance of faith, though new birth is the consequence of faith.⁶⁰ He often describes the new birth as the awakening of the spiritual senses.⁶¹ The new birth involves a “twofold operation” of the Holy Spirit,⁶² the opening and the enlightening of the spiritual senses, so that God and the things of God can be discerned.⁶³ In the new birth, for Wesley, the spiritual senses are opened and awakened, such that the believer is empowered for growth in holiness as she continues in the life of faith.

We also find Wesley using the language of spiritual sensation in connection with his doctrine of the “witness of the Spirit.” As is well known, Wesley posits that there are two witnesses to our adoption in Christ, namely the indirect witness of our spirit, and the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. The witness of our spirit is rational and experiential, because it is our reflection on the presence of the scriptural marks of Christianity, such as the fruit of the Spirit, in our lives.⁶⁴ Beyond this Wesley proposes that there is a “direct witness” of the Holy Spirit, which he defines as “an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly ‘witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God’; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.”⁶⁵ It is in connection with the witness of the Spirit in particular that we see most clearly Wesley’s reticence to answer the question of *how* the human being experiences the Spirit. So he confesses that “It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain ‘the deep things of God.’ Indeed there are none that will adequately express what the children of God experience.”⁶⁶ But the “fact” of this divine testimony, Wesley argues, is simply and indisputably known by

the one who has received this witness.⁶⁷ Again we have come to the problem of “invincible logic” and the question of enthusiasm. This will be discussed further below.

Issues of Coherence and Adequacy

We now come to two questions of coherence. First, is Wesley’s use of the language of spiritual senses soteriologically coherent? Mealey in raising these questions, notes that there are difficulties presented by Wesley’s use of the language of spiritual senses and the relation between faith, new birth, and assurance.⁶⁸ The relation between faith and the assurance of faith is problematic in that Wesley, particularly in the early years of the revival, implies that one cannot have saving faith without the full assurance of faith, excluding doubt.⁶⁹ This created pastoral problems for Wesley, because it left many sincere people doubting their salvation on the basis of the fact that they had not experienced the witness of the Spirit in the dramatic way that Wesley depicted it.⁷⁰

The solution which Wesley introduces later in his life is a distinction between the “faith of a servant” and the “faith of a son,” both of which are granted to be justifying, but the latter of which is identified with the fullness of Christian experience. The faith of a servant is the divine *elenchos*, a “divine conviction of God and of the things of God,” which brings with it actual acceptance by God.⁷¹ Wesley still proposes, that “unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons,”⁷² that is, the direct witness of the Spirit that they are a child of God. Further still, the mature Wesley distinguishes between the initial witness of the Spirit, which might include some doubt, and the *plerophory*, his transliterated term for “full assurance” of faith.⁷³ Acknowledging the problems that were created by the early preaching of this doctrine,⁷⁴ he believes he has found a solution by acknowledging degrees of faith and degrees of assurance.

Wesley will always maintain, however, that some measure of assurance is necessary.⁷⁵ One cannot experience the Spirit, even in the initial event of the new birth and the awakening of faith, without knowing it.⁷⁶ This difficulty, of course, was raised in part because Wesley was using the same language - that of spiritual sensation - to speak of faith, new birth, and assurance. If faith is the experiencing of a divine *elenchos* from the Spirit, and if this is accompanied by a new birth in which our spiritual senses are awakened so that such evidence can be discerned, it follows that we must certainly have an explicit awareness that this new birth has taken place. Since Wesley has framed faith as an evidence which is intuitively recognized, he cannot but insist that anyone having faith must be assured of the reality of God and the things of God.

In spite of these potential difficulties, we can still view Wesley’s soteriological use of the language of spiritual senses as coherent if we give him a charitable reading. Though he speaks of faith, new birth, and assurance in the same

language, they can clearly be distinguished. Faith as spiritual sensation is, generally, the experience of God and the things of God, through the Spirit - a theological reality best expressed by the analogy of the senses. The new birth as spiritual sensation is the Spirit's opening and enlightening of the capacity in the human being to discern the Spirit's presence and to continue into a deeper knowledge of God and the things of God in the life of holiness. Assurance is a particular spiritual experience whereby the Spirit gives a direct testimony to one's adoption as a child of God. In all three cases, as Mealey rightly notes, the factor that gives Wesley's use of this language coherence is the theological reality of God's presence in the life of the believer.⁷⁷ Wesley's use of this language is not aimed at explicating the distinctions between faith, new birth, and assurance, but is an analogical expression of the reality of salvation as the dynamic and living presence of God in the life of the believer. In this sense, also, his use of this language reminds us that Wesley views salvation in its entirety as an integrated whole, and not a series of distinct parts ("regeneration," "justification," etc.) which can be isolated and explained separately.⁷⁸

The second issue of coherence has to do with the relationship between Wesley's intuitionist account of the knowledge of God and his empiricism. We have already seen that empiricists such as Locke and Browne would not accept Wesley's account of intuitive theological knowledge. We have also seen that Wesley's use of the language of spiritual sensation is analogical and cannot be said to derive from his empiricism. However, I would argue that Wesley is, at times, attempting to integrate his claim to the intuitively known experience of the Spirit with his empiricism.⁷⁹ While he argues clearly that spiritual knowledge is not attainable by natural reason, he nevertheless suggests that the "ideas" perceived by spiritual sensation can be integrated with reason. The knowledge of God is based on intuitively *apprehended* graces, but we use our regular faculties of *judgment* and *discourse* in reasoning about these divinely apprehended realities. This is most evident in Wesley's acknowledgment of the fruit of the Spirit as secondary confirmation of the direct witness of the Spirit, a move which grounds intuitive knowledge in scriptural revelation.⁸⁰ I would argue that this attempted integration of natural empiricism with an intuitively recognized experience of the Spirit is not incoherent, though it is unclear in places. For example, what is the relation between the "ideas" that we have of God from the direct working of the Spirit and the ideas of God that we gain through our physical senses? In other words, how do the things we learn through our community of faith and our own study, which would seem to be "naturally" learned according to Wesley's scheme, integrate with our experience of the Spirit directly sensed?

Finally, we must ask if Wesley's use of the language of the spiritual senses is theologically adequate. I would suggest that there are three significant

weaknesses in his use of this language, all arising from the individualistic character of his account of the Spirit's work. First, conceiving the Spirit as individually and intuitively recognized undermines the role of the church. Because, for Wesley, the Spirit is individually experienced and intuitively known, the community is left with a diminished role in the process of discerning the Spirit, and a weaker mandate for offering correction to its members. It is not surprising, therefore, that the various movements that have emerged from Methodism after Wesley have tended to have underdeveloped ecclesiologies.⁸¹ Secondly, Wesley's extensive use of the language of spiritual sensation also has potential to undermine the importance of doctrinal content. Wesley himself was clearly rooted in the historic faith of the Church. However, his transformative experience of the Spirit came after a high-church upbringing and an Oxford education, which enabled him to assume an orthodox theology of the Spirit. Most of his hearers did not have this grounding in the historic faith, and so, many Methodist movements, as time went on, became increasingly rooted in experience, expressed either in terms of a liberal ethic of brotherly love, or a revivalistic fervor. Thirdly, Wesley's use of the language of spiritual sensation has the potential to be highly divisive. When the individually and intuitively discerned experience of the Spirit becomes a line of demarcation between the real Christians and the pretenders, this can lead to divisions *ad infinitum*, especially if the line of demarcation becomes an experience cut loose from the grounding of scripture, the historic faith of the Church, and the historic visible continuity of the Church itself. While some may feel that it is unfair to evaluate Wesley's theology on the of developments that took place among later generations of Methodists, I would suggest that these developments highlight potential weaknesses that are already present in Wesley's pneumatology in its own right.

Endnotes

¹ Mark T. Mealey, "Taste and See that the Lord is Good: John Wesley in the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Sensation." (Ph.D. diss., Toronto: Wycliffe College, 2006).

² See Mealey's overview, *Ibid.*, 20–30.

³ In his *Christian Library* Wesley included selections from a number of the Cambridge Platonists, including Nathaniel Culverwell, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Simon Patrick, John Smith, and John Worthington. See John C. English, "The Cambridge Platonists in Wesley's 'Christian Library.'" *Proceedings of the Methodist Historical Society* 36 (1968): 161–168. The connection to Zinzendorf is well known and requires no demonstration. Arndt's *True Christianity* was included in the *Christian Library*, and is mentioned favourably by Wesley in "Reasons Against Separating from the Church of England," §L.10, Rupert E Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley, Bicentennial Edition*, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 335. Subsequent references to the Bicentennial Edition will simply be identified as *Works*. Wesley is known to have read Edwards, and abridged his *Religious Affections*

in 1773; he quotes him as “That great man, President Edwards, of New England,” in “A Thought on Necessity,” §§III.1-6; though he takes issue with him over predestination (see Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), X: 475–476. On the other hand, there was also a rich tradition of spiritual sensation language in Christian antiquity, and it is well known that Wesley immersed himself in patristic literature. Wesley himself gives a list of patristic sources in defense of his claim that assurance is well compared to the blind receiving their sight: “All this may be allowed concerning the primitive Fathers’, I mean particularly Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian; to whom I would add Macarius and Ephraim Syrus.” “Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton,” §VII.11, *Ibid.*, X: 79. The influence of Clement, Origen, Macarius, and Ephrem Syrus is noted in Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 74–75, and Mealey, *Taste and See*, 28. The theme is particularly prominent in Macarius, who Wesley included in his *Christian Library* and quoted in other contexts as well. See Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” §I.7, Works 2:159; Sermon 132, “On Laying the Foundation Stone of the New Chapel,” §II.3, Works 3:586. Hoo-Jung Lee has argued that Macarius should be read as “the major patristic source” for Wesley’s understanding of the experience of the Spirit. See “Experiencing the Spirit in Wesley and Macarius,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*. (Nashville: Kingswood, 1998), 211. Mealey has also shown that Wesley, in his defense of the immediate sensible activity of the Spirit, draws on a broad range of patristic sources, including Chrysostom, Jerome, Athanasius, and Augustine. Mealey’s suggestion is that such descriptions of spiritual experience were in fact what Wesley believed to be “characteristic of all the best Christian divinity of every age.” Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵ *Ibid.* This is the central claim of Mealey’s dissertation.

⁶ I use the term “intuitively” here in its colloquial sense, to mean something which is recognized immediately by the subject, without prior reflection or reasoning. I am not referencing any specific epistemological account of intuitive knowledge.

⁷ While Aristotle remained the official standard at Oxford during Wesley’s time, the private reading of tutors and students included Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the many works that sprung up in response to Locke’s epistemology. Cf. Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2002), 386. Oxford was steeped in Aristotelian logical tradition, and students of Wesley’s era were instructed on the basis of compendia of scholastic logic, such as Henry Aldrich’s *Rudiments of the Art of Logic*. Wesley studied Aldrich, and continued to see his approach as normative, even as newer logics influenced by Locke, such as that of Watts, gained ascendancy. *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸ Wesley’s study of Locke seems to have been indirect at first. He read a number of the responses to Locke in the mid 1720s, and the first indication we have of his actually reading the *Essay* itself is in 1732. Richard Brantley characterizes Wesley’s engagement with Locke’s *essay* at this time as “all but direct.” Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 29. Rack, indicates 1732 as the time when Wesley first read Locke’s *Essay*. *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 386.

⁹ Found in *Works* (Jackson) XIII: 455-464.

¹⁰ It was, according to Wesley, an issue which was “at that time an utter paradox both in the philosophical and the religious world.” *Works* (Jackson) XIII: 455.

¹¹ *Works* (Jackson) XIII: 456.

¹² Sermon 69, “The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,” §I.4, *Works* 2: 571.

¹³ *Works* (Jackson) XIII:462, 464.

¹⁴ Showing his true colours as an Oxford man, Wesley remarks that “all the operations of the mind are more accurately divided by Aristotle than Mr. Locke. They are three and no more: Simple apprehension, judgment, and discourse.” *Works* (Jackson) XIII:456. For Wesley, this is the standard definition of reason as a faculty of the mind. Reason “means a faculty of the human soul; that faculty which exerts itself in three ways: by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind, the first and most simple act of understanding. *Judgment* is the determining that the things before conceived either agree with or differ from each other. *Discourse* (strictly speaking) is the motion of progress of the mind from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations I here mean by the term *reason*.” Sermon 70, “The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,” §I.2, *Works* 2: 590. Elsewhere, Wesley comments, “It seems Mr. Locke only gives a new name to simple apprehension, terming it perception. Of judgment and reason, he speaks in the Fourth Book. Discerning, comparing, compounding, abstracting, are species of judgment. Retention, or memory, refers to them all.” *Remarks Upon Mr. Locke’s Essay*, *Works* (Jackson) XIII: 456.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 464. Wesley was sincere in his endorsements, and made good on them by acting as “judicious Tutor” to his reading public, editing and publishing extracts of Locke’s *Essay* in *The Arminian Magazine* between January 1782 and April 1784. A table of reference listing all the portions of Locke’s *Essay* which were extracted and published by Wesley is found in Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism*, Appendix D, pp. 224–225. As we would expect from the above assessment, Wesley did not excerpt any material from Books III or IV.

¹⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 386.

¹⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1690), §IV.19.5. Since Locke’s work is available in numerous editions, I will cite section references, rather than page references.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §IV.19.6–8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, §IV.19.8–9. Interestingly, Ronald Knox also includes the claim to new faculties as typical of enthusiasm: “The saved man has come out into a new order of being, with a new set of faculties which are proper to his state...” Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 3.

²⁰ Locke, *Essay*, §IV.19.10. Wesley will speak of new birth as the awakening of the spiritual senses.

²¹ *Ibid.*, §IV.19.14–16.

²² Sermon 37, “The Nature of Enthusiasm,” §12, *Works* 2: 50. Late in life, and looking back on some of the failings of the Methodists, he describes excesses among them that cannot be called anything but enthusiasm, and uses language

similar to that found in Locke's *Essay*: "[Methodism] brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspiration, ascribing to the all-wise God all the wild, absurd, self-inconsistent dreams of a heated imagination." Sermon 107, "On God's Vineyard," §V.2, *Works* 3: 515.

²³ Locke, *Essay*, §IV.19.16.

²⁴ Peter Browne, *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*, 3rd ed. (London: R. Innys & R. Manby, 1737). Peter Browne, *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding*, 3rd Edition (London: R. Innys and R. Manby, 1737). Originally published in 1728, and revised in 1729 and 1737. The connection between Wesley and Browne is discussed at length by Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism*, 29–47. See also Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 386–387; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood Books, 1994), 27–28; Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 25–26. Wesley received Browne's work with enthusiasm when it was published, and composed an abridgement of it in 1730, which he later published as an appendix to his compendium of natural philosophy, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation, or A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, published originally in 1750 (Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism*, 29; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 27.). The theological orientation of Browne's treatise undoubtedly attracted Wesley's attention, in part because one of Browne's stated aims was to counter the deists, whom he believed did not recognize the limits of reason. Browne was concerned to "lay a Foundation for the clear and effectual Confutation" of the errors of both enthusiasts and rationalists, "but especially those of the *Arians*, and *Socinians*, and *Deists*, and *Free-thinkers* of all Sorts." *Browne, Procedure, Extent, and Limits*, 51. Irregularities in the use of capitals, italics, and occasionally in spelling, are reproduced as they are found in Browne.

²⁵ "When the Ideas of Sensation and Reflection are first laid down indifferently for the Groundwork, then Men run endless Divisions upon them. . . Tho' it be a *Scheme* as precarious and as void of any Foundation in Nature as *Aristotle's* Predicaments, but much more perplexed and confounding; and thus they go on till their Heads are so filled and impregnated with them, that they turn everything into Ideas that comes in their way, insomuch that they can neither think nor speak without them." *Ibid.*, 68–69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 383.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 55. Browne is in some ways more extreme in his empiricism than Locke, chiding Locke for his indiscriminate use of the word "idea" to refer to ideas of both sensation and reflection. Browne argues that "the Word *Idea*, according to its genuine and proper Signification, should be limited and confined to our simple Sensations only, and to the various Alterations and Combinations of them by the pure Intellect." *Ibid.*, 63. Locke's use of "idea" was too imprecise for Browne's liking, as it seemed to imply ideas of reflection as independent sources of knowledge. "Thus the laying down the Ideas of *Sensation* and *Reflection* to be *Alike* the *Original* Sources and Foundation of all our Knowledge, is one great and fundamental Error which runs thro' most of the Discourses and Essays of our modern Writers of Logic and Metaphysics." *Ibid.*, 64. The point is made repeatedly by Browne in various contexts throughout the treatise. Wesley is less bothered by Locke's use of "idea," though it is at times used improperly: "And why should any one be angry at his using the word "idea" for "whatever is the object of the mind in

thinking?” Although, it is true, it is his favourite word, which he often thrusts in not so properly.” Remarks upon *Mr. Locke’s Essay*, in *Works* (Jackson) XIII: 456.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 472.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 473.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 477.

³¹ Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 55. He references Gerald Cragg’s note on Wesley’s *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, §32, in *Works*, 11:57.

³² Randy Maddox helpfully summarizes Wesley’s view of the Spirit by writing that he “equates the Holy Spirit with God’s gracious empowering Presence, restored through Christ.” Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 119. Indeed, Wesley speaks of the Spirit as *grace*, which, though it sometimes means “unmerited mercy,” may also refer to “that power of God the Holy Ghost, which ‘worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’” Sermon 12, “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” §15, *Works* 1:309. This is not to say, of course that the Spirit is a mere “power” or attribute of God. Doctrinally, Wesley holds to a orthodox Western concept of the Spirit. For example, see *A Letter to a Roman Catholic*, §8, “I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy in himself, but the immediate cause of all holiness in us; enlightening our understandings, rectifying our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of the adoption of sons, leading us in our actions; purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies, to a full and eternal enjoyment of God.” *Works* (Jackson) X:82. However, such foundational issues as eternal procession, Personhood, and divinity are beliefs which he assumes, and does not normally explicate. Hence Wesley’s writing on the Spirit is focused heavily on the Spirit’s work in human beings.

³³ “But you thought I had meant ‘immediate inspiration.’ So I do, or I mean nothing at all. Not indeed such inspiration as is sine mediis. But all inspiration, though by means, is immediate.” *A Farther Appeal*, §I.V.28, *Works* 11:171.

³⁴ Mealey calculates at least three references to “spiritual sensation,” fifteen references to “spiritual senses,” four references to “spiritual sight,” and one reference to “supernatural sight,” “faculties capable of discerning things invisible,” and “spiritual sense.” Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 63–64. The references, range in date from *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1743) to Sermon 125, “On Living Without God” (1790).

³⁵ I am indebted to Mealey for pointing out very clearly this threefold use of the language of spiritual sensation in Wesley. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 treat each of these doctrines in turn. *Ibid.*, 104–288.

³⁶ *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* §32, *Works* 11:56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Works* 11:56–57.

⁴⁰ *An Earnest Appeal*, §§33–34; *Works* 11:57.

⁴¹ *An Earnest Appeal*, §35, *Works* 11:57.

⁴² The spiritual senses are spoken of as “inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things.” Sermon 9, “The Spirit of Bondage and the Spirit of Adoption,” §I.1,

Works 1:251; Charles Wesley also speaks of “inlets of spiritual knowledge,” Sermon 3, “Awake, Thou that Sleepest,” §I.11, *Works* 1:146. They are also “faculties capable of discerning things invisible.” “A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton,” §VI.II.9, *Works* (Jackson) X:74. If our “spiritual senses are all locked up,” then we have “no true knowledge of the things of God.” But when the spiritual senses are exercised, we are “daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom.” “Sermon 45, “The New Birth,” §II.4, *Works* 2:192-193. The physical senses, and therefore all natural reason, on which they are based, “have nothing to do with the invisible world; they are not adapted to it.” Sermon 119, “Walking by Faith and Walking by Sight,” §6, *Works* 4:50-51. Only when the Spirit has awakened the spiritual senses can the invisible world be grasped: “By this two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our soul both opened and enlightened, we see the things which the natural “eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard.” We have a prospect of the invisible things of God; we see the spiritual world, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being: And we see the eternal world; piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed.” Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” §II.1, *Works* 2:161.

⁴³ We should note that Wesley clearly is not approaching the knowledge of God in Platonic categories. The knowledge of God given by the Spirit comes to us completely *extra nos*, and is not something which is somehow found within ourselves. Cp. John Smith, “...seek for God within your own soul, he is best discerned... by an intellectual touch of him.” in *Cambridge Platonist spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 158. While this sounds similar to Wesley, Smith is suggesting that we use the soul sense that is in us; the knowledge of God comes for Smith from ascending by being conformed to God, whereas for Wesley it is more of a dramatic, revelatory event.

⁴⁴ *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, §I.V.1; Wesley does not name the author, but he is identified in the notes by Gerald Cragg. *Works* 11:139.

⁴⁵ *A Farther Appeal*, §I.V.2, *Works* 11:140.

⁴⁶ *A Farther Appeal*, §I.V.28, *Works* 11:171.

⁴⁷ Sermon 45, “The New Birth,” §II.4, *Works* 2:193. See also the last paragraph of his last written sermon, Sermon 122, “On Faith,” §18, where he writes, “... hereby a new set of senses (so to speak) is opened in our souls...” *Works* 4:200.

⁴⁸ Sermon 130, “On Living Without God,” §11, *Works* 4:173.

⁴⁹ Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – I,” §II.11, *Works* 1:282-283.

⁵⁰ Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – I,” §II.9, *Works* 1:282.

⁵¹ Cf. the quote from Locke, *Essay*, IV.19.8-9, noted above.

⁵² Sermon 119, “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §19, *Works* 4:58.

⁵³ For example, in Sermon 1, “Salvation by Faith,” preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford, in June of 1738, Wesley defines faith as follows: “Christian faith is then not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of

Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; and in consequence hereof a closing with him and cleaving to him as our 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption' or, in one word, our salvation." Sermon 1, "Salvation by Faith," §I.5, *Works* 1:121. Also, Sermon 2, "The Almost Christian," also preached at St. Mary's, in July of 1741, §II.5, where Wesley quotes from the Homily on the Salvation of Man: "The right and true Christian faith is' (to go on in the words of our own Church) 'not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ'—it is a 'sure trust and confidence' which a man hath in God 'that by the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God'—whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments." *Works* 1:139.

⁵⁴ Secondly, "conviction." Sermon 4, "Scriptural Christianity," (his final Oxford sermon, preached August 24, 1744) §1.2, *Works* 1:161.

⁵⁵ Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith," §IV.2, *Works* 1:194.

⁵⁶ An Earnest Appeal, §6, *Works* 11:46.

⁵⁷ Sermon 119, "Walking by Faith and Walking by Sight," §12, *Works* 4:53.

⁵⁸ So, in "Justification by Faith," from 1746, we find Wesley moving immediately from a discussion of faith as divine evidence into quotations from the homilies on faith as "sure trust and confidence." §IV.2-3, *Works* 1:194-195; See also Sermon 18, "The Marks of the New Birth," §1.3, where the "sure trust and confidence" is described as "a disposition, which God hath wrought in the heart." *Works* 1:418-419. However, in the last decade of his life, Wesley addressed the topic of faith a number of times in published sermons, always speaking of faith as *elenchos*, and making no mention of the fiduciary aspect. See Sermon 106, "On Faith, Hebrews 11:6," 1788; Sermon 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 1788; Sermon 119, "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," 1788; and Sermon 122, "On Faith," 1791. In the sermon "On Faith, Hebrews 11:6," (1788), Wesley describes faith as "such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness." Sermon 106, "On Faith," §I.10, *Works* 3:497. While Wesley maintains an "enabling" aspect of faith as divine evidence, it should be clear that this enabling does not include the capacity for faith itself, as if the *elenchos* was the facilitation of a "choice" to put on faith. The *elenchos* is a gift of God, and it is itself faith, meaning that faith also is a gift, not a human work enabled by the *elenchos*. In accordance with his understanding of the Spirit as the gracious and empowering presence of God, he conceives the experience of the divine *elenchos* as transformative.

⁵⁹ However, it should be noted that Wesley presupposes some initial degree of regeneration which precedes even faith. See the discussion in Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 159. Some degree of restoration of the spiritual senses is necessary for the person to experience faith as a divine *elenchos*. The new birth, then, denotes the greater opening of these capacities following upon faith.

⁶⁰ So, as Mealey summarizes, "faith is prior in reality, but not in time, both to new birth and to justification, in the initial moment of Christian life. Mealey, "Taste and See that the Lord is Good," 173.

⁶¹ Sometimes Wesley speaks as if these are latent abilities which are not functioning, as in the vivid image of a fetus in the womb: "he has eyes, but sees

not, he has ears, but does not hear, he has a very imperfect use of any other sense.” Sermon 45, “The New Birth,” §II.4, *Works* 2:192. Also, Sermon 9, “The Spirit of Bondage and the Spirit of Adoption,” §I.1: “...his soul is in a deep sleep: His spiritual senses are not awake: They discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; they are sealed together, and see not.” *Works* 1:251. At other times, rather than speaking of the spiritual senses as somehow dormant, he speaks of them as absent: “Ye have not received the Holy Ghost. Ye have no spiritual senses.” Sermon 130, “On Living Without God,” §15, *Works* 4:175-176. Also *An Earnest Appeal*, §50: “There is no intercourse between your soul and God. ‘You have neither seen him,’ (by faith, as our Lord witnessed against them of old time,) ‘nor heard his voice at any time.’ You have no spiritual ‘senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.’” *Works* 11:64.

⁶² Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” §II.1, *Works* 2:161.

⁶³ “...when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed! His whole soul is now sensible of God, and he can say by sure experience, ‘Thou art about my bed, and about my path’; I feel thee in ‘all my ways’. ‘Thou besettest me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me.’ The Spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul; and the same breath which comes from, returns to God.” Sermon 19, “The Great Privilege of Those Born of God,” §I.8, *Works* 1:434. Multiple similar examples could be given. For example, Sermon 9, “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” §III.2, “Then he sees (but not with eyes of flesh and blood) ‘The Lord, the Lord God; merciful and gracious...’” *Works* 1:260-261.

⁶⁴ “Every man applying those scriptural marks to himself may know whether he is a child of God. Thus if he know, first, ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God’ into all holy tempers and actions, ‘they are the sons of God’ (for which he has the infallible assurance of Holy Writ); secondly, I am thus led by the Spirit of God—he will easily conclude, ‘Therefore I am a “son of God”.’” Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse I” §I.2, *Works* 1:270.

⁶⁵ Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse I,” §I.7, *Works* 1:274. The definition is repeated by Wesley in Sermon 11, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse II,” §II.2, which was written twenty-one years after the above quote (the dates are 1746 and 1767 respectively). *Works* 1:287.

⁶⁶ Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse I,” §1.7, *Works* 1:274; also §I.12 “The manner how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart I do not take upon me to explain. ‘Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it.’” *Works* 1:276.

⁶⁷ “But the fact we know: namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption that while it is present to the soul he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship than he can doubt of the shining of the sun while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.” Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse I,” §I.12, *Works* 1:276.

⁶⁸ Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 5–6. He returns to the question in his conclusion, pp. 291-294.

⁶⁹ For example, Sermon 4, “Scriptural Christianity,” §I.1, “By this faith of the operation of God, which was the very substance, or subsistence, of things hoped for, (Heb. xi.1.) the demonstrative evidence of invisible things, he instantly received the Spirit of Adoption...” *Works* 1:161. Wesley discusses faith and assurance

separately, suggesting on the one hand that faith is the only condition of justification, Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith," §IV.1-6, Works 1:193-197. Yet at the same time he insists that no one can be justified without knowing it, and this can only come through the witness of adoption: "A sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me." This is that faith by which he is justified, or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, "Thou art pardoned; thou hast redemption in his blood." And this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart." Q.5. Have all Christians this faith? May not a man be justified, and not know it? A. That all true Christians have such faith as implies an assurance of God's love, appears from Romans viii.15; Ephes. iv.32; 2 Cor. xiii.5; Heb. viii.10; 1 John iv.10, and 19." From "Minutes of Some Late Conversations," 1744, Works (Jackson) VIII:276.

⁷⁰ Thus, before long, Wesley was revising his position to make room for exceptions. *Ibid.*, from 1745, "Q.1. Is a sense of God's pardoning love absolutely necessary to our being in his favour? Or may there be some exempt cases? A. We dare not say there are not. Q.2. Is it necessary to inward and outward holiness? A. We incline to think it is." Works (Jackson) VIII:282.

⁷¹ "He actually is at that very moment in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a servant of God, not properly a son. " Sermon 106, "On Faith, Hebrews 11:6" §I.10, Works 3:497.

⁷² *Ibid.*, §I.12, Works 3:497.

⁷³ Even further still, he at times distinguishes the plerophory of faith and the plerophory of hope. For, example in "A Letter to Mrs. Ritchie," October 6, 1778: "The plerophory (or full assurance) of faith is such a divine testimony, that we are reconciled to God, as excludes all doubt and fear concerning it. This refers only to what is present. The plerophory (or full assurance) of hope is a divine testimony, that we shall endure to the end; or, more directly, that we shall enjoy God in glory. This is by no means essential to, or inseparable from, perfect love." Works (Jackson) XIII:60-61. On the basis of this distinction, Arthur Yates distinguishes between four degrees of assurance: faith in general, assurance of adoption, full assurance of faith, and full assurance of hope. See *The Doctrine of Assurance: With Special Reference to John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 128-132.

⁷⁴ "Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the preachers commonly called Methodists began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that even one 'who feared God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' In consequence of this they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, 'Do you know that your sins are forgiven?' And upon their answering, 'No', immediately replied, 'Then you are a child of the devil.' No; that does not follow." Sermon 106, "On Faith, Hebrews 11:6," §I.11, Works 3:497.

⁷⁵ The point is well demonstrated by Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 131-137.

⁷⁶ For example, "If Christ is not revealed in them, they are not yet Christian believers." "Minutes of Some Late Conversations," June 16, 1747, Works (Jackson) VIII:293.

⁷⁷ As Mealey summarizes in his conclusion: “The apparent incoherence of Wesley’s soteriology comes into focus once we understand the experience of spiritual sensation realistically. This basic experience of God is the supernatural presence of God in the believer; this experience is nothing else but a direct contact with the life of God.” Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 291.

⁷⁸ On this point, again, Maddox helpfully comments that, for the mature Wesley, the various aspects of salvation “were not an ordered series of discrete states,” but “intertwined facets of an overarching purpose – our gradual recovery of the holiness that God has always intended for us.” Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 158.

⁷⁹ In this I differ from Mealey, who asserts strongly that Wesley’s use of the language of spiritual senses is “the exact antithesis of Lockean empiricism.” Mealey, “Taste and See that the Lord is Good,” 290. While I agree that we need to be careful not to read too much philosophy into Wesley’s use of this language, I think Mealey has over-stated the case against considering the influence of empiricism on Wesley’s use of the language.

⁸⁰ Here I think Wesley could have harmonized his views of spiritual knowledge with Locke’s category of “intuitive knowledge,” the apprehension of which Locke describes as “irresistible,” and “immediately perceived,” without any room for doubt. Locke, *Essay*, §IV.II.1; 472. Similarly, Wesley is asserting the reality of an experience which is known “antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity; yea, to any reasoning whatsoever.” Sermon 11, “The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse II,” §III.4, *Works* 1:289.

⁸¹ While this is, of course, a rather broad generalization, the fact that Albert Outler could write an article titled, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?” is a testimony to the general weakness of the Methodist ecclesiological tradition. See Albert C. Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 211-226.