

The Seven Senses

A normal human is given five means of awareness of physical things about him or her. A normal person also can list them as sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell. These five senses give us limited perceptions, however. We can detect only a certain range of wave lengths of sound and sight. We have not the ability of a homing pigeon to interpret accurately the sense of direction nor of a bat to interpret bounced sound waves. We can see some but not all of a peach, particularly we cannot see the life in the kernel. Modern technical equipment allows us to detect many things not ordinarily discerned through the physical senses. But that is not what I am focused on here.

My observations here are suggestive rather than scientific. The sixth sense that I will propose comes under a different heading, a classification that I will not try to make. I am suggesting that imagination is a sixth sense sparked by the five physical senses. Imagination is mental imagery combining inconclusive perceptions of the five senses. Let me illustrate: I see something lying ahead of me. I imagine it is an animal. As I approach, I imagine that it is a dog, then I imagine that it is a dead dog and my emotions begin to be stirred. Coming closer where my five senses can discern better, I see motion which allows me to know that it is alive but I imagine that it is asleep. Observing more closely, I see the movement as slightly convulsive jerks and I imagine the dog is dreaming. That injects a mystical element which cannot be proved or disproved though I may declare earnestly that the dog was dreaming. This state of imagination changes my unpleasant emotion to one of relief and, perhaps, a chuckle.

If I were proposing that the sixth sense is faith, it is likely you would have agreed. But as I describe it as imagination, do you respond negatively? Why? What is the difference? My imagination was based upon yet unproved evidence. As I came closer to the dog, the evidences became stronger, though still not proved. What I thought about the dog did not prove or disprove anything. Faith does not prove or disprove anything. Even as clearer evidence detected through the five senses changed my emotions from negative to positive, my final conclusion that the dog was dreaming was still unproved.

Paul wrote, "*We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Cor. 5:6-7). Dropping the literary devices, he is saying that our lives are directed by faith instead of the physical senses and the concepts that can be proven by them. "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). We can have assurance that brings strong conviction about things which cannot be proven. In fact, that can be said about our whole system of religion. In varying degrees depending upon the person, faith is influenced by mystical, emotional subjectivity. One cannot prove that God exists, that the Bible is his revelation, that Jesus made atonement for sin, that unending life will be given believers, or the list of other tenets of our faith. The song that declares that, "I know he lives because he lives in my heart," relies on the subjectivity of imagination, faith, and hope as

proof, but that is not reliable proof. This does not mean that our faith is baseless. There are sufficient evidences to give us assurance and conviction. The more logical person demands more evidence while the more emotional person is content with less.

Now I will add a seventh sense in this unscientific, and perhaps illogical, rambling. No person has seen God at any time, though he has made himself known in specific instances through physical evidence that can be perceived by physical man. He revealed himself in the incarnation. But God is Spirit. We cannot discern spirit by the five senses. By that sixth sense of imagination, we may think to form some imagery of spirit, but it is based entirely on physical senses. Though I knew my Elma Lea for about sixty years, I had no concept of her spirit. I could not see it as it left her body. And if I am limited to the five physical senses in the spirit world where she awaits, I will not discern her there. I will have to be given another sense.

If a person is born totally blind, never having seen a ray of light, how can you explain sight and light and color and visual form to him? It would be impossible. The only glimpses we have of God, heaven, and those in the spirit world are through the distorting lens of the five physical senses, but a spirit has no flesh and bones, no earthly elements. Flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God. The five senses will be left with the dust through which they were exercised. We will have to be given the sense of spiritual perception. If we were suddenly given that discernment now, what a different world it would be. We would “see” people as they are. We would discern God everywhere.

Even as the blind person can have no perception of sight but may try to imagine it based on his other four senses, our perception of spirit, God, and the spirit world (heaven) are based upon our five senses. Because of that most of us imagine heaven and its inhabitants as a physical world like this earth and its inhabitants as having bodies like our earthly ones with the same feelings and emotions as we have in the physical body. The inspired Scriptures accommodate our sensual nature in many ways. How could we have believed that divinity died for us had there been no incarnation? How could we comprehend a Spirit conquering death if there was no restoring of life to a physical body? How could we perceive a newness of relationship with a divine Spirit without the figure of a physical rebirth? A physical ascension into the clouds assured witnesses that the risen divinity returned to the spirit world. The physical demonstration of a seed’s nature being changed completely is the closest perception of our mortal body being changed into an immortal spiritual being. All these accommodations to our senses use physical perceptions to give imagery to the mysterious spiritual realm to be discerned only when we have been given what I have called a seventh sense when we leave this body of dust behind.

Perhaps you watched the program, “The Elegant Universe,” on public television recently. Renowned physicists told how we can comprehend five dimensions but that there may be any number of other dimensions operating in the universe that we cannot detect. They were not speaking of spiritual things, but they opened the door for such a dimension.

And, who knows, those mysterious “out of body experiences” that many have recounted as occurring when they were near death may overlap as a bordering dimension.

Jesus explained to those mystified disciples who thought they were seeing a ghost after his resurrection that “*a spirit has not flesh and bones*” (Luke 24:39). He was still in the flesh, but in his ascension, evidently, he left that behind, for “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*” And, “*As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable* (1Cor. 15:44, 48-50).

What will heaven be like -- the unseen, spiritual world of Him who is Spirit? The world of spirits is an existence, a state, another dimension, rather than a place. I can no more describe that dimension than the person born blind can describe sight or the one born deaf can describe music.

. By the sixth sense of faith we can be convinced that it awaits us, but not until we experience the seventh sense given in our immortality will we comprehend heaven.

(Cecil Hook; November 2003) []