THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY AS A MEANS OF GRACE
IN THE WORKS OF JOHN WESLEY

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ABSTRACT

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The Appropriation of Christian antiquity as a means of grace
in the works of John Wesley

This paper argues that Christian antiquity is one of the means of grace Wesley used to enrich his description of the divine-human relationship. It contrasts with the study of Christian antiquity in Wesley’s texts identified by Ted Campbell who concluded that Wesley used Christian antiquity in polemical, conservative, and programmatic ways to advocate his wish for Christian revival.

Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity was influenced by his High Church background, and those experiences received from the Moravians. The Moravian influence coupled with Wesley’s High Church identity, led him to build a theology which treats Christian antiquity similar to the Anglican pietism established by Anthony Horneck. Similarly, by appropriating antiquity, Wesley was seeking for ancient Christian virtues which represented the Christ-like characteristics that help Christians to receive the ‘spiritual senses’ for knowledge about God.

Wesley was educated during the period when British empiricism was at its peak. He adopted the views of John Locke and Peter Browne for his epistemology dealing with physical knowledge, but referred to the long history of Christianity and philosophers such as John Norris, to insist that spiritual senses are needed for spiritual knowledge. It should be noticed that “knowing” for Wesley was always relational. In other words, he argued, appropriating Christian antiquity would help people receive spiritual senses for true and relational knowledge about God; and this relational knowledge about God is in fact implicating an increase in the relationship with God.

For Wesley the means of grace was a channel God used to interact with people. By this interaction, people could become conscious of and even know God. Wesley also proposed the concept of the general means of grace which he argued was instrumental in facilitating Christian self-examination and self-correction. In Wesley's view, humanity could use Christian antiquity as a means of grace to know God thus enabling the divine-human relationship to be enriched. Moreover, when a person acquired ancient virtues by appropriating Christian antiquity, they were in fact exercising self-examination and self-correction in their life. This paper therefore concludes that the appropriation of Christian antiquity is a means of grace in the works of John Wesley.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

John Wesley stated that,

no thinking man will condemn the Fathers of the Church, for having in all ages and nations, appointed some to the ministry, who suppose they had the capacity, yet had not the opportunity of attaining them. But what excuse is this, for one who has the opportunity, and makes no use of it? What can be urged for a person who has had an university education, if he does not understand them all?¹

John Wesley treasured antiquity as a source of genuine knowledge on religion. He accepted antiquity as necessary for the argument. Ancient writers therefore were perceived by him to be good interpreters for the Scripture, in which their thought is in line with the sacred texts. Christian antiquity was considered one of the reliable sources for the knowledge of God. Wesley stated, ‘What is…that the doctrine we preach are true?...We prove the doctrines we preach by Scripture and reason; and, if need be, by antiquity.’² Wesley treated Christian antiquity as one of the authorities on religion, although he sees it only in subservience to Scripture. In light of Christian antiquity, John Wesley preached and wrote his journal and sermons. From Wesley’s point of view, Christian antiquity functions as a stimulus for Christian revival. For example, in his ‘On Clemens Alexandrinus’s Description of a Perfect Christian’, Wesley argued ‘the mystic powers of love’ can perfect human soul towards the state of perfection.³ This is to say, Wesley used Clement of Alexandria to describe the state of perfection and the ‘mystic powers of love’. In Wesley’s appropriation of Clement, he applied Clement’s theology and eventually used ‘perfect love’ to be the way of salvation and

sanctification. We can see that Christian antiquity complemented Wesley’s movement for revival and the development of his theology.

Therefore in this paper, the researcher proposes a study on how John Wesley appropriated Christian antiquity in his theology, and how his appropriation of Christian antiquity was consistent with his understanding on the means of grace. The main thesis of this paper is to argue that appropriation of Christian antiquity could serve as a means of grace for Wesley. In other words, Wesley’s concept of the means of grace could be applied to understand his appropriation of the Christian antiquity. Before we go deep in our analysis, some terminology used in the paper should first be clarified.

1.1 Terminology of the Research

Firstly, by Christian antiquity, Wesley referred to ‘the religion of the primitive church, of the whole church in the purest ages’⁴; by appropriation, it means ‘reading or taking for use’. Therefore, by ‘appropriation of Christian antiquity’, this paper means ‘reading or taking for use the religion of the primitive church’. In addition, the paper will also use primitivism, primitive church, ancient or early Fathers to refer to Christian antiquity; apart from that, we will use ‘patristic’ to refer to Christian antiquity as well. With regard to the period of Christian antiquity, Wesley showed more regard for the first three Christian centuries. In Wesley’s publication of Advice to a Young Clergyman, he mentioned that his father Samuel Wesley recommends the New Testament Apocryphal works and the Apostolic Fathers; in addition at his publication of his Christian Library, Wesley began with a translation-partly his own work-of the early second century Apostolic Fathers. But apart from that, Wesley

also accepted some of the fourth and fifth century texts, especially the Trinitarian dogma confessed in the Council of Nicaea. He stated, ‘We ended...the Apostolic Canons; so called, as Bishop Beveridge observes, “because partly grounded upon, partly agreeing with, the traditions delivered down from the Apostles”. But he (Beveridge) observes farther...“they contain the discipline used in the church at the time when they were collected: not when the Council of Nicaea met; for then many parts of it were useless and obsolete.”’ The writings of these periods of the Early Church were, in Wesley’s view, the most reliable, because these were those closest to the apostolic period. They were the writings from the early apologists, the patristic sources, the Church Fathers. They were ‘the most authentic commentators on Scripture, being nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with the Spirit by whom all Scripture was given’.

Secondly, like most of the clergy of Wesley’s time, Wesley had received a classical education, which enabled him to read the ancient Christian texts. Wesley himself gave importance to the effect of reading. In his Letter to George Holder, he expressed his view on reading, ‘It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people’. It is thus expected that reading of the ancient texts for Wesley was important for one’s Christian life. In fact, John Wesley did expect his lay preachers to be competent in the ancient language and the Christian texts in his Address to the Clergy. He had desperately advocated the ancient texts of ‘St. Chrysostom, Basile, Jerome, Augustine, and, above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus’ to his

preachers. By reading the ancient texts, they prepare their hearts, minds, and bodies for proclaiming the Gospel, to which God has called them to do.

Thirdly, we will soon show that Christian virtues are a vital concept that will be employed throughout the whole paper, in order to argue that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) could strengthen the divine-human relationship and served as means of grace for John Wesley. By appropriation of Christian antiquity, humanity can acquire Christian virtues. With regard to the Christian virtues, Wesley during his time in Oxford led the group called ‘Methodist’ to reflect some prescribed virtues by daily self-examination: ‘the Love of God and Love of Man headed the list each week, but they were followed by such items as humility, mortification, self-denial, resignation, and thankfulness’. Wesley’s view is that

“Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment”. Very excellent things are spoken of love; it is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue...“If there be any virtue, if there be any praise,” they are all comprised in this one word, --love...The royal law of heaven and earth is this, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

A rightly formed heart guiding the outward form of the work, i.e. love.

Strive to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of God blameless, "giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure: Add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; to patience godliness; to godliness brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness charity."

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11 John Wesley, ‘Journal on 1 April 1762’, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol.4, p.120.
We see that when someone is transformed by the Christian virtues, he is equipped with a ‘distinguishing mark of ... a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of Him that created it, -- is one of those important truths that can only be spiritually discerned’. This was, for Wesley, the substance of ‘inward religion’. Therefore Christian virtues for Wesley were a right intention with Christ’s character. Embodiment of Christian virtues means one is inwardly transformed and thus then to be led to certain outward actions and habits. Throughout this paper, we are going to employ this understanding of the Christian virtues for our analysis on the connection between the Christian antiquity and the means of grace. As mentioned earlier, by appropriation of Christian antiquity, Wesley was going to acquire Christian virtues. Now with our understanding on the Christian virtues, appropriation of Christian antiquity is seen not as copying the practice of the primitive church, rather it is by reading the ancient texts for a right state of soul that is embodying a Christlike attitude.

1.2 Outline of the Research

Hoo-Jung Lee in his PhD dissertation, *The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley*, intended to propose a new clue or direction for re-reading Wesley and interpreting the formulation of his theology, i.e. the theology of re-creation. It was through this new structure that Lee thought Wesley and the patristic writers in Christian antiquity could be linked.

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Lee claimed the distortion of the divine image of humanity requires a radical and real change of New Creation that is not merely an instantaneous event, but also a teleological progress toward the ultimate fullness of salvation. In other words, for Lee, Wesleyan salvation cannot be complete until the fullness and perfection of our divine image is consummated in the final New Creation. In this respect, Lee insisted Wesley’s doctrine of New Creation occupies a strategic place in his scheme of theology. There emerged a new task of viewing Wesley’s theology from the standpoint of creation or re-creation. The doctrine of New Creation signified a fresh motif in viewing Wesley’s theology from a holistic and comprehensive standpoint.

Finally Lee concluded that this motif in Wesley could be traced back to patristic sources of Christian antiquity. He pointed out that the theological linkage between the patristic writers and Wesley was shown by ‘Wesley’s teleology of New Creation in the pneumato-centric context of transformative sanctification’.15

However, the application of patristic sources, in Wesley, were revised and edited. He edited and revised rather than preserved the original meaning of the patristic text. By doing so, he advocated church and Christian reform. For example, he edited heavily Macarius’ ‘Fifty Spiritual Homilies’ when he prepared his Christian Library, in order to make it coherent with his understanding on the Christian Perfection.16

Then what patristic sources, according to Lee, did Wesley relate to? The original text or his edition? Wesley did edit the patristic text; Christian antiquity could only be a veil for Wesley’s own theology. However, Wesley’s theological system itself was built upon or could be traced back to the patristic theology.

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15 Lee, The Doctrine of New Creation, p.5.
In the second chapter of this study will review the literatures of the early 1960s, including Albert Outler, Ted Campbell, Roberta Bondi, and Bengt Haglund. In studies of Wesley and the early church Fathers, Ted Campbell looked at the various ways in which Wesley used the materials from the early church in his own writings. He categorized these uses into three groups: polemical, conservative, and programmatic.

By ‘polemical’ use of Christian antiquity he meant to call upon early Christian customs or teachings in order to polemize with opponents on their practices or beliefs. For example, he cited the ancient texts against the Roman Catholic teachings, and against the doctrines of predestination by quoting Augustine and Chrysostom. These are considered polemical uses of Christian antiquity. ‘Conservative’ use of Christian antiquity is to call upon a vision of Christian antiquity in order to defend the existing customs and teachings of the established church. For example, Wesley’s general defended of Anglican liturgical traditions showed his conservative view in affirming the eighteenth century practices he believed to be coherent with the practices in ancient Christianity. ‘Programmatic’ use of Christian antiquity is to call upon a vision of Christian antiquity to find patterns of customs, beliefs, or even virtues to ‘programme’ the Christianity of their age. For instance, Wesley used Christian antiquity in order to confirm beliefs or practices which the Methodists had espoused in addition to Anglican beliefs and practices. In the chapter ‘The Manners of the Ancient Christians’ in Campbell’s book, he seems to accept that editing on patristic text could be possible when Wesley quoted the antiquity for the programmatic purpose. This conclusion of Campbell would complete Lee’s argument, because it seems to affirm Lee’s argument that Wesley’s theology could be traced back to the early church, and at the same time offering explanation on Wesley’s editing on the patristic texts in which Lee has not explained.

However, although Campbell’s argument seems to replenish Lee’s argument, it is not sufficient enough to complete Lee’s argument in explaining the connection between Wesley and the patristic writers in Christian antiquity. Wesley did not reproduce Christian antiquity uncritically; he did edit the patristic text to shape his churchmanship and calling. But polemically and conservatively speaking, how could Wesley’s argument be a strong argument if he used Christian antiquity to polemize with the opponents for defending Christian practices and beliefs, but at the same time he was not in fact convinced by their teachings and did intentionally edit it according to his own theology or calling. Campbell might know this weakness, he therefore presents his view on programmatic usage. Correspondingly, if Christian antiquity was used in a programmatic way to reproduce to the present age the practices or virtue of the Christian antiquity, Wesley’s editing of the patristic texts would not weaken his argument for using Christian antiquity to restore the Church. However, would the editing of the patristic text weaken the polemical and conservative usages of the Christian antiquity? If the editing could appear in all the three usages of antiquity Campbell proposed, would Christian antiquity be merely a veil for Wesley’s own theology? Campbell failed to give an explanation. In fact, how did John Wesley appropriate the Christian antiquity in his theology?

To analyze this question, in the chapter 3, this thesis will not divide Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity into various categories, but analyze Wesley’s appropriation of the Christian antiquity according to his theology, which was shaped by two sources: the Nonjuroring High Church tradition and his sense of piety.

Indeed, Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) was influenced by his High Church background. His backgrounds from his family, life at Oxford, his practices in the Fetter Lane Society and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) did give him early influences as a High Churchman, and showed his
continuity as a High Churchman. High Churchmanship, generally speaking, could be understood as a Churchmanship that through apostolic succession recognizes the authority and purity of the early Church. By following the practices and beliefs of the ancient Church which believed the High Churchman were well manifested by the practices and beliefs of the Church of England, Christians could achieve the virtues of the purest age. However, such a High Church tradition was not completely the theology that Wesley adopted. His experience with the writings of William Law and the Moravians did ‘add’ to his theology an aspect of sense of piety. William Law added deep devotion to the life of the Christian, while Moravian demonstrated Christian faith and life relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley’s theology can be observed having the influences from a sense of piety and the High Church tradition. Such a theology of John Wesley is similar to the theology of the ‘Anglican pietist’.

Wesley conceived Anthony Horneck to be a key figure of Anglican pietism. Horneck adopted the practices and beliefs of the Continental Pietism in Germany, and brought it into the Church of England. He established a Religious Societies to integrate the practices and beliefs of the Continental Pietism and the High Church Tradition within the Anglican Church. Within the Society he established, according to his thought, a tradition of Anglican Pietism was manifested in integrating primitive and pietist theology. John Wesley’s father Samuel Wesley was actively involved in the SPCK, the society that continued Horneck’s Anglican Pietism. Following his father, Wesley involved actively in the SPCK as well. Through SPCK, Wesley had a glimpse of Anglican Pietism, and launched a theology similar to Anglican pietist when he met Law and the Moravians, who emphasized more on the power of Holy Spirit and the primitive practice/‘belief’ of the High Church tradition of the established church. Because of this theology, in chapter 4, the paper demonstrates that Wesley would seek to know God through discerning the power of Holy Spirit and the primitive practices/beliefs of the High Church tradition. In this paper, therefore, instead of arguing
Wesley seeks for Church or Christian reform by using Christian antiquity in a programmatic way, this paper argues Wesley sought for Church/Christian reform by advocating the appropriation of the Christian antiquity as a mean of grace. In order to understand how it works, in chapter 5, we have to comprehend the eighteenth century epistemology that Wesley accepted.

During the time of Wesley, British empiricism reached its peak in the region. John Locke is one of the figures that influenced Wesley. Locke insisted human knowledge is not built up from intrinsic ideas; human knowledge is built up from sensory experiences. From sensory experience humanity can collect experimental data, which formulate simple knowledge. While the several of the simple knowledge interact together, the mind can integrate them into a more complicated knowledge. Peter Browne followed Locke and insisted the cause of knowledge could only come from experience. However, John Wesley was not fully satisfied with Locke and Browne’s approaches, because their approaches refused Christian faith could lead to the true and certain knowledge of God. John Wesley, instead, adopted the approach of spiritual senses from the history of Christianity and philosophy of John Norris, and insisted that the spiritual senses received from the Holy Spirit should be taken as an experience that formulate true and certain knowledge about God. Since knowing for Wesley is always relational, knowing God for Wesley means increasing the relationship with God. In other words, Wesley used this approach to confirm the true and inward knowledge about God, which could lead to the divine-human relationship.

The next question, then, is how one could properly receive the spiritual senses from the power of the Spirit and thus achieve the true and inward knowledge of God? Wesley may suggest: let the tradition speak to us. This suggestion is in line with the Nonjuror teachings from whom Wesley learned from them a lot. The Nonjuror treated the power of the Spirit as
the main element of the knowledge of God, and this knowledge of God should be tested by the primitive theology. For example, the early Nonjuror George Hickes in his *The Christian Priesthood Asserted* said that

> From all which it will appear, that the ancient Church thought the Holy Spirit to be most especially present at the Eucharistical sacrifice, and to be the chief agent in the ministration of it...The Holy Ghost then is the principal, and the priests but the instrumental ministers in the ministration of the Eucharistical oblation...co-agents or workers together with the Holy Spirit in the ministration of it.\(^{18}\)

Wesley adopted this Nonjuror tradition when he met Thomas Deacon in Manchester. Following this tradition, Wesley used Christian antiquity to seek for the ancient virtues which could help for the receipt of the spiritual senses from the power of the Spirit. With these spiritual senses, humanity can obtain inward and relational knowledge of God. The logic is that when one refers to Christian antiquity, one can realise the virtues of Christian antiquity, the purest age. By such virtues, like meekness, humility, and self-sacrifice, one can receive properly the spiritual senses from the power of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual senses one experiences from the Holy Spirit, again, can lead to the inward and relational knowledge of God. This inward and relational knowledge is important because it increases humanity’s relationship with God. In other words, by appropriating Christian antiquity, humanity can go deeper with the relationship with God. The final chapter of this paper will argue that the means of grace serves as a channel to increase the relationship with God. Therefore Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity is similar to his use of the means of grace. This is to say, since, through appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use), one can perceive the virtues of the purest age which help to receive the spiritual senses from the power of the Holy Spirit that lead to the inward knowledge of God, this paper argues that we

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can apply Wesley’s concept of means of grace in explaining how he appropriates Christian antiquity: Christian antiquity is one of the means of grace Wesley used for Christian revival. We have to be aware that for Wesley Christian revival is the same word with increase in relationship with God, because he was a plain man who had experienced a Christian relationship with God, and stirred up from this experience the great awakening and revival movement (that bring back into a proper relationship with God). In other words, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) helps to increase the relationship with God as well. That is why we conclude that we could apply the concept of means of grace to explain Wesley's appropriation of the Christian antiquity. By doing so, the main thesis of this paper, i.e. appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) is a mean of grace for Wesley, would then be supported.
Chapter 2: The Literature review for John Wesley’s Appropriation of Christian Antiquity

2.1 Attitudes to John Wesley’s use of Christian Antiquity since the 1960s

Interest in Wesley’s uses of Christian antiquity increased after the suggestions of Outler who showed that Wesley drank deeply at the well of patristic Eastern Orthodox theology in the provocative ‘Introduction’ in his John Wesley.\textsuperscript{19} Outler did refer to the spiritual tradition of Eastern Orthodox that was developed from Clement of Alexandria and Origen through Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. Outler maintained that the term ‘perfection’ that Wesley frequently used was adopted from the Greek Fathers.\textsuperscript{20} Wesley stated that ‘(perfected Christians) are not free from ignorance, no nor from mistake … They are not free from infirmities, such as weaknesses or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination’\textsuperscript{21}(Perfected Christians) are ‘grown Christians … (who) are in such a sense perfectly, as secondly, to be freed from all evil thoughts and evil tempers’.\textsuperscript{22} For Outler, the patristic Eastern Christians saturated Wesley’s theology with a dynamic vision of grace leading towards perfection. Finally, Outler also argues these ancient Eastern thoughts merged with Wesley’s heritage of Caroline Anglicanism; ‘holiness as disciplined love that became fused in Wesley’s mind with his own Anglican tradition of holiness as aspiring love, and thereafter was developed in what he regarded to the end as his own most distinctive doctrinal contribution.’\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Outler, John Wesley, pp.9-10; and his ‘John Wesley’s Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church’ in Bulletin of the United Church of Canada Committee on Archives and History, no. 29 (Toronto: United Church Pub. House, 1980), pp.5–17.
\textsuperscript{23} Outler, John Wesley, p.516.
Although it appeared that Outler was demonstrating Wesley’s reliance upon and compatibility with specific tradition within antiquity, i.e., the patristic Eastern Orthodoxy, Outler’s introduction and his works on Wesley did eventually lead to a research direction on Wesley’s interest in antiquity. Outler’s works launched various conversations about the relationship between Wesley and Christian antiquity. In late July and early August, 1982, he took responsibility to be a Co-Convener in a working group met at Keble College, Oxford, under of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, in which the members included Outler, Ted Campbell, Roberta Bondi, and Bengt Haglund. After that conference meeting, Bondi proposed a discussion focused on the relationship between John Wesley and Christian antiquity, which finally led the working group recommended an explicit and intensive Wesleyan studies direction on Wesley’s relation with the antiquity.

In John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change, Ted Campbell launched a pivotal study in Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity. In the book, Campbell showed Wesley employed Christian antiquity at different ways in his writings. Jeffrey W. Barbeau explained that Campbell has demonstrated that, Wesley uses ‘upon the authority of early church writings in four contexts: 1. Right interpretations of Scripture, 2. Illustrations of biblically-proscribed practices and morality, 3. Suggestions of right practice (though not proscribed by the Bible), and 4. Confirmations of Methodist teachings and practices’. Following these four contexts of usage, Campbell categorized these usages of Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) into three categories: polemical, conservative, and programmatic. Polemical usages would be those instances

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where Wesley called upon early Christian customs or teachings in order to contradict arguments, and to refute the practices or beliefs of the polemicist’s opponents, such as in Wesley’s letter to Middleton or the Roman Catechism. For example, Wesley stated,

And with this you do not fail to acquaint your reader at a convenient season--namely, ‘that in the most ancient dispute concerning the time of holding Easter, St. Polycarp and Anicetus severally alleged apostolic tradition for their different practice’ (page 60). And it is not improbable that both alleged what was true; that in a point of so little importance the Apostles varied themselves, some of them observing it on the fourteenth day of the moon, and others not. But, be this as it may, it can be no proof either that Polycarp was not an holy man or that he was not favoured with the extraordinary as well as ordinary gifts of the Spirit, and

The Church of Rome is that society of Christians which professes it necessary to salvation to be subject to the Pope of Rome, as the alone visible head of the Church...(Wesley replies) Christi is the Head, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together. And the holding to that head (Col. ii, 19) is the one great note of the Church, given by St. Austin.

Another example is that Wesley cited Augustine and Chrysostom against the doctrine of predestination.

Augustine speaks sometimes for (absolute double predestination) and sometimes against it. But all antiquity for the four first centuries is against (it)...But does not antiquity say, Judas was predestinated to damnation? Quite the contrary. St. Chrysostom’s express words are, ‘Judas, my beloved, was at first a child of the kingdom, and heard it said to him with the disciples, “Ye shall sit on twelve throne”; but afterward he became a child of hell.’

These citations are considered polemical uses of Christian antiquity, since Wesley has not defended his own views by calling upon these sources, but used them only to refute his

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The conservative use, as Campbell calls it, is Wesley’s apologetic use of the Christian antiquity to secure doctrines, structures, and customs of the established church. For example, Wesley defended the Anglican episcopacy, and what he supposed to be its succession from the apostles, by appealing to patristic precedents. He talked about the notion of the Episcopal governance in 1756 at the Letter to John Clark: ‘As to my judgment, I still believe “the Episcopal form of Church government to be both scriptural and apostolical”: I means, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe.’

The programmatic use entails Wesley’s references to the Fathers in order to support ideas, practices or even virtues that he thinks are important for his own time, in order to see restoration and revival to the Christianity of their age. For example, in addition to Anglican beliefs and practices, the Methodists had advocated the practices of fasting, penitential practices, or the need for experiencing persecution for Christian revival.

Wesley stated, ‘Lastly, had you been with the brethren in Antioch, at the time when they fasted and prayed, before the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul, can you possibly imagine that your temperance or abstinence would have been a sufficient cause for not joining therein?’

Among the polemical, conservative and programmatic usages, Campbell emphasized that ‘In almost every case, however (Wesley’s) vision of Christian antiquity may have been changed, Wesley characteristically (and consistently) utilized his vision of Christian antiquity in what I have identified as a “programmatic” manner.’ That means, as Peter Bellini states, for Campbell, ‘Wesley’s uses of Christian antiquity are (a) more “programmatic” way, especially

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30 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.105.
32 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, pp.20, 106.
34 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.53.
when he delivers vision for the Methodist societies’. Wesley did not stick strictly on
the original text of the patristic sources, but edited and revised it for the purpose of reforming the
church and renewing Christian life. Indeed, Wesley is not a speculative theologian on
historical theology, nor a historian; he is practical theologian who concerns mainly on
renewing the Church and Christian to the better spiritual life. Campbell demonstrated that
Wesley took up early church theologians as programmatic resources more than polemical and
conservative for the revival of the eighteenth century Britain. But what would Wesley
receive and want to pass to the Methodist people when he uses Christian antiquity? Jeffrey
Barbeau referred to Campbell’s works and tried to draw a conclusion on Wesley for this
purpose. He argued, Campbell’s answer focused on five legacies of the Early Church: ‘1.
the actual holiness he perceived in the ancient monks”; 2. An “understanding of the religious
life as the quest to restore the lost image of God”; 3. A deepened understanding of “religious
communion and communal discipline”; 4. A use of “therapeutic imagery” drawn from ascetic
literature; and 5. A vision of Christian perfection as the goal of sanctification’.36

2.2 Position to analyze Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity

Campbell contributed to Wesleyan scholarship on drawing attention to the way Wesley used
antiquity. In Campbell’s John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, the discussion about Wesley’s
‘uses’ of Christian antiquity focus on how Wesley used or applied the conceptions of
Christian antiquity as a vision for the Methodist Revival, both in supporting and in
challenging the culture of his age.37 By identifying Wesley’s quotation of antiquity into
polemical, conservative and programmatic ways, Campbell aimed at making this focus sharp.
However, a problem with this argument is that all quotational arguments seem to fit into this

35 Peter Bellini, ‘Wesley and Participation in Grace’, in his Participation: An Onto-Epistemology for a Theology
37 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.4.
method of categorization. Campbell’s categorization could make Wesley’s quotation of antiquity well classified to the reader, but it trivializes its further utility by becoming tautological (e.g. without classifying arguments into these categories, one can also know Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity [reading or taking for use] is for the Church reform and Christian revival in divine-human relationship). In other words, identifying quotation of antiquity in polemical, conservative and programmatic ways is unnecessary for investigating Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity in relation to the Christian revival; just like one can identify chopsticks can be used as a way to eat noodles as fork, and way to eat rice as spoon; but these identifications cannot explain Chinese’s appropriation of using chopsticks to eat.

My identity being a Chinese, who uses to take ancient rules and practices as authority helps to open my eye to discover a possibility that Wesley’s attitude to Christian antiquity may be different from the way that Campbell portrayed it: Christian antiquity or the Fathers are not used by Wesley to support himself on asserting certain ideas, but as an authority that could be appropriated to achieve Christian revival. Polemical, conservative and programmatic usages should not be the best way to analyze Wesley’s attitude and theology to the use of the Christian antiquity. His appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) is far more plentiful than using Christian antiquity as a tool to formulate arguments. It is the primary aim of this paper to draw the reader’s focus away from polemical, conservative and programmatic analysis, and argues that, by appropriating of Christian antiquity, Wesley was going to receive spiritual senses, by which an true and relational knowledge about God could be obtained. This paper will show that Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) were more spiritual than pragmatic.
In other words, Wesley’s insistence on the belief that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) would nourish the true and relational knowledge does make it amply plain that the relationship with God could not be separated entirely from appropriating the Christian antiquity. In the following chapters, this research is going to argue that John Wesley sought from Christian antiquity some ancient virtues, such as meekness and humility; and argue these virtues obtained from Christian antiquity, for Wesley, could help for receiving ‘spiritual senses’ which is the basic for the knowledge of God. This knowledge of God is existentially significant to the human’s relationship with God.

Based on this argument, since means of grace could facilitate the divine-human relationship, I will conclude that the Christian antiquity serves as a mean of grace for Wesley, and Wesley has demonstrated to the people who are called Methodist that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) helps people to receive spiritual senses, and through this sense, people can obtain true and relational knowledge of God and thus enhance the divine-human relationship.
Chapter 3: John Wesley and the inheritance of his theology

In order to understand how Wesley appropriated Christian antiquity, this paper will study from Wesley’s biography for his theology which is highly related to his appropriation of Christian antiquity.

3.1 John Wesley’s theology as a High Churchman

3.1.1 Influenced from Wesley’s Family
We will see that, having the support to the High Church tradition, John Wesley’s parents, Samuel and Susanna Wesley, like many eighteenth century members of the Church of England, were fascinated by the ideal of primitive Christianity. In the seventeenth to eighteenth century, although the term ‘High Church’ is used in various Christian traditions, the term is usually associated with the Anglican/Episcopal tradition. But we have to clarify that, though the term used to be associated to the Anglican tradition, the term was initially meant to describe the church which adopts the formal and ritual beliefs and practices, such as the liturgy and theology inherited from the Early Church.38

The High Churchmanship of Wesley’s background is widely accepted, since both his parents, Samuel and Susanna, chose not to follow the Puritanism of their ancestors, but supported the High Church tradition and joined the established church.

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3.1.1.1 Samuel Wesley

The established church reoriented itself to the High Churchmanship by following the beliefs and practices of the Early Church began by 1678 in the pattern of Christian societies, which later called ‘Religious Societies’.\(^{39}\) A priest supervised each Society, and led the prayer said in the Society strictly according to the prayer book of the Church. The Society only had entry for the devout members of the Church of England, and no discussion on speculative theology like ecclesiology was allowed.\(^{40}\) Therefore we can see that the vision and the aim of the Religious Societies was to restore the Early Church practices within the Church of England. They were practicing holiness-fasting, prayer, frequent communion, charitable works, reading of Scripture of the Early Church in the Society, and supporting the state Church as the established church did.\(^{41}\) Clearly these early societies were strong in their High Church presence, even in the day of Samuel Wesley, they still took a formal and ritual position of the High Churchmanship.\(^{42}\) Samuel Wesley was a member of Exeter College, Oxford. He had been elected to attend Oxford after dissatisfaction with the dissenting theology of his parents, which led him to embrace conservative Anglicanism. Samuel Wesley noted in his ‘Letter concerning the Religious Society’: ‘I know few good men but lament that after the destruction of monasteries, there were not some societies founded in their stead, but reformed from their errors and reduced to the primitive standard. None who had but looked into our own church history, can be ignorant how highly instrumental such bodies of men as these were to the first planting and propagating Christianity amongst our


\(^{40}\) Anthony Horneck is the first person to bring primitive faith into the established church through developing Religious Societies movement and through his *'The Happy Ascetic’*; or *'The Best Exercise and The Sirenés’*; or *'Delight and Judgment’* in Anthony Horneck, *The Sirenes, or Delight and Judgment*, 2nd ed, (London: H. Clark, 1690).


forefathers." Samuel Wesley accepted the values of societies, and started a Religious Society in Epworth with close connection to the Reformational Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1700 in Epworth. On 16 April 1702, Samuel attended the SPCK meeting. There ‘Mr. Wesley’s account of the Religious Society at Epworth was read, for which the Society gave him their thanks’. John Wesley joined the SPCK as a corresponding member in August, 1732, in which he has experienced the primitive practices of the High Church tradition.

Apart from that, Samuel Wesley also influenced John Wesley on his appropriation of Christian antiquity by recommending young John Wesley to read on the Church Fathers. Two documents had come down from Samuel Wesley which illustrated his interests in ancient Christianity. Both of the documents were read by John Wesley. The first is a pamphlet entitled The Young Student’s Library (1692), attributed to Samuel Wesley as Secretary of the Athenian Society. This document gave a list of books in various fields recommended to students by the Society. Striking in this list are the prominence of works on post-Nicene theology. The list advised students to read Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History, The History of the General Councils, a Summa Conciliorum, William Beveridge’s Collection of Canons Received by the Greek Church, Cotelier’s Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta and finally ‘All the Fathers, as St. Ambrose, etc.’

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44 SPCK will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.
46 SPCK, Minute Book 1, 1699-1706 (CUL, SPCK MS A1/1, 204), cited in Douglas Shantz, A Companion to German Pietism, p.239.
The second, Samuel Wesley passed on a more extensive prospectus of his recommended readings in ancient Christianity in his *Advice to a Young Clergyman* (1735), which was published by John Wesley in the year that Samuel Wesley died. The *Advice* shows more regard for the first three Christian centuries, but gave its approval to fourth and fifth century works, especially the Nicene formulation of Trinitarian dogma. In the first section of *Advice*, it deals with patristic studies: Samuel recommended the New Testament Apocryphal works and the Apostolic Fathers, for example he asserted the genuineness of the Ignatian epistles. Samuel added a final paragraph in his consideration of patristic studies in which he recommended some fifth century and later writers. These are Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Boethius, Cassiodore, Gildas, Bede, and the Saxon Councils and Homilies.48 He completed the section of patristic works by recommending the ordinand to read Irenaeus, Cyprian, and Lactantius.49

We can see that the indications of Samuel Wesley’s appreciation of Christian antiquity could be found from his *Advice* and his *Young Student’s Library*. Throughout both we can see the high approbation of Christian antiquity characteristic of the conservative Anglicanism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and John Wesley has learned from these works an abiding ‘reverence to the ancient church and our own.’50

In the winter of 1724-1725, John Wesley, still a scholar of Christ Church, made a decision to seek ordination as a priest of the Church of England. On the 26 January, 1725, Samuel Wesley wrote and promised to send him the manuscript of his advice to Mr. Hoole (that is, the *Advice to a Young Clergyman*). In this and two subsequent letters in 1725, Samuel urged

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49 Samuel Wesley, ‘Advice to a Young Clergyman’, pp.30-34.
John Wesley to read Styan Thirlby’s edition of Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio* (published in 1712): ‘Master it,’ he urged, ‘digest it’. At the same time, he suggested that John should study the Anglican Articles of Religion and form of ordination.\(^{51}\) From his father, then, John Wesley received the impetus to study the ancient texts under the situation of the Anglican Church, in order to find bases for supporting the doctrines and practices of the Church of England by appealing to Christian antiquity.

3.1.1.2  *Susanna Wesley*

Susanna Wesley practiced daily devotions throughout her life. She dedicated her life into a sense of Christian life in a pietistic way, and instilling it into each of her children. Therefore much of Wesley’s upbringing has been attributed to his mother; her goal used to instill discipline and piety in her children. To Susanna, it was not easy for Christian to fight with the stubborn flesh and stay unsinful, therefore the Godly parents have the responsibility to prepare their children at the early stage for overcoming it. Susanna Wesley then equipped and taught her children ‘methodically’. Some suggest that Wesley's apparently get rid of the High Church tradition is significantly influenced by Susanna and her puritan root.\(^{52}\) This paper expresses a disagreement on this comment. Indeed, Susanna’s grandfathers were dissenters from the Church of England, and her father Samuel Annesley was a Puritan. Puritans were English Protestant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries whose thought emphasized on individual participation and personal experience on religious faith, in respond to the Gospel’s message of active trust and obedience to Christ. John Von Rohr even claimed, ‘in interweaving of the two, Luther’s “by faith alone” and Calvin’s “covenant law”…the Puritan movement…is more being seen as embodying a (what William Stoever calls) “profound experientialism”, and indeed as an early expression of what later came to be


designated “pietism”.

In nineteenth century, the phase ‘the puritan pietism of England’ was mentioned by Heinrich Heppe; he also named the early Puritan theologian William Perkins as the ‘father of pietism’. Therefore, it is not surprised that Susanna’s Puritan roots had led her apparently to maintain the pietistic view on holiness to foster her children. But we have to be aware at the same time when Susanna was a teenager at age 13, she disagrees with the teachings of the dissenters and had decided to withdraw from the dissent church of his father and go back to the Church of England; she states ‘because I had been educated among the dissenters, and there being something remarkable in my leaving them at so early an age, not being full thirteen, I had drawn up an account of the whole transaction, under which I included the main of the controversy between them and the Establish Church, as far as it had come to my knowledge’. Susanna herself was devoutly a High Churchman. Hammond even showed that there are four letters of Susanna available which revealed her connection with the Nonjuring community. Nonjuror community is a group of people who distinguished themselves from the established church by their High Church theology which came to be characterized by their burning reverence for the primitive church (this will be discussed further in next section). The High Churchmanship that Susanna dedicated herself to is the Nonjuror High Churchmanship, which could be demonstrated by her first letter to Lady Yarborough. The letter mentioned that Samuel Wesley deserted the family and left for London at Easter. Samuel’s desertion brought to Susanna an extremely sad


57 Hammond, John Wesley in America, p.17.

injury. Hammond wrote,

(Susanna) requested (in the letter) that her dilemma be communicated to “one of our Divines”. Her letters were forwarded to George Hickes, the deprived Dean of Worcester and suffragan Nonjuror Bishop of Thetford who urged her to obey the dictates of her conscience. Her respect for the eminent Nonjuring divine is reflected by her comment that she was “much better satisfied” that she should not surrender her convictions (after his discussion with Hickes).

Apart from that, in 1709

(Susanna) still upheld the doctrine (of the) divine hereditary monarchy. From the little we know about Susanna’s Nonjuring principles, it appears that she considered herself a part of Nonjuror communion at a time when the theological and political concerns surrounding divine right monarchy were paramount. While it is unclear if Susanna advocated a forced restoration of James II and/or his male heirs, she would only pray for a monarch de jure (by right or law).

Moreover,

Susanna’s belief in divine hereditary monarchy (is evidently) leading her to oppose the removal of a ruling monarch and to sympathize with the Nonjuring High Church clergy (and tradition).

From here we can see Susanna’s persistent attachment to the Nonjuring cause. This strong sense of Susanna’s own convictions and dedication to the the Nonjuror and thus the primitive church would be passed onto her sons. In other words, Susanna’s dedication to the Nonjuror tradition might have contributed to John Wesley’s favour to Nonjuror churchmanship.


60 Hammond, John Wesley in America, pp.16-17. Susanna’s letters about the conversations with Hickes have been published by Robert Walmsley, ‘John Wesley’s Parents: Quarel and Reconciliation’, Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, 29 (Evesham: Wesley Historical Society, 1953), pp.50-57; see Hammond, John Wesley in America, note 21, p.17.

Wesley's parents gave John Wesley their early education. With Samuel Wesley's High Churchmanship and his involvement in the Religious Societies, and with Susanna's High Churchmanship and identity as a Nonjuror, it could be expected that John Wesley’s family background might offer him a soil for his High Churchmanship and adoption of primitivism. However what directly influence Wesley’s High Churchmanship and primitivism was his personal interaction with Nonjurors.

3.2 Influenced by the Nonjuror

3.2.1 Who is the Nonjuror?

The conquering of William III and Mary II over James II in the Glorious Revolution in 1688-1689 exposed a new page for the politics and religion for England, and a movement called the Nonjuring movement was consequently awakened. In the aspect of religious faith, the movement emphasized more on human reason in religious dialogue. At that time, some High Churchmen refused to concede the new reign, and insisted to maintain the traditions of the past. Nonjurors were those High Churchmen who declined to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to William and Mary, because they considered the oaths contradicting to the oaths they took to Charles Edward Stuart, James II’s heir. Their protest developed into two points: the “State Point” was that William’s claim to the throne was not valid, and the “Church point” was that the monarch did not have the right to deprive bishops without ecclesiastical approval.

63 Hammond, John Wesley in America, p.24.
However, the Nonjuror movement should not be appreciated as a political issue only; by their glowing passion on primitive church, the Nonjurors found themselves a High Churchmen different from the established church, although for the most part, the established church and Nonjurors were of the same theological persuasion, like the centrality of the church to salvation, the equality of church and state, and authority of the church on ordaining bishops, priests, and deacons, who are the administer of the means of grace, such as baptism, and the Eucharist. Nonjuror’s attitude was not to be a slave of the antiquity, but using it practically as a testimony for the purpose of renewing the Church corresponding to the primitive church, that sought to return the Church to the structures and beliefs of the first four centuries of the Christian era. This is a similar attitude to that which Campbell calls Wesley’s programmatic uses of Christian antiquity. The Nonjurors seemed to use antiquity in a programmatic way as Campbell described, though in this paper Campbell’s categories will not be the research direction for analyzing Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity.

It is not easy to discuss the theology of Nonjurors as a single group, because the Nonjuror is a heterogeneous group. But by Nonjuror’s liturgy, we can still clearly distinguish the Nonjuror and the established church. In fact, it is this distinction arousing the Usages Controversy within the Nonjuring group. Some of them insisted that the Prayer Book of the established church is corrupted, and claimed some of the liturgical elements should not be missed from the Prayer Book, thus they requested for the restoration of that elements. The revised liturgy championed four ‘usages’, they thought, was indispensable in the Eucharistic service. The usages were: ‘(1) The mixture of water and wine in the sacramental cup is needed; (2) The oblation of the Eucharistic elements is the representative sacrifice of Christ’s body and

65 Cornwall, Visible and Apostolic, pp.12, 15.
66 Hammond, John Wesley in America, pp.24-25.
blood; (3) The Blessing of Christ’s body and blood or the Invocation of the Holy Spirit pour upon them; and (4) The recommending of the faithful departed to God’s mercy is announced at the Celebration of the Christian Sacrifice’. 68 Nonjurors who ascribed to the four usages have been variously labeled ‘Essentialist’ or ‘Usager’.

Apart from these usages, the Usagers also included some practices that was not usually carried out in the established church. For example, they used the model of the Eastern Orthodox Church liturgies, in order to emphasize Eucharist is a sacrifice invoking the Holy Spirit. Eucharist therefore for the Usagers became a sacrifice involving the Trinity, in which when one participates in it, he/she is participating in the sacrifice of Christ, which presenting the offering to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. But be aware that not all Nonjurors agree totally with the Usagers. On the contrary, majority of the Nonjurors did not accept the liturgy revised by the Usagers. Not only that, even among the Usagers, they could not agree with each other; a schism eventually happened in 1716 between the Usagers who accepted the 4 usages and those who did not. 69

3.2.2 Nonjuror impacts on Wesley during his time at Oxford

Between 1725 and 1731, during his time at Oxford, the most direct influence from Nonjurors to Wesley was a Nonjuror John Clayton who involved in the Oxford Holy Club in 1731 or 1732, and consequently became a close friend of John Wesley. 70 During Wesley’s time at Oxford, in June 1732, he read High Church clergymen, such as William Cave’s *Primitive Christianity*, which inspired and called for a restoration of primitive piety of the first three to

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four centuries. This works became one of the elementary texts for Wesley to develop his interest in patristic sources and primitive tradition. On 20 April 1732, the same month that Wesley read *Primitive Christianity*, another circumstance that was influencing Wesley would be his connection with John Clayton. John Clayton (1709-1773) was a conforming High Churchman and Jacobite; he was also a tutor and patristic scholar at Brasenose College. He, from 1732, aroused Wesley’s further interests and companion with him on an intensive study of the thoughts of the Apostolic Fathers and High Church interpreters of primitive Church. Strictly speaking, he was not a Nonjuror, since he stayed at the established church as a clergy; but his theology belong to that of Nonjuror Usager. Wesley first met Clayton on 20 April 1732; immediate after that, Clayton took part in the Holy Club. According to Green, the purpose of Clayton to attend the Holy Club was to hope that the Club can return to the apostolic tradition. Through the Holy Club, he aroused Wesley’s interest in Christian antiquity. Clayton’s presence reinforced the public ministry and frequent celebration of communion in the Club. His direct influence to Wesley was to convince Wesley to practice the ancient rituals of Wednesday and Friday fasts, and the other days fasting as stated in the Prayer Book. Wesley wrote, ‘While we were at Oxford the rule of every Methodist was “unless in case of sickness” of fast every Wednesday and Friday in the year, in imitation of the primitive church, for which they had the highest reverence.’ Hammond demonstrated that the Holy Club group that ‘met in Clayton’s room began studying the *Apostolic Constitutions* in the second volume of William Whiston’s “Primitive Christianity Reviv’d” (1711) entitled *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* by Clement, in English and in Greek,


72 Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp.30-31; and Weeter, *John Wesley’s View and Use of Scripture*, p.42.


with the various readings from all of the manuscripts',\(^75\) and ‘(Wesley has) drawn upon Clayton’s personal library for his readings before Clayton returned to Manchester… A catalogue of Clayton’s library that lists nearly every book that influenced Wesley during this period.’\(^76\) We can see that Clayton influenced Wesley, through various readings, towards the theology of Nonjuring High Church tradition. Wesley was also introduced by Clayton several of his Nonjuror friends during the summer of 1733 when Wesley followed Clayton to Manchester, which included John Byrom and Thomas Deacon. Wesley met Thomas Deacon in several of his visits to Manchester; and through his reading of his book *The Doctrine of the Church of Rome Concerning Purgatory* (1718) in June 1733, Wesley became more emphatic on the primitive rules of the High Church Nonjurors. This association with the Nonjuring High Church tradition further established and strengthened Wesley's desire for restoring the established church with the primitive tradition.\(^77\) Nonjuror Usagers emphasized on reviving the primitive rules and practices. They found the Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549) was not sufficient, and the primitive liturgies, mainly the *Apostolic Constitutions*, had to be included in the Prayer Book. *Apostolic Constitutions* are a compilation of ecclesiastical laws and prayers which were commonly believed to have been Apostolic in origin.\(^78\) Therefore through the Nonjuror Usagers, Clayton and Deacon, Wesley was led for a time to follow the guidance in matters ecclesiastical of the pretended *Apostolic Constitutions* to restore the established church. We could infer that, Wesley’s early readings during his time in Oxford drew his interests in the theology of the Early Church and Church Fathers and were enamored with the Early Church.\(^79\)

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\(^{75}\) Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, p.35

\(^{76}\) Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, p.31.


At that period, Wesley studied directly and primarily on the Apostolic Fathers, especially those Apostolic Fathers who were considered having touch with the Apostles; for example, according to Weeter, ‘dated back to November 1726, Wesley read and translated Justin Martyr’s Apology. On the theme of the primitive martyrs Wesley read Lactantius’s De Mortibus Persecutorum (“On the Deaths of the Persecutors”)’ as well.80 V.H.H. Green, in his book The Young Mr. Wesley noted: ‘Wesley read the writings of the Fathers of the early church in Grabe’s Spicilegium. He also studied Wake’s Apostolic Epistles and Fathers, Reeve’s Apologies of Christian Martyrs, St. Augustine’s Confessions, Lactantius’ Divinarum Institutionum, Vincent of Lerin’s Commonitorium, and more recent works on the early church like William Cave’s Primitive Christianity, and Marshall’s Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church’.81 Hammond added that Wesley also read works of the early church Fathers, like the Eastern Syriac father Ephraem Syrus, ‘whom he later emphasized “above all” the Fathers as “the man of the broken heart”’.82 (Wesley read Syrus’ A Serious Exhortation to Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, and a Strict and Mortified Life, which calls Christian for holy living.)83 Hammond further explained Wesley’s connection to Christian antiquity at about the same time. He claimed it should be noticed that Wesley mentioned in his diary a desire that he wanted to ‘translate the Patres Apostolici up to the year of 350 and to write on the Decreta Concilium’. He continued, other readings regarding to Christian antiquity that Wesley read included, in 1733, Archbishop William Wake’s (1657–1737) The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, S. Barnabas, S. Ignatius, S. Clement, S. Polycarp, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the martyrdoms of St.Ignatius and St. Polycarp (1693); and in September 1734 William Reeves’s (1667–1726) The Apologies of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Minutius Felix, in defence of the Christian religion, with the

80 Weeter, John Wesley’s View and Use of Scripture, pp.45-46.
81 Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, p.274.
82 Hammond, John Wesley in America, p.37.
Commonitory of Vincentius Lirinensis, concerning the primitive rule of faith translated from their originals.⁸⁴ All these readings enriched Wesley’s inheritance of primitive tradition he received from his parents. In accordance with the experiences and readings during Wesley’s early biography, Wesley called for unity through a return to the primitive church in his Friday morning prayer in 1733⁸⁵: ‘Lord, let it be thy good Pleasure to restore to thy Church Catholic, primitive Peace and Purity’⁸⁶…(endow the clergy with) ‘apostolical Graces’…(and) ‘restore to her the ancient Discipline.’⁸⁷ For Wesley and the Usagers, the primitive church tradition is an avenue by which the Church of England could and should be critiqued.

From the early biography of Wesley’s interaction with the Nonjurors, we find that Wesley had built up a theology in favour of High Church tradition, especially the Nonjuror/Usager tradition. However, James Rigg argued that Wesley’s favourite of High Church tradition has been ceased from 1738 after he met Böhler.

3.3 The Critique on John Wesley’s High Churchmanship

In the nineteenth century, James Rigg has charged that Wesley discarded the fable of High Church tradition, and that ‘he presently gave up all that is now understood to belong to the system, whether theological or ecclesiastical’ of the High Churchmanship in all Wesley’s life after 1738.⁸⁸ Rigg wrote, ‘The High Churchman makes salvation to be directly dependent on sacramental grace and apostolical succession. Whereas the evangelical believer, the man who has received the doctrine of salvation by faith, as it was taught by Peter Böhler, and as it

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⁸⁴ Hammond, John Wesley in America, pp.36-37; see also Weeter, John Wesley’s View and Use of Scripture, p.41; and Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, pp.305-319.
⁸⁵ Cited from Hammond, John Wesley in America, p.43-44.
⁸⁶ John Wesley, ‘Form of pray, Friday morning 1733’ in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 6, p.396.
⁸⁷ John Wesley, ‘Form of pray, Friday morning 1733’ in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 6, p.399.
is understood by the Reformed Churches in general, learns from St. Paul that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”. According to Rigg, since ‘the High Churchman makes salvation to be directly dependent on sacramental grace and apostolical succession’, but Wesley taught the Arminian doctrine of salvation by faith which asserts humanity receiving salvation by faith. Rigg argued that ‘Wesley who began to preach salvation by faith only... was excluded from the pulpits of the established church... that by sacraments, fasts, penances, ritualism, and good works’. Wesley therefore ceased to be a High Churchman after 1738. One of the good examples that Rigg gave to support the challenge is that during the last forty or fifty years of Wesley’s life, due to the special needs of the American colony, Wesley tried to violate the theology and ecclesiastical governance of High Church tradition, and ordained a presbyter for the American colony. He was writing to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Dartmouth, on behalf of the revolutionary American colonists. He was writing on a political question to a politician. Accordingly he says, ‘(h)ere all my prejudices are against the Americans; for I am a High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance.’ ‘And yet in spite of all my long-rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking, if I think at all, these, an oppressed people, asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner that the nature of the thing would allow’ Wesley finally ordained a presbyter for America, which is used to be implemented by a bishop. In short, it seems to support that, after 1738, Wesley was gradually getting rid to his high ecclesiastical tenets and prejudices. However, are these arguments of

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89 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.58.
90 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.59.
91 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.81.
92 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.74.
94 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.73-74.
Rigg valid enough to support that Wesley was getting away from the High Church tradition since 1738? No.

There are some Wesleyan scholars showed disagreements with Rigg. Firstly, Rigg’s argument was invalid to argue that Arminian doctrine which Wesley taught was a support showing that Wesley had ceased his High Churchmanship after 1738. Arminianism is a model of theology raised and developed by Jacobus Arminius. Wesley’s father followed the writing of Arminius. It is first Wesley’s father presented Arminianism to John Wesley, and John Wesley further took it up when he was at Oxford. Wesley accepted Arminius’ teachings and held most of the doctrines which is associated with Arminianism, which include:

- original sin,
- total depravity (humanity is enslaved to sin as their fallen nature because of the consequence of the Fall of Man),
- conditional election (God chooses for eternal salvation those whom he can have faith in Christ),
- prevenient grace (it is a divine grace to make sinful human able to believe before human decision),
- resistible grace (humanity is capable of resisting the grace of God and not obeying to the call of the Gospel which bring them faith in Christ),
- unlimited atonement for all (the universal call for salvation),
- Jesus’ death satisfies God’s justice,

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God predestines Christians to have a glorious future but not to predestine who he/she will believe,

Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer (that is, treated as if it were their through faith, so that God accepts humanity),

conditional eternal security (salvation is conditional; it is only available for humanity who remains faithful until the very end),

human freewill to respond and resist God, and the equal, impartial and undifferentiated love of God.

John Wesley had historically been influential in advocating for the teachings of Arminian soteriology. The Arminian soteriology contrasts to that of Calvinist; firstly, the Arminians believe faith is a condition of election, while Calvinists disagree. Secondly, Arminians teach that Christ’s atonement is for all, Christ died for all men, but Calvinists only hold Christ died for the elected one. When Wesley later tried to affirm and advocate some practices of the church, he disputed a lot with Calvinists. Wesley finally came to conclude that he stands against Calvinist’s doctrines of election and reprobation, and therefore adopted Arminian doctrine of soteriology. His objections to Calvinism were clearly expressed in his sermon Freedom of Grace in 1739.

98 Wesley does hold to this in his account of justification, but he puts more stress on the impartation of righteousness through sanctification.
Since the clergy of the Church of England normally accepted the theology of the Arminian in the seventeenth to eighteenth century, and Arminians still relied heavily upon the articles, the homilies, and the general spirit of the common worship of the holy Catholic Church, Wesley’s attitude as an Arminian, therefore, should not be the reason why he gave up the identity of High Churchman. Even the ordination of the American presbyters could show nothing about Wesley’s abandonment of his own High Churchmanship. Indeed, with the refusal of the Bishop of London, Dr. Robert Zowth, who was technically responsible for all areas overseas, Wesley finally took an action to ordain American presbyters. But it is not necessary and sufficient to consider this action as Wesley's action to abandon his High Churchmanship as Rigg proposed. It could be an action for the sake of avoiding dissentence in American Methodist societies. As Adrain Burdon said,

(t)he great problem for Christianity in newly-independent America was the lack of ordained ministers. In 1784, there were 14,998 Methodist being served by 83 non-ordained, itinerant Methodist Preachers…Some American Methodists called for a break away from John Wesley’s leadership and…instigated a movement for presbyteral ordination…it became clear that action had to be taken in order to prevent…Wesley losing control of the societies in America.

This is coherent with the fact that Wesley never ordains presbyter in England. The ordination of the American presbyters does not necessarily and sufficiently support the view that Wesley has got rid of the High Church tradition.

On the contrary, Wesley at his later life, in 1775, when writing to a Tory statesman, described himself as ‘I am an High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman, bred up from my

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101 Rigg, The Churchmanship of John Wesley, p.78.
102 Adrain Burdon, Authority and Order: John Wesley and his Preachers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance\textsuperscript{103}; and this fact could be brought forward as evidence that Wesley throughout his life sustained his High Churchmanship. In 1777 again, Wesley has written in a letter appeal to dissenters, ‘Do you imagine there are no High Churchmen left? Did they all die with Dr. Sacheverell? Alas! How little do you know of mankind! Were the present restraint taken off, you would see them swarming on every side, and gnashing upon you with their teeth…If other Bonners and Gardiners did not arise, other Lauds and Sheldons would, who would either rule over you with a rod of iron, or drive you out of the land.’\textsuperscript{104} This quotation seems to respond to the query on Wesley’s High Churchmanship. These are important statement and writing, because it indicates that Wesley considered himself to be a High Churchman; this identification had not died away in his later life when he had experienced various religious impacts in his life. With regard to the theology of Wesley, from above all, we could expect Wesley maintained an inheritance that he is ecclesiastical High Churchman, and he has sustained his High Churchmanship throughout his life.

3.3.1. John Wesley’s theology as similar to an Anglican Pietist

Apart from the High churchmanship to Wesley, his theology also included some pietistic elements due to his experience and connection with the some English mystics and the Moravians. In order to explain how Wesley’s theology relates to his appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use), the influence of the pietists on Wesley’s theology is going to be studied

3.3.1.1 The Influenced from the pietists

The pietist influences on Wesley besides that from Susanna Wesley started during Wesley’s

\textsuperscript{104} John Wesley, ‘A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England’, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 6, p.335.
life at Oxford on 1725-1731 by the influence of the Taylor, à Kempis and Law. On 13 March, 1725 John received words from his father pressing him to enter Orders as soon as possible and to prepare himself for ordination through prayer and religious study, John’s attitude toward religion began to change. During that time, he visited to Stanton and met his first religious friend, Sally Kirkham, whom he affectionately nicknamed ‘Varanese’.105 According to Bonamy Dobrée, ‘Miss Kirkham induced Wesley to read Thomas à Kempis (Christian Pattern), and, more studiously than before, Jeremy Taylor (Holy Living and Holy Dying). Having found “a religious friend,” and no doubt feeling the stress of a hopeless love-affair, Wesley began to think about religion more profoundly’.106 Wesley was encouraged to read the Christian Pattern, but he considered à Kempis too strict. Wesley wrote to his mother: ‘I think he must have been a person of great piety and devotion, but it is my misfortune to differ from him in some of his main points’.107 In 1725, Wesley started to read The Imitation of Christ at the year of his ordination to be a deacon of the Church of England. From the Imitation, he ‘began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and action.’108 In his Plain Account, Wesley also reflected on à Kempis’ teachings and quoted his writing directly that “‘simplicity of intention and purity of affection” ...are...“wings of the soul” without which she can never ascend to the mount of God’.109 With regard to Taylor’s work, Wesley wrote in his diary, ‘It was in pursuance of an advice given by Bp. Taylor, in his Rules for Holy Living and Dying, that about fifteen years ago, I began to take a more exact account that I had done before, of the manner wherein I spent my time, writing down how I had employed every

106 Bonamy Dobrée, John Wesley (GabrielKolbe, 1933), p.10.
Writing to John Newton in 1765, Wesley also recalled and wrote that ‘In 1725, I met with Bishop Taylor’s Rules of Holy Living and Dying, I was struck particularly with the chapter upon intention, and felt a fixed intention “to give myself up to God.” In this I was much confirmed soon after by the Christian Pattern (à Kempis), and longed to give God all my heart.’

In A Plain Account, Wesley mentioned that he had read William Law before 1730: ‘A year or two after (1726 or 1727), Mr Law’s Christian Perfection and Serious Call were put into my hands.’

He decided then to be, ‘more explicitly resolved to be all devoted to God, in body, soul, and spirit’.

Indeed, although Wesley’s parents exercised a continual influence on his spiritual growth, Nehemiah Curnock in his John Wesley’s Journal said that it was Varanese who kindled John’s enthusiasm for the devotional literature which influenced him so strongly at this time. In other words, Wesley's beginning to access the influential devotional literature in his life seems to correspond with his visits to Stanton. Wesley recalled the day on 1725 in A Plain Account of Christian Perfection and claimed that ‘Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts and words and actions’. Wesley seems to be very impressed by this religious experience in 1725.

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However, the unique and most important, in point of religious influence, among the spiritual and pietistic writers was the Nonjuror William Law. The pietist advocated that Christians should seek God through a personal experience, and William Law who was considered to be one of the prevailing figure on pietist movement in England in 1729, bought pietist elements into Christian practices; he urged Christians to meditate and go through self-denial, along with calling for a Christian religion of heart, which stood opposite to the formal approach to God.116 According to Hans J. Hillerbrand, ‘The greatest early Anglican advocate for Pietism was William Law, whose widely read books, including *A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection* (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728), emphasized the sanctified renovation of (individual) Christian life after regeneration rather than the New Birth itself.’117 Henry Clay Sheldon said, Law ‘looks upon religion as an all-transforming agency, links it with the supernatural, denounced the adequacy of reason apart from divine illumination, and claims a place for enthusiasm in piety’.118 Indeed, William Law’s *A Serious Call* has been quoted in Wesley’s sermon *On the Education of Children* for illustrating the vision education: ‘And as the only end of a physician is to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be considered as reason borrowed at second hand, which is as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection’.119 Eric Baker implied that Taylor and à Kempis prepared Wesley for the influence of Law.120 It seems that Wesley was drawn to all three for

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120 Eric Baker, *A Herald of the Evangelical Revival* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), pp.93-99. But in Law’s later years, he studied the works of Jokob Böhme, the German theosopher (four volume of Böhme’s works,
much the same reason - their strongly disciplined ethical piety. This ethical piety was conditioning Wesley on his mystical development. Although he was probably unaware of the mystical thread at this time, the foundation was being laid.\textsuperscript{121}

Therefore started from Taylor and \(\text{à Kempis}, \) and later Law, Wesley was eventually convinced of the importance of the inward religion, which is the true religion. Inward religion is seated in the heart; therefore, one must give not just one’s life, but one’s heart to God. Corresponding to the religion of heart, Wesley’s religious life was attracted by the pursuit of Christian holiness as well. Furthermore, abridgments of \(\text{à Kempis} \) and Law (including his later works) were included in the first edition of Wesley’s own works. In fact, \(\text{à Kempis’ Pattern} \) was among the first books that was published by Wesley; an extract from Taylor’s works is also included in the \textit{Christian Library} which was published by Wesley in the \textit{1749-1755}.\textsuperscript{122}

All of the previous influences in Wesley’s life are combined here to create a system of religion based on wholehearted devotion to God through inward obedience or asceticism. But later Wesley discovered that Law’s approach discouraged him from outward works. Wesley said,

\textsuperscript{121}edited by friends of Law George Word and Thomas Langcake, was published between 1764 and 1781 as a memorial to Law, who was an ardent of Böhme); see Elisabeth Hurth, Between Faith and Unbelief: American Transcendentalists and the Challenge of Atheism, note 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p.150. He was then convinced by mysticism, which was shown in his work in about 1734. These works of law may influence on the mind of John Wesley. See Paul Hughes, \textit{Neoplatonist Stew: How Pagan Philosophy Corrupted Christian Theology} (Texas: Lulu Press, Inc, 2014), p.75; and Elisabeth Hurth, Between Faith and Unbelief: American Transcendentalists and \textit{The Challenge of Atheism} (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p.50.

Soon after, a contemplative man (William Law) convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and in several conversations instructed me, how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. But even of his instructions (though I then received them as the words of God) I cannot but now observe, 1. That he spoke so incautiously against trusting in outward works, that he discouraged me from doing them at all. 2. That he recommended (as it were, to supply what was wanting in them) mental prayer, and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul, and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God thus pursued, was as really my own righteousness, as any I had before pursued under another name.123

There then is a subtle but important turn, when Wesley was aware that Law’s ‘effectual means of purifying the soul, the uniting it with God’124 are as much ‘my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name’.125 He continued, ‘In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England’.126 It was beginning from this time, Wesley decided gradually away from Law. However, after this occasion, Wesley’s extent of the inward religion was strengthened by coincidence to meet Moravians in his journey to Georgia, and we will show that, at the end of this chapter, the nature of their inward religion added to Wesley’s theology an additional attitude to appropriate Christian antiquity.

3.3.1.2 Influenced by the Moravian

In October 1735, John Wesley started his journey to Georgia as a missionary. On the

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voyage on 23 November, he encountered a terrific storm. However he saw on board some Moravians who sang hymns and prayed peacefully. Wesley correspondingly noted the contrast between the Anglican and Moravian passengers. After arriving at Georgia, at one worship service, Wesley recalled that ‘the sea broke over, covered the ship, and split the mainsail’, ‘Many of the English screamed out. The Germans looked up, and without intermission sang on’. 127 Wesley asked the one Moravian if he was scared to die, and he answered, ‘I thank God, no’.128

In Georgia, Wesley also spoke to Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg, the Moravian leader. Wesley was asked by him if he knew Jesus Christ and had ‘the witness of the Spirit in your heart’.129 Wesley recorded the conversation between Spangenberg and himself in his journal: ‘He (Spangenberg) asked… “Do you know Jesus Christ?” I paused, and said, “I know he is the Saviour of the world.” “True,” replied he, “but do you know he has saved you?” I answered, “I hope he has died to save me.” He only added, “Do you know yourself?” I said, “I do.”’ Wesley then added in his journal, ‘But I fear they were vain words.’130 Wesley recorded that, ‘after my answering these, he gave me several directions, which may the good God who sent him enable me to follow.’131 Within the two year Wesley spent in Georgia, Wesley actively reached out to the Moravians. The Moravians spoke almost no English, and Wesley learned German to converse with them.132 Wesley then got more personal interactions with Moravians, and got chance to observe their model of life closely. Wesley

found their assurance of salvation, even in the face of death, very impressive. This impression did bring impact to John Wesley’s theology and thus his view on Christian antiquity. Before Wesley sailed to Georgia, he learned from the various sources and the High Church tradition about Christian antiquity (refer to previous chapters). But the experience that he had in Georgia with Moravians regarding ‘religion of heart’ and the supreme religious authority of Scripture opened the eye of Wesley. The Moravians combined the inward witness of the Holy Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ, with a mystical piety similar to the (German) Pietist, which emphasized on the personal faith. It was the ‘Moravian synthesis of mystical piety and Reformed theology’ that draws Wesley’s attention to Spangenberg and later Peter Böhler.

Having returned to London in 1738, which was very soon after he landed, Wesley attended a society meeting held in Aldersgate Street with another Moravian, Peter Böhler. In fact, John Wesley had met Böhler in his earlier life. In 1738, Böhler wrote to Zinzendorf: ‘I traveled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man; he knew he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught. His brother, with whom you often conversed a year ago, is at present very much distressed in his mind, but does not know how he shall begin to be acquainted with the Saviour’. Böhler was a Moravian and Pietist theology student from Frankfort, German. He was the first man ordained by Count von Zinzendorf. Böhler introduced the young

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Wesley a Christian mysticism associated with the Lutheran pietism. According to Misty Anderson, ‘Böhler encouraged Wesley to embrace atonement as a mystical reconciliation ...made possible by the crucifixion of Christ. This strain of Christian theology emphasizes the Pauline ‘justified by grace through faith’ and the ‘warming of the heart’ that overwhelsms the economic metaphor of redemption’.\(^\text{138}\) Böhler told Wesley that ‘saving faith brought with it both dominion over sin and true peace of mind - both holiness and happiness’.\(^\text{139}\) Wesley, after many days of close controversy, was at length convinced that the Moravian is right. Wesley admitted that Böhler’s teachings were fruits of ‘the living faith, the holiness and happiness which he affirms to attend it’.\(^\text{140}\) Wesley’s Journal has expressed this confession of his mind:

March 23\(^{rd}\). I saw Peter Böhler again, who amazed me more and more by the account he gave me of the fruits of this living faith, the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by the law and the testimony; and being confident that God would hereby show me whether the doctrine was of God,\(^\text{141}\)

April 22\(^{nd}\). I met Peter Böhler once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) “a sure trust and 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.” Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described as fruits of this living faith.\(^\text{142}\)


After that, at the same year on 24 May, at the Aldersgate street, Wesley heard Luther’s preface to the Commentary on Romans, he then responded, ‘About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.’143 This ‘Aldersgate experience’ was important for Wesley. It opened a new Christian life and theological insight for Wesley. Aldersgate has become a turning point for Wesley’s life and his ministry. Theodore Runyon stated that before Aldergate ‘Wesley’s efforts were directed to merit acceptance and win divine approval rather than to receive the grace freely offered This was the weakness Luther’s words identified’.144 Outler said that the Aldersgate experience for Wesley is the outcome - ‘the fusion of justifying faith with the “sure trust and confidence in God that by the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven and he reconciled to the favour of God”.’145 On 30 October 1738, Wesley, in his a Letter to his brother Samuel, defined the meaning of ‘Christian’ and how the term was connected to the Aldersgate experience of him: ‘By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him: And in this obvious sense of the word, I was not a Christian till May the 24th last past. For till then sin had dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely, then, from that time to this is hath not; - such is the free grace of God in Christ.’146 However Daniel L. Burnett added, ‘Yet the class the Aldersgate experience as just a change of perspective on the matter of assurance falls short as well...It certainly contained elements of awakening and assurance, but it is equally certain

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145 Outler, John Wesley, pp.52-53. See also John Wesley, Earnest Appeal, 59, in J. Emory and B. Waugh (ed), vol.5.
that it included much more.’ Burnett continually argued that the Aldersgate experience allows Wesley to transform ‘from works-oriented religion to grace-oriented faith’, and this ‘was in fact a true conversion to biblical Christianity’.\textsuperscript{147} Indeed, Wesley’s experience in Aldersgate Street is worth paying attention. It was at the society meeting at Aldersgate Street, Wesley experienced Böhler’s teaching about a mystical reconciliation of atonement exercised through the help of the Divine Spirit. Such faith he some years later described as ‘the loving, obedient sight of a present and reconciled God.’\textsuperscript{148} It was such Moravian faith, Wesley felt that he was ‘strangely warmed’ in his heart, and thus confirmed his personal assurance of salvation.\textsuperscript{149} In 1786, \textit{Letter to Mr. C}, Wesley mentioned, ‘What, then, is religion? It is happiness in God, or in the knowledge and love of God…and heart and life devoted to God; or communion with God the Father and the Son; or the mind which was in Christ Jesus, enabling us to walk as He walked’.\textsuperscript{150} We can see that the influence of the spiritual awakening or the nature of inward religion on Wesley has been sustained throughout his life.

In short, the Moravians did open Wesley up to an exciting new world of spirituality in comparison to his previous life. The Moravians made an impression on Wesley through their use of hymns in worship, their deep piety that quelled their fear of death, and the mutual language lessons they shared. In Wesley’s mind, the Moravians fitted within his expanding vision of primitive Christianity along with the High Church Nonjurors. It might be that

\textsuperscript{148} John Wesley, ‘Farther Appeal’, 9, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.134. Wesley’s such spiritual views were present in the journals of two Moravian passengers, David Nitschmann and Johann Andrew Dober, which stressed the knowledge Wesley gained from the Moravian; see Hammond, \textit{John Wesley in America,} p.122.
through the influence of the Moravians, Wesley slowly began to assimilate views of pietist and High Church tradition into his theology.\textsuperscript{151}

In accordance with this theology, Wesley called for a critique on Moravian teaching. One of the Moravian teachings that Wesley received from Philip Henry Molther at Fetter Lane Society is that to obtain true assurance of faith, humanity should exercise stillness or quietness before God until he/she received Christian faith coming from God.\textsuperscript{152} The Fetter Lane Society that Wesley had involved, was permeated with the doctrine of ‘stillness’. Since those who accepted the Moravian teaching on stillness stopped using the means of grace, this violated the common belief and practice of the High Churchmanship. Wesley thus started finding it odd and destructive that the Moravian quietism and stillness could get one into a direct relationship or communion with God, because both ways seek a complete negation of the world and of the self. Wesley wrote, ‘Observe that I never knew one of the Moravian Church, but that single person, affirm that a believer does not grow in holiness. And perhaps he would not affirm it on reflection. But I am still afraid their whole Church is tainted with Quietism, Universal Salvation, and Antinomianism: I speak, as I said elsewhere, of Antinomian opinions, abstracted from practice, good or bad.’\textsuperscript{153} ‘I think therefore it is my bounden duty to clear the Moravians from this aspersion. And the more because I am perhaps the only person now in England that both can and will do it’.\textsuperscript{154} Wesley’s first objection to them was that the Moravians ‘slight the means of grace’. Wesley charged Moravians and said ‘that a man ought not to use those ordinances of God which our Church terms “means of grace”, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies


a new, a clean heart.” The charge was that the mystical experience of Moravians allowed humanity to access to the divine directly, they therefore did not need any of the traditional means of grace. Moravians insisted the means of grace were work, which should not be done until being moved to do so by Spirit; therefore it is inherently antithetical to faith. Wesley’s second objection to them come from their breaking of the connection between the love of God from the love of neighbor. Wesley stated, ‘to be a real Christian, is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and to serve him with all our strength; to love our neighbor as ourselves; and therefore do unto every man as we would he should do unto us’. But Moravians insisted only when your soul is perfected in the love of God, you will then naturally exercise the ‘works of charity’. For Wesley, however, the love of neighbor and the love of God are two sides of the same coin. Wesley saw love as active; as Knight put it, ‘This illustrates a pervasive feature of Wesley’s thought: it is something which is done. There can be no “inward love without a corresponding change in one’s active relationship with God and neighbor”’ Wesley rejected the Moravians for they undervalue the ‘good works’; he said, ‘You (the Moravian) undervalue good works, especially works of outward mercy, never publicly insisting on the necessity of them’. The Moravians would not do any good works but be ‘still’ and ‘quiet’, until they are moved by the Spirit to do so. Wesley finally could not follow the Moravian quietist (although, according to Runyon, he did not hesitate to use what he considered valid from their writings for the goal of communion with God). Instead he held the view that the mean of grace is a channel needed to receive

157 John Wesley, ‘Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained’; and see also his Letter to Thomas Church, Bristol, (2 February 1745).
grace and get connected with God. Wesley’s understanding of means of grace was that it is ‘outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end - to be the ordinary channels whereby he night convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace’161 That implies the means of grace are all the ways God works in our lives for humanity come to know and build up a relationship in grace with Him. The main thesis of this paper is to demonstrate that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) serves as means of grace for Wesley; this is to say, appropriation of Christian antiquity could become a channel that connect humanity to God, i.e. enriching the divine-human relationship. In order to continue our analysis and support this main thesis, what comes next is to summarize the discussion above and focus on Wesley’s theology to see how John Wesley appropriates Christian antiquity.

Chapter 4: Wesley’s theology on appropriating Christian antiquity

4.1 John Wesley’s Theology

From the several debates between Wesley and Moravian in the 1740s, it appeared that Wesley had not fully adopting Moravian teachings. But we still have to notice that the pietist influence of Moravians on Wesley should always be recognized. We can now see that Wesley’s theology was not simply contributed by a single source. It is always a dynamic result of various parties, as we can see, challenging and renewing Wesley’s theology. The inheritance of the High Church tradition as inculcated by Wesley’s family and the people Wesley met during his life at Oxford fostered Wesley’s High Churchmmanship, while the experience inculcated by the pietist and Moravian added to Wesley’s theology an inevitably influences of pietistic affection. These dynamic between religious parties inevitably manifested a special theology of Wesley which integrates the High Churchman tradition (which emphasized on the primitive practices and belief) and the sense of piety (which was described as warming in the heart). In fact, the theology integrating the High Church tradition and the sense of piety was not strange at Wesley’s time, because of Anthony Horneck. In 1681, Horneck published The Happy Ascetic, writing in the epistle dedicatory to Thomas, Bishop of Lincoln. The book was devotional, written for a lay audience. The Happy Ascetic showed Horneck’s understanding of his own calling. It directed the reader in spiritual exercises consonant with the devotion of the church in its earliest days. Christianity’s main difficulty, according to Horneck, was its corruption by a pagan culture it had sought to supplant. His solution was ‘to reduce Christianity in men to its primitive rule’ and thereby reconverted the society. In other words, Horneck advocates a concept that Religious Society was a means ‘of regulating and modeling the church’s

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163 Anthony Horneck, ‘To the Right Reverend Father in God, Thomas, Lord Bishop of Lincoln’ in his The Happy Ascetic or, the Best Exercise, Together with Prayers Suitable to Each Exercise (London: printed for Samuel Chapman; and Richard Ware, 1724), Aa3.
adherence to the primitive faith’. Horneck was ‘not fond of controversy’ over doctrines or practices that did not touch the heart of salvation. For Horneck, Christianity primarily concerned with ‘the right way to salvation.’ Sectarianism is profoundly unchristian. Moreover, for any doctrine to be considered necessary to salvation, it must have a solid foundation in Scripture, he argued. As mentioned, the primitive church was a reference point for Horneck's theology. The early church served primarily as an example of a time when the church was not so corrupt as in Horneck’s own day. It is because the earliest Christians were more nearly approximated to the vision of the New Testament, they were an example to be emulated. Horneck described the primitive church as model of lived Christianity, the primary attribute of which as holiness. ‘Holiness was their ornament, and men were counted great as they arrived to high degrees of piety.’ Similarly, the mission of the early church is holiness. Holiness is the critical element to ensure the church’s success. ‘With this kind of life the first Christians amazed the unbelieving world, and their power and number grew too formidable, that the emperors themselves began to be started at their progress. Such holiness was the work of the Holy Spirit.’ ‘For the Holy Ghost that impregnated the blessed Virgin, baptized them too; and the same Spirit, that raised the mighty Jesus from his grave, quickened their mortal bodies, and transformed them into new creatures.’ Horneck regarded the purpose of the clerical office is ‘to plant goodness in men...and to make souls fall in love with heaven, the import of the duty, whereby we hold our charter.’ Horneck represented another trajectory. This trajectory was often referred to the religion of the pietism. This has brought a tremendous impact on the established church with pietism. A piety-based Protestantism under the auspices of the established church began to

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164 Kelly, ‘The High Church Roots of John Wesley’s Appeal’.
166 Horneck, The Happy Asceticke, p.557.
168 Horneck, The Happy Asceticke, p.620.
emerge in England via a grouping of Religious Societies under the leadership of Anthony Horneck.170

Since Horneck remained within the Anglican denominational settings to establish a stream of Pietism, Horneck became a figure within Anglican Pietism, which stressed more the ‘religion of the heart’ and new birth than enrichment of human intelligence, in additional to the emphasis on ethical purity, inward devotion, charity and asceticism.171 Kisker saw Horneck ‘carries Pietist elements of the Reformed theology into the theological world of later Caroline Anglicanism’. He thereby constructed a theological framework that is authentically Anglican ‘by the standards of his day, (but also) emerges a connection of Pietist movements in this framework as revealed in Reformed and Lutheran contexts on the Continent’.173 This influence of ‘Anglican Pietism’ was irrigated into Anglican Churchman through the Religious Society, and ‘(Horneck) began actively to encourage the piety of some of the young men who heard him preach by organizing them into societies’.174 The continuance of the Religious Societies after Horneck’s death, is the foundation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). The influences of Anglican Pietism were further rooted in John Wesley’s family and thus John Wesley himself through SPCK. Therefore according to Kisker, Anglican Pietism was a ‘forerunner of Methodism’.175

The SPCK was founded by a group of friends in London who were already active in the Religious Society movement. The key figures are Thomas Bray (1656-1730), an Anglican clergyman, and four Anglican laymen. August Francke, one of the key figures of the Halle

173 Kisker, Foundation for Revival, chapter 2-3.
174 Kisker, Foundation for Revival, p.68.
175 Kisker, Foundation for Revival, p.197.
Pietists, was in contact with the SPCK virtually from its beginning, and became a corresponding early member of the Society. The connection between the SPCK and the Continental Pietists became stronger when the Society began supporting the Danish-Halle missionaries to India, Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, in 1711. The SPCK then served as a link between the Religious Societies and the emerging Pietist movements on the Continent.176 The Anglican Pietist influences on John Wesley come in a couple of ways. First, John’s father, Samuel Wesley, had been an early supporter of the SPCK. He entered Stepney Academy as a student about the time ‘Dr. Anthony Horneck was at the height of his useful popularity’.177 In 1701 Samuel Wesley became a correspondent for the SPCK, and in 1702 organized a society for promoting Christian knowledge in his Epworth parish, following the SPCK pattern.178 At the minutes of SPCK dated 30 June 1701, a Letter read from Mr. Wesley was recorded. In the minutes, a discussion on 16 June 1701 is abstracted. In the abstract, Samuel Wesley ‘says that he has been laboring ten years to carry on the business of reformation, and the greatest part of last year in a small society for promoting Christian Knowledge, with very little success; but hopes he shall not despond’.179 It was also during this period in the history of the Religious Societies that Samuel and Susanna’s son Charles Wesley began the Holy Club experiment at Oxford in 1729. His brother, John Wesley took over leadership of the group, followed the pattern of his father’s society at Epworth.180 The similarity included communication with Pietists on the Continent. Later, Wesley also joined the SPCK as a corresponding member in August, 1732, while at Oxford.181 The Society

176 Douglas Shantz, A Companion to German Pietism, p.160.
became an important source on Anglican Pietism on foreign missions for Wesley. Second, Wesley’s view on Anglican Pietism were also deepened through the missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, and the publication of the *Danish-Halle mission to India* he read during his time as a fellow in Oxford; this publication was published in London by Anton Bohme in 1709.\(^{182}\) The dynamic between the established church and the pietism within the Anglican Societies finally via SPCK along with missionaries and some related publications brought to Wesley a theology of Anglican Pietism similar to Anthony Horneck. This theology reinforced the piety Wesley glimpsed from the pietists and learned from Moravian, which harmonized the sense of piety with the High Church practices and attitude, especially the Nonjuror one.

John Wesley, as mentioned, having his connection with SPCK, gradually built into a theology similar to the Anglican Pietism. Accordingly, throughout his life, John Wesley shared with the Anglican pietist who showed little interest on speculative theology, but practical theology leading to salvation. Wesley and the Anglican Pietist concerned only for the new birth, and were prominent in ‘fight’ for true Christianity by primitive rule and the solid foundation of the Scripture, which in Wesley’s view is the two side of the same coin. Therefore with the background of Anglican Pietism, Wesley believed that the Church of England was a true Church gathering ‘faithful people’ or ‘true believers’ for Word and sacrament.\(^{183}\) But in term of spirituality, the Church of England is accused to be apostate. In 1763, Wesley wrote that only few members of the Church of England ‘whose inmost soul is renewed after the image of God.’ He continued, ‘there are doubtless a few such to be found…But how few!…And as for a Christian visible church, or a body of Christians visibly united together, where is this to


be seen? The Church of England (and the whole Christian Church generally) Wesley thought was largely corrupted, although in term of structures, practices and liturgy it was still a true church. As Wesley stated, ‘this is the religion of the Church of England; as appears from all her authentic records, from the uniform tenor of her Liturgy, and from numberless passages in her Homilies. The scriptural, primitive religion of love, which is now reviving throughout the three kingdoms, is to be found in her Morning and Evening Service, and in her daily, as well as occasional, Prayers; and the whole of it is beautifully summed up in that one comprehensive petition.’ But in fact the spirit of the true church was demonstrated merely in few of the faith people within the community of the Anglican believers.

We have seen that from the influence of Horneck, Wesley could have built into the theology similar to Anglican Pietist, i.e. theology simultaneously emphasizes on the practices and beliefs of the High Church tradition (Wesley believed it manifested primitive practices and belief) and the sense of inward piety. In early 1750s, Wesley worked again on Cave and Horneck’s works. Two years later in the Christian Library-in the twenty-ninth volume, published in 1752-Wesley included an abridgment of Anthony Horneck’s Happy Ascetick, which contained ‘A Letter to a Person of Quality, concerning the Heavenly Lives of the Primitive Christians’. This letter was itself a summary of a Latin letter dating from 1660, and described in systematic fashion the virtues of the early Christians, holding them up as models for contemporary Christian life. Since the Happy Ascetick reinforced the pietist sense for Wesley, in which the primitive rules served as a reference point, and Wesley considered primitive Christian as model for Christian qualities in these publications, it could be expected

187 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.45.
that Wesley’s publication of these works reflect his theology showing the vision of integrating the pietistic sense and the views of the particular moral traits and institutions of the first Christian centuries. This is what Wesley held up as models for his generation.

4.2 The Appropriation of Christian antiquity under the influence of Wesley’s theology

Under this theology, Wesley was going to seek for a sense of piety from Christian antiquity. Christian antiquity for him therefore was not a tool to ‘program’ the Church reform/Christian revival. Instead, Wesley was going to seek for Christian virtues from Christian antiquity, in order to receive a sense of piety that will be called ‘spiritual senses’. By receiving these spiritual senses, one can know God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we will see in Wesley’s writings that his emphasis on Christian antiquity no longer considered it to be authority parallel with the Scripture. He, however, still considers antiquity as a religious authority throughout his life for Christian virtues. Take Wesley’s A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists as an example: A Plain Account is dated 1748 and was published in January of 1749. It showed Wesley’s understanding in Christian antiquity in relation to people who are called Methodist. In this work, Wesley ascribed a particular religious authority to Christian antiquity. He aimed at appealing to ancient Christian teachings or practices to confirm teachings or practices that the Methodists have to take up. In other words, Wesley’s A Plain Account provided the prime example of this appeal to the authority of Christian antiquity. In this document, he also indicated that many of the distinctive Methodist institutions arose out of the circumstances in which the Methodists found themselves conform to ancient Christian institutions. Wesley stated, ‘So that it is not in vain that, without any design of so doing, we have copied after another of the institutions of the apostolic age. I can now say to all the world, “Come and see how these Christians love one
another.’’\textsuperscript{188} In \textit{A Plain Account}, Wesley stated also that the Methodist societies arose out of the desire of individual persons to follow divine grace, and were found later to conform to the catechetical institutions of the ancient church. ‘‘In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all his mercies, I desired that, one evening in a quarter, all the men in band, on a second, all the women, would meet; and on a third, both men and women together; that we might together ‘‘eat bread,’’ as the ancient Christians did, ‘‘with gladness and singleness of heart.’’\textsuperscript{189} More, in visiting the sick, Wesley stated, ‘‘To relieve them, if they are in want. To do any thing for them, which he (or she) can do. To bring in his accounts weekly to the Stewards. Upon reflection, I saw how exactly, in this also, we had copied after the primitive Church.’’\textsuperscript{190} Wesley took these ancient patterns as a special sign of the rightness of Methodist institutions and practices, especially in cases where those institutions had been called into question by Anglican leaders. Wesley continued, ‘‘About this time, I was informed that several persons in Kingswood frequently met together at the school; and, when they could spare the time, spent the greater part of the night in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving. Some advised me to put an end to this; but, upon weighing the thing thoroughly, and comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians, I could see no cause to forbid it. Rather, I believed it might be made of more general use.’’\textsuperscript{191}

At the same time of publishing \textit{A Plain Account}, it is almost certain that Wesley also engaged in work on the first volume of his \textit{Christian Library}, which began with a translation-partly his own work-of the early second century Apostolic Fathers. The work contained was an

\textsuperscript{188} John Wesley, ‘‘A Plain Account’’, VIII.3, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.188.

\textsuperscript{189} John Wesley, ‘‘A Plain Account’’, VI.5, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.183.

\textsuperscript{190} John Wesley, ‘‘A Plain Account’’, XI.1, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.186.

\textsuperscript{191} John Wesley, ‘‘A Plain Account’’, III.1, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.181.
abridgment of a translation of St. Macarius the Egyptian’s fifty ‘Spiritual Homilies’. The homilies were principally concerned with Christian’s pursuit of ‘perfection’, Wesley’s edition of the work showed how he sees early Christian teachings as models for understanding sanctification. Macarius, as quoted by Wesley, said: ‘And if the mind but a little give way to unclean thoughts; lo, the spirits of error have entered in, and overturned all the beauties that were there, and laid the soul waste.’

Second, as shown in Wesley's abridgment, ‘the image of the circumcision of the heart as representing the work of perfection in the human soul’ is mentioned at least once in Macarius’ Homilies. Wesley showed his continual interests in the Apostolic Fathers by his translation of the ancient works in the first volume of his Christian Library based on Wake’s Apostolic Epistles and Fathers.

The authors of the following collection, were contemporaries of the holy Apostles….We cannot therefore doubt, but what they deliver to us is the pure Doctrine of the Gospel; what Christ and his Apostles taught, and what these holy men had themselves received from their own mouths.

And again, he stated,

…we cannot with any reason doubt of what they deliver to us as the gospel of Christ but ought to receive it, tho’ not with equal veneration, yet with only little less regard, then we do the sacred writings of those who were their masters and instructors.

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The second passage showed that the Apostolic Father was considered having the authority almost the same with the Scripture, though it still presented the stand of the subordination of Christian antiquity to Scripture.

In the thirty-first volume of his *Christian Library* (this volume published in 1753), William Cave’s work *Primitive Christianity* was included in Wesley’s abridgment. This is the work Cave composed for the purpose of restoring the Church according to the primitive faith and practices. As Hammond stated, ‘Cave is interested in the early church as model of practical piety’. Cave stated, ‘I studiously avoided controversies, it being no part of my design to inquire, what was the judgment of the Fathers in disputable cases, especially the more abstruse and intricate speculations of theology, but what was their practice, and by what rules and measures they did govern and conduct their lives.’ The revival of the moral life of the early church seems to have been so prominent in Wesley’s concerns in this work. Wesley said in his journal, ‘I nearly finished the abridgment of Dr. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, a book written with as much learning and as little judgment as any I remember to have read in my whole life; serving the ancient Christians just as Xenophon did Socrates; relating every weak thing they ever said or did’. Campbell claimed, these two works allowed readers to understand the purity of the primitive church, through which we could glimpse for the early and continued influence of the work on Wesley’s view on Christian antiquity, which was also what Wesley wanted to pass to the people who called Methodist.

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198 Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture*, p.46.
In addition to these edited works, Wesley’s vision of Christian antiquity was also reflected in the *Address to the Clergy* which he wrote in the middle of the 1750s. He stated, ‘How much more shall I suffer in my usefulness, if I have wasted the opportunities I once had of acquainting myself with the great lights of antiquity, the Ante-Nicene Fathers’. Wesley’s *Address to the Clergy* recommended the study of the early Christian writers, whom Wesley called ‘the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given’, and among whom he especially values the second century writers. ‘Can any be excused if they do not add to all that…the knowledge of the Fathers? The most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given. It will be easily perceived that I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the Council of Nicaea. But who would not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them: with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Jerome, Augustine, and, above all...Ephraim Syrus?’ Apart from that, in *Father Appeal*, Wesley also validated his own interpretations of biblical passages by citing patristic interpretations of them. His suggestions for reading in the *Address to the Clergy* were reminiscent of Samuel Wesley’s advice to younger clergy. In his reading and comment on Baxter’s *History of the Councils* at 1754, Wesley also antedates Voltaire’s mockery of the ancient councils.

It is utterly astonishing and would be wholly incredible, but that his vouchers are beyond all exception. What a company of execrable wretches have they been (one cannot give them a milder title) who have, almost in every age since St. Cyprian, taken upon them to govern the Church! How has one council been perpetually cursing another; and delivering all over to satan, whether

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predecessors or cotemporaries, who did not implicitly receive their determinations, though generally trifling, sometimes false, and frequently unintelligible, or self-contradictory! Surely Mahometanism was let loose to reform the Christians! I know not, but Constantinople has gained by the change.207

All these showed Wesley’s emphasis of Christian antiquity, in which Wesley deplored the councils of the third century and later, in spite of his affirmation of the language of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon.

During this period, as Maddox showed, Wesley also provided Kingswood School and the Holy Club reading lists with a number of readings representing the high Church tradition,208 which led the reader ‘toward the primitive Christianity; e.g., Grabe's *Spicilegium*; Wake's *Apostolic Epistles and Fathers*; Marshall's *Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church*; and Robert Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England*.209

Moreover, although it did not appear in the *Christian Library*, Wesley published in 1771 an edition of *Johann Lorenz von Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History*. Richard Thomas Hughes stated, ‘John Wesley was a convinced primitivist, basing his periodization of church history upon a careful reading of Johann Lorentz von Mosheim’s ecclesiastical histories’.210 By the time Wesley published an abridged version of Mosheim’s work, the ancient church conspicuously became patterns to be emulated among the Methodists. For example, at Christmas Day, 1774, Wesley wrote: ‘During the twelve festival days we had the Lord’s Supper daily; a little emblem of the Primitive Church. May we be followers of them in all

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209 Kelly, ‘The High Church Roots of John Wesley’s Appeal’; see also Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, p.298.
things, as they were of Christ!’

Similarly, for the festival of the resurrection in 1777, April 30, he wrote in his journal:

Sun 30-Easter Day was a solemn and comfortable day, wherein God was remarkably present with His people. During the Octave I administered the Lord’s Supper every morning, after the example of the Primitive Church.

The structure of Wesley’s conception of the earliest Christian centuries can be seen from his sermon *On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, near the City-Road, London at 1777* as well. In here, he appealed to Scripture, the primitive church, and the Church of England in his sermon for sources of religious authority. ‘But you will naturally ask, “What is Methodism? What does this new word mean Is it not a new religion?” This is a very common, nay, almost an universal, supposition; but nothing can be more remote from the truth. It is a mistake all over. Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England.’ Wesley continued, ‘The Methodists at Oxford were all one body, and, as it were, one soul; zealous for the religion of the Bible, of the primitive church, and, in consequence, of the Church of England; as they believed it to come nearer the scriptural and primitive plan than any other national Church upon earth’.

Lastly, two years before his death, Wesley again called on an ancient Christian precedent in order to defend Methodist practice. His sermon on *Prophets and Priests* (or, *The Ministerial Office*) in 1789 argued in defense of the Methodist lay preachers that laypersons could hold a ‘prophetic,’ but not a ‘priestly,’ office. He called upon biblical evidence and evidence from

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the earliest Christian centuries to demonstrate the existence of a prophetic office which, he held, was different from the priestly office. Wesley stated,

(section)1. There are exceeding few texts of Holy Scripture which have been more frequently urged than this against laymen, that are neither Priests nor Deacons, and yet take upon them to preach...3. In ancient times the office of a Priest and that of a Preacher were known to be entirely distinct. ...(4)... The eldest of the family was the Priest, but any other might be the Prophet. ...(8) if a lay-brother believes he is called to go a mission...10 Let it be well observed on what terms we received these, viz., as Prophets, not as Priests.215

We can confirm here Wesley’s explicitly reference to Christian antiquity as ‘authority’. In fact, from Wesley’s writing to Joseph Benson, Wesley has clearly stated that ‘I regard no authority but those of the Ante-Nicene Fathers; nor any of them in opposition to Scripture.’216

But we have to note that Wesley is not a slave to Christian antiquity. Firstly, under the theology of Wesley, the ante-Nicene writers was only regarded as a subordinate pattern of Christian teaching which was Wesley’s consistent use after 1737, when he recognized his error in having regarded antiquity as a ‘coordinate’ rule with Scripture. Secondly, instead of regarding antiquity as a coordinate rule with the Scripture, Wesley believed that the early church represents the purest age of the Christianity, in which it is authority because it gives Christian virtues for Christian model. In other words, Wesley became a person intentionally utilizing the resources of antiquity as an authority to offer visions of Christian virtues, by which Christian could model their lives by enriching those Christian virtues. Indeed, after 1737, Wesley’s emphasis on Christian antiquity shifted from an emphasis upon the consensus of ancient Christian practices, to an emphasis upon the purity of ancient Christianity.

Wesley then appealed to the life of ‘the whole church in the purest ages’, the ancient Christianity, for the Christian virtues. For instance, in describing the ancient church’s virtues, Wesley mentioned ancient church’s unity; and in 1742, Wesley acknowledges that a passage from Clement’s Stromateis had inspired Christian virtues for The Character of a Methodist. Indeed, The Character of a Methodist revealed a great deal about how Wesley saw the Methodism extending attitudes and practices of the Early Church. According to Campbell, in order to provide meaning to the term ‘Methodist’, Wesley in 1742 wrote The Character of a Methodist. It is a work describing the ‘true gnostic’ in Book Seven of Clement’s Stromateis. Wesley's ‘entirely sanctified Methodist’ and Clement’s ‘perfect Christian gnostic’ partake similar features. The Character of a Methodist depicted the ideal Christian by listing specific virtues. Many of which were the same virtues listed by Clement of Alexandria in describing the Christian ideal: hope of immortality, obedience to God’s commandments, freedom from worldly desires, constancy in prayer, and love of neighbor.

We can see, in the early 1740s, Wesley had been gradually building up his view of Christian antiquity. Wesley called upon Christian antiquity as a religious authority in addition to the authority of Scripture. He therefore appealed to the life of the ancient church and the lives of ancient Christians in order to illustrate what he believed to be scriptural teachings, practices, that could lead to the Scriptural standards of morality and virtues. Wesley’s poem Primitive Christianity in 1743 depicted the life of the ancient church as illustrating Scriptural virtues of unity and faithfulness as well.

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217 John Wesley, in his poem ‘Primitive Christianity’ in Earnest Appeal, I:9-10.
219 Though Wesley’s tract does not refer to some of the virtues stressed by Clement (passionlessness and contemplation of the divine, for example); see also Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.107.
220 John Wesley, ‘Primitive Christianity’ in Earnest Appeal (1743).
The term ‘authority’ in reference to Christian antiquity was also be used in his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* at 1745. *Farther Appeals* was a work that consolidated Wesley’s modified view on Christian antiquity after 1737-38 where he had received Moravian influence from Georgia and the Aldersgate Street. From Wesley’s *Farther Appeal*, several instances about his use of Christian antiquity could be noted 1) In the first place, Wesley called upon Christian antiquity as religious authority. He cited Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Athanasius in favor of his own interpretation of passages in Romans and I Corinthians. 221 2) In the second place, however he insisted, the religious authority of Christian antiquity was an authority subordinate to Scripture. Here he regarded the writings of Christian antiquity having authority for subsequent Christian teachings; not ever against the authority of Scripture, but a ‘subordinate’ authority which he found nonetheless helpful. Wesley stated, ‘What is it you would have us prove by miracles? That the doctrines we preach are true? This is not the way to prove that – as our first Reformers replied to those of the Church of Rome who, you may probably remember, were continually urging them with this very demand. We prove the doctrines we preach by Scripture and reason; and, if need be, by antiquity.’ 222 Here we can still see that Wesley ascribed special authority to ancient Christian authors as interpreters of Scripture; 223 ‘I propose, thirdly, to specify some of the chief passages of Scripture that are misapplied by modern enthusiasts,

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223 The authority Wesley ascribed to Christian antiquity is in the *suggestions* of Christian practices and teachings which Wesley held to be ‘well agreeing with’ the scriptures, though ‘not prescribed’ in scripture. In these cases, Wesley appealed to Christian antiquity not so much to interpret obscure passages of scripture as to authorize practices or teachings about which scripture was simply silent. Wesley could argue that, although these practices and teachings were not prescribed in Scripture (and thus were not to be required of Christians), they were nevertheless shown to be truly Christian by their use in the ancient church. Examples of this use of Christian Antiquity as a religious authority would be Wesley’s approval of Episcopal church government and his suggestion of observing Wednesday and Friday fasts, both of which he held to accord with ancient Christian customs, but neither of which he held to be positively prescribed in the Bible; see also Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, pp.110-111.
and to show that they are to be interpreted chiefly, if not only, of the apostolical church; and
that they very little, if at all relate to the present state of Christians’.  

3) Lastly, Wesley reaffirmed from Christian antiquity that a person can perceive inspiration of the Holy Spirit
directly at their own age. ‘But this will be still more clear from those that follow: wherein
the reader may likewise observe, a plain, rational sense of God’s revealing himself to us, of
the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and of a Believer’s feeling in himself the mighty working
of the Spirit of Christ’.

In addition to Farther Appeal, to continue the work Wesley had started in Georgia, in late
1748 to early 1749, he abridged Claude Fleury’s Moeurs des Chretiens (Manners of the
Ancient Christians), and published it in January 1749. In his edition of Fleury’s work, he
asserted in one place, ‘After the apostles had received the Holy Ghost they were living
images of Jesus Christ. And by them all the following servants of Christ were to form their
hearts and lives’. And in another place he asserted, ‘It is among the first Christians,
therefore, that we must look for a pattern of the most perfect life, and by consequence of the
most happy, that can be upon earth’.

The assertions in these passages were consistent with Wesley’s beliefs about the exceptional
virtues of the early Christians, which pointed to the apostles in the early church as illustrative
of a Christian vision for individual life. The Christian antiquity has, again, become for
Wesley a pattern for individual virtuous life. Indeed, through his life, Wesley referred to

226 Campbell, John Wesley and Christian Antiquity, p.44.
227 Claude Fleury, ‘Chapter II: Of the Church at Jerusalem’, in John Wesley (ed), The Manners of the Ancient
228 Claude Fleury, ‘Chapter I: Of the Life of Christ’ in John Wesley, (ed) The Manners of the Ancient
Christians, p.2.
Christian antiquity as a pattern for individual Christian life. Wesley extolled the virtuous lives of the ancient Christians, he depicted the essentially scriptural virtues of individual Christians in the ancient church. Similarly, his *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, which was composed during a visit to Ireland in the summer of 1749, included a description of the moral and spiritual virtues of the Christian believer, in which Wesley wrote: ‘This, and this alone, is the old religion. This is true, primitive Christianity.’

During this time, Wesley also came upon Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*. We should pay attention to Wesley’s responses to Middleton. *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton* in 1749 was a work written in the light of Methodist challenges to the newly emerging culture of the Enlightenment in England. Campbell claimed, the period of the Apostolic Fathers was critical for Wesley to argue with Middleton, and Wesley’s responses were wholly concerned with the question of ‘miraculous powers’ in the first Christian centuries. Although Wesley has admitted to Middleton that some of the Fathers erred, that does not mean all of them were wrong. Wesley wrote, ‘I grant, in three or four opinions, some (though not all) of these [early church Fathers] were mistaken, as well as those two. But this by no means proves that they were all knaves together; or that if Justin Martyr or Irenaeus speaks wrong, I am therefore to give no credit to the evidence of Theophilus or Minutius Felix’. Therefore, Wesley in his *Letter to Conyers Middleton* stated that it was the exceptional virtue of the ancient Christians that made them less susceptible to doctrinal errors. Although Wesley views that the ancient texts of the first few centuries were not as significant as but subordinate to the Scripture, they did make people free from pernicious errors. This is to

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say, the writings of antiquity carried humanity free from ungodly errors, and the probably religious errors, especially the errors of Popery.\textsuperscript{233} We can see that Wesley has demonstrated in this work that ancient Christian writers from the second through the fourth centuries has displayed Christian virtues for the genuine knowledge of God. Wesley said also in the Preface to \textit{the Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers}:

Yet farther: (The Fathers) were not only such eminent men, but they were also persons of consummate piety; adorned with all those Christian virtues which they so affectionately recommend to us...Such reason have we to look on the writings of these holy men, as containing the pure, uncorrupted doctrine of Christ;\textsuperscript{234}

and at Foundation of the New Chapel that

This old religion...is no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved, as the fountain of all the good we have received’. ...‘This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages...It is clearly expressed...in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus and Macarius.\textsuperscript{235}

This confirms that Wesley did appropriate Christian antiquity for the Christian virtues. In other words, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) for Wesley is to receive Christian virtues.

In the letter, after admitting that the ancient Christians exhibited some weaknesses, Wesley wrote,

And yet, I exceedingly reverence (the ancient Christians), as well as their writings, and esteem them very highly in love. I reverence them, because they


were Christians, such Christians as are above described. And I reverence their writings, because they describe true, genuine Christianity, and direct us to the strongest evidence of the Christian doctrine....I reverence these ancient Christians (with all their failings) the more, because I see so few Christians now; because I read so little in the writings of later times, and hear so little, of genuine Christianity; and because most of the modern Christians, (so called), not content with being wholly ignorant of it, are deeply prejudiced against it, calling it enthusiasm, and I know not what.236

These passages revealed at least part of the motivation behind Wesley’s lengthy response to Conyers Middleton. Middleton’s attack on the claims ancient Christians to have miraculous powers impugned the character of the ancient Christians. Wesley defended their character throughout his response to Middleton, and, held them up as models to be emulated by eighteenth century Christians.

In fact, all the above texts are important, for they indicated Wesley’s interests in Christian antiquity has not died away in his later life. Instead, Wesley’s intentions to appropriate Christian antiquity had been sustained throughout his life. He utilized ancient Christian teachings, customs and institutions as a vision of corporate Christian life. All the above texts also showed that Wesley sought from Christian antiquity not for ritual or formal practices, but for the ancient Christian virtues. Since the theology of John Wesley consisted of attitude of High Church tradition and senses of piety, that made Wesley not sought only for the ritual or formal practices of the Christian antiquity, but through the practices sought for the ancient Christian virtues. Wesley believed that appropriation of the Christian antiquity could lead to the development of the ancient Christian virtues. Those virtues of the Christian antiquity of which is exemplary, and derived from the practices and belief of the

whole church in the purest age of the first few centuries. John Wesley conceived an ideal of Christian virtuous life was manifested in individual and community at a period of the Christian antiquity. More, from the above texts, we could discover that the ‘ideal’ virtues Wesley believed to have been realized in Christian antiquity was mainly what were passed from the apostolic tradition, whose paradigm was what Wesley found in Christ and the early church in the New Testament to the Ante-Nicene writers of the fourth centuries. Wesley stated,

This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed, even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp; it is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian; and, even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius. It would be easy to produce ‘a cloud of witnesses,’ testifying the same thing; were not this a point which no one will contest, who has the least acquaintance with Christian antiquity.237

These ancient virtues were believed to manifest the primitive purity. Now we see that, under Wesley’s theology, Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) had an intentional calling upon antiquity the ancient Christian virtues, and this intention was supported by his writings.

The following chapters argue that these virtues of the Early Church through the power of the Holy Spirit provided help to receive ‘spiritual senses’, which can lead to a true and relational knowledge of God, i.e. an increase in the relationship with God. This is to say, since the theology of John Wesley explained that John Wesley appropriated Christian antiquity for receiving the ancient virtues, appropriation of Christian antiquity for John Wesley (reading or taking for use), through the ‘spiritual senses’ aroused by the Christian virtues, could increase

in the true and relational knowledge of God. This is the ground on which it could be argued that appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as means of grace for Wesley. Appropriation of Christian antiquity to be one of the means of grace was what Wesley wanted to see reinstituted by the Methodists. Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity does contribute to the process of developing the Methodist community. In order to understand how Wesley developed the concept of ‘spiritual senses’, and how appropriation of Christian antiquity could eventually lead to such a true and relational knowledge, the epistemology of John Wesley should be studied.

Chapter 5: Understanding of John Wesley’s Epistemology

We have shown that Wesley aimed at receiving Christian virtues by appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use). Since Wesley was a practical theologian who
did not emphasize speculative theology, the following questions may be asked: What is the role of Christian virtues? Or how the Christian virtues could relate humanity to God? The answer, this paper is going to argue, relied on the concept of the ‘spiritual senses’ that Wesley developed. In order to understand the concept of ‘spiritual senses’, and the possible linkage between Christian virtues and the divine-human relationship for John Wesley, the epistemology of John Wesley should then be analyzed. By doing so, we could thus connect Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use), through the ‘spiritual senses’ aroused by the Christian ancient virtues, to the knowledge of and relationship with God, and finally treat Christian antiquity as on of the means of grace. Because the eighteenth century epistemology provided soil for the growing of the epistemology of John Wesley, an analysis of eighteenth century epistemology, could help explain what the epistemology of John Wesley could be.

5.1 Eighteenth century epistemology
Wesley did not write a lot about philosophy. But since Wesley arrived at Oxford at a time when empiricism was making strong headway against previous philosophical epistemologies, it could be expected that empiricism is also the philosophical thought John Wesley received John Locke was one of the central figures in British empiricism; Wesley adopted the ideas of John Locke, although, as we will show later, he has also disagreed with Locke at some points. In fact, in Wesley’s abridgment, he marked the evidence of his direct study of Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding more than three months in 1725 during the period between the beginning of his university education and his election to a Fellowship at Lincoln College, Oxford.238 This paper will try to explore the possible contribution of Locke to Wesley to seek for the epistemology of Wesley.

5.1.1 From Descartes to Locke

Locke wished to see his empiricist methodology defended against Descartes’ doctrine of innate ideas, which stated that humanity is born with a significant quantum of knowledge. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* aimed not to attack on Descartes; in contrast, it is an epistemological work having large influences from Locke's reading of Descartes’ works. In fact, it is Descartes who brought the philosophical discussion at that time into modern philosophy, and Locke was then introduced from his works a insight of humanity’s inability to obtain direct knowledge of the reality. For example, Descartes considered different kinds of beliefs and the ways in which they might be mistaken by evil genius who constantly deceives us.

I will suppose...and evil genius, supremely powerful and clever, who has directed his entire effort at deceiving me. I will regard the heavens, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds, and all external things as nothing but the bedeviling hoaxes of my dreams, with which he lays snares for my credulity. I will regard myself as not having hands, or eyes, or flesh, or blood, or any senses, but as nevertheless falsely believing all these things.239

Laurence BonJour argued, Descartes demanded that philosophy has to be based on a proper method to solve the skeptical challenge. Descartes argued the evil genius could not deceive him on his own existence.240 He stated,

There is no doubt that I exist, if he is deceiving me. And let him do his best at deception, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I shall think that I am something. Thus... ‘I am, I exist’ is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind.241

241 René Descartes, ‘Meditations of First Philosophy, Second Meditation: The Nature of the Human Mind: That
But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and that also imagines and senses.  

Is it not the very same ‘I’ who now doubts almost everything, who nevertheless understands something, who affirms that this one thing is true, who denies other things, who desires to know more, who wishes not to be deceived, who imagines many things even against my will, who also notices many things that appear to come from the senses?  

Descartes referred to the abilities to refuse, deny, affirm, understand, will, sense, doubt and imagine as a cognitive ‘faculty’, i.e. the intellect, imagination, sense perception and memory. These faculties allow humanity to seek complex knowledge by linking up the simple ideas or truths.  

Descartes said that ‘there can be no other faculty that (he) can trust’. The faculty forms idea, and Descartes claims, the knowledge of ‘ideas’ is the only direct and immediate idea that we could have in understanding the world. Idea is ‘whatever is immediately perceived by the mind’.  

Locke adopted Descartes, and took seriously the skeptical challenge on the possibility of certain knowledge. Locke, in addition to the philosophy of Descartes, included Descartes’ points, objections and even terminology in formulating his thought: One example of Locke
adopting Descartes’ thought is Locke's notion of the idea.\textsuperscript{246} Locke here held that only ‘idea’ is always the direct objects of our perceptions; and ‘(Idea are) produced in us’. Locke defines an idea as ‘Whatever the Mind perceives in itself, or it the immediate object of Perception, Thought or Understanding’;\textsuperscript{247} therefore ‘Ideas...are suggested to the Understanding, by every Object without, and every Idea within’.\textsuperscript{248} In other words, for Locke, ideas are derived from ‘perceptions’ which either come from the external world, (that is known as sensation), or from the human mind’s operation (that is called reflection). This sounds exactly the same with Descartes’ definition of idea: ‘whatever is immediately perceived by the mind’.\textsuperscript{249} Locke continued to talk about the qualities (powers to produce ideas) of an object: there are distinction between primary and secondary qualities. The secondary qualities are ‘Powers to produce various Sensations in us’, which are not the power existed in the objects but power to be perceived or sensed\textsuperscript{250} The primary qualities are those power existed in the object itself such as ‘Solidity, Extension, Figure, Motion, or Rest, and Number’.\textsuperscript{251} This in fact correspond to the distinction Descartes proposed about the qualities of wax: under Descartes’ philosophy, a person is able to perceive size, shape, motion, duration, number, and substance clearly, but not qualities like Locke's secondary qualities, for instance color and sound are not clearly perceived.\textsuperscript{252}

However we have to notice that to compare Locke and Descartes, their differences are much more important and worth noted than their similarities, because it is the differences that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{246} James E. Hamilton, ‘Epistemology and Theology in American Methodism’ in \textit{Wesleyan Theology Journal}, 10 (1975), p.70.
\item \textsuperscript{247} John Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, Book II, (Worcestershire: Read Books Ltd, 2013), VIII, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{248} Locke, \textit{Essay}, Book II, VII, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{249} René Descartes, \textit{Third Set of Replies}.
\item \textsuperscript{250} Locke, \textit{Essay}, Book II, VIII, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{251} Locke, \textit{Essay}, Book II, VIII, 9.
\end{itemize}
protrude their respective theories of knowledge. According to Descartes, experience and deduction through which it is the two ways to catch knowledge. However, knowledge depends on absolute certainty; and since human ‘sensory grasp’ of objects ‘is in many cases very obscure and confused’, we have no reason to think that all bodies exist in a way that exactly as perceived by our senses. In other words, for Descartes, perception is not trustworthy, genuine knowledge should not be denied from the senses obtained from the world. Descartes believed that deduction ‘can never be performed wrongly by an intellect which is in the least degree rational’, therefore the certain knowledge is only possible if it is a deductive knowledge. However some knowledge was considered by Descartes as an immediately known knowledge, e.g. the idea of the existence of the self and God. These are knowledge which are ‘revealed to (us) by natural light’ and ‘cannot in any way be open to doubt’. ‘This light... could teach that (anything revealed by this light of nature) are not true’ as well. Descartes described the results produced by this light/principle as ‘evident’ and as ‘manifestly true’. It is this ‘light of nature’, Descartes argued, produces the self-evident idea and truth. Descartes stated ‘light of nature shows me – for example, that from the fact that I doubt, it follows that I am and so on – cannot in any way be doubtful, because there can be no other faculty in which I may trust as much as the light of nature that could teach which of these positions are not true.’ BonJour explained, ‘the underlying idea seems to be that the principle and other causal beliefs and convictions (if there are any) that result from the “light of nature” are self-evidently true, that is, are things that can be seen to be true simply by thinking about their content...(which) can seemingly be known independently of

254 John Cottingham (tr), Selected Philosophical Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.76.
255 René Descartes, ‘Rules for the Direction of our Native Intelligence, Rule 2’, in Cottingham (tr), Selected Philosophical Writings, p.365.
256 René Descartes, in Cottingham (tr), Selected Philosophical Writings, p.89.
257 BonJour, Epistemology, p.16.
any reliance on sensory and introspective experience’, and ‘if there are claims or principles that are genuinely self-evident, then they can be used to supplement his knowledge of the contents of his own mental states (and of his own existence), thus possibly providing a basis for inference to further knowledge, including knowledge of the material world’.259 Kurt Brandhorst also explained, ‘“by the light of nature”…(i)t is the immediacy of “once you see it you cannot but acknowledge it” that Descartes had tried (but failed) to distill into a rule’.260 BonJour continually argued, for Descartes ‘these principles are innate or Knowable a priori, without reliance on sensory or introspective experience.’261 Peter Machames and Marcus P. Adams agreed that and suggested ‘These references to natural light are reminiscent of Descartes’ discussion of a “sort of innate light” in the Rules for the Direction of the Mind’.262 We can now see that reasoning from the self-evident principles is sufficient to infer the best explanation for human mental and sensory states about anything existed in the world.263 Rationalist, Descartes, took this view in order to argue that humanity do not learn ultimate truths by experience. But where does the self-evident innate idea or principle come from? Descartes proposed a non-deceitful and perfect God who can prevail all evil genius to get rid of any doubt on the ultimate truth and the existence of the reality.264 In his Meditations of First Philosophy, Descartes sought to establish the proposition about the Truth Rule that ‘whatever is perceived clearly and distinctly is true’, in which the foundation for the Truth Rule is the proposition that ‘God exists and is not a deceiver’.265 Brain Leiter explained, ‘Descartes perceives God’s existence and non-deception clearly and distinctly, and that

259 BonJour, Epistemology, pp.18-19.
261 BonJour, Epistemology, p.23.
263 BonJour, Epistemology, p.22.
264 BonJour, Epistemology, p.18.
265 René Descartes, ‘Meditations of First Philosophy, Third Meditation: Concerning God that He exists’, Part I, in Cottingham (tr), Selected Philosophical Writings, pp.49-72.
whatever is perceived clearly and distinctly is true’. In other words, the ‘light of nature’ reveals the self-evident truth, because of the existence of a non-deceiving God, and thus the nonexistence of the evil genius which guarantee that self-evident truth is always true and can be trusted.

Unlike Descartes, Locke, on the other hand, supported humanity is given and inborn an ability to attain knowledge, just as normally humanity is inborn an ability to see, walk, digest and learn language. I think it is right for Grayling to claim for Locke that all knowledge ultimately bases on experience. Sense-experience does constitute a reliable source of knowledge concerning the existence and, to some extent, the properties of external objects, as Locke said: ‘The notice we have by our Senses, of the existing of Things without us, though it be not altogether so certain, as our intuitive Knowledge...yet it is an assurance that deserves the name of Knowledge.’ We have noticed that Locke had borrowed a lot from Descartes’ epistemology. But Locke’s task was to clarify an epistemological path, so that the way of acquiring knowledge, i.e. knowledge is from the observation to the world, as asserted by newly emerging empirical sciences, could be taken seriously. In other words, Locke’s point was to make experience a reliable source of knowledge. This is why Locke found it necessary to abandon Descartes’s notion of innate ideas. He argued that since little children do not immediately know about some innate ideas, it supports that no innate ideas is inborn in humanity. Locke further explained, if innate idea exists, the existence of God should be one of the innate idea. However, since not all the people believe in the notion of God, there is no innate idea of God. It supports the inexistence of the innate idea. Locke insisted the

267 BonJour, Epistemology, p.18.
mind was a ‘white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas’, we should not presuppose any innate idea presented in human mind.\textsuperscript{271} Such inborn ideas, Locke argued, can only interfere with evidence gathered by the senses from the external world. For Locke, experience takes two aspects: 1) ‘sensation’, which is observation of external sensible objects, and 2) the ‘reflection’ which is inner perception from the operations of human mind. Locke said that sensation and reflection formulate all idea; experience is the foundation of all knowledge.\textsuperscript{272} Reflection which is the activities of the mind is an introspective awareness, as the mind busies itself with the ideas it contains – comparing, remembering, believing, and the like. In Locke’s philosophy, humanity’s experience formulates ideas through sensation and reflection, and ideas maintain all activities of the understanding, for example painfulness can mean nothing unless the idea of it enters the space of the understanding. Locke in the first edition of the \textit{An Essay concerns Human Understanding} distinguished ideas into ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ ideas.\textsuperscript{273} Locke described simple ideas as idea which can be obtained from direct experience to the world only. ‘In ordinary ways of thinking this denotes an arrangement into ideas of things, ideas of their properties, and ideas of the relations in which they stand to one another.’\textsuperscript{274} In the fourth and final edition of the \textit{Essay} Locke described complex ideas as an account given in terms of the mind’s ability to combine, compare, and abstract. ‘The mind then combines the (simple) ideas taken from sensation and internal perception in memory, which he describes as “an ability in the Mind”, to produce complexity, comparison produces relation, and abstraction produces general ideas.’\textsuperscript{275} In other words, the humanity constructs the complex idea. When several of the simple ideas has been accumulated, the mind ‘has the power to repeat, compare, and unite (the simple ideas) even to an almost

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\textsuperscript{271} Locke, \textit{Essay}, Book II, I, 2.
\textsuperscript{272} Locke, \textit{Essay}, Book II, VII.
\textsuperscript{273} Grayling, ‘British empiricists’, p.492.
\textsuperscript{274} Grayling, ‘British empiricists’, p.493.
\textsuperscript{275} Grayling, ‘British empiricists’, p.493.
\end{flushright}
infinite variety, and so can make at pleasure new complex ideas’.\textsuperscript{276}

5.1.2 Locke’s Idea of God

Locke’s story about human understanding should not be ended here. Locke saw the gap between physical idea and the spiritual idea, such as God, and subsequently relegated knowledge of God to that which is revealed in Scripture. We have to note in Lockean language, the idea of ‘an immaterial Spirit’, such as souls, angels, and the idea of God belong to the complex idea. Locke stated, ‘When we would frame an Idea the most suitable we can to the Supreme Being, we enlarge every one of these with our Idea of Infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex Idea of God.’\textsuperscript{277} However is this complex idea a knowledge? Locke claimed knowledge consists in ‘the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas’.\textsuperscript{278} Locke continued, through reason,\textsuperscript{279} which consists of deductions (a term Locke did not use to refer to logical entailment but to the process of finding connections between ideas) from ideas acquired from natural faculties alone, we can discover some truths, and these truths are either certain or probable. Locke believed that only through our natural faculties we can achieve knowledge. He told us that our ideas come from our natural faculties alone, and our ideas ‘are the Foundation, and sole Matter of all our Notions, and Knowledge’.\textsuperscript{280} Clearly, then, not only humanity can know some propositions without consulting faith and revelation, but none of human knowledge can be received from revelation. For Locke knowledge is possible only in

\textsuperscript{276} Locke, \textit{Essay}, II, II, 2.
\textsuperscript{277} Locke, \textit{Essay}, II, XXIII, 33.
\textsuperscript{278} Locke, \textit{Essay}, IV, I, 2.
\textsuperscript{279} By reason, Locke generally means the ability of humanity to use natural faculties to formulate ideas, i.e., sensation and reflection (Locke, \textit{Essay}, IV, XVIII, 2) ‘Reason therefore here’, as Locke claims, ‘(consider) to be the discovery of the Certainty or Probability of such Propositions or Truths, which the Mind arrives at by Deductions made from such Ideas, which it has got by the use of its natural Faculties, viz. by Sensation or Reflection (Locke, \textit{Essay}, IV, XVIII, 2) That’s why in Locke’s notion of reflection, the mind is to receive, analyze, and reflect upon the data drawn from sensory experience, and then combine such data to form abstract thinking with the help of imagination and reasoning.
\textsuperscript{280} Locke, \textit{Essay}, IV, XVIII, 3.
matter of reason, while in matters of faith we must be content with mere belief. Locke may be clearly skeptical of such claims to have a complex idea of God. It is because humanity always makes mistakes; and when humanity talk about the idea of God, reason is lost. Locke claimed,

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, need 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...

Moreover, at one point, Locke insisted all true knowledge should be certain, although not necessarily the certainty of entailment. He asserted that ‘the highest Probability, amounts not to Certainty; without which, there can be no true Knowledge’.

This passage suggested that knowledge is limited to those propositions of which we can be certain. In other place of his works, he was even more explicit on this point. For instance, in the Stillingfleet correspondence he berated the Bishop of Worcester more than once for failing to understand knowledge and certainty are the same thing.

Therefore, as stated in the chapter of the Essay on ‘Faith and Reason’, Locke explained, ‘The Knowledge, we have, that this Revelation came at first from GOD, can never be so sure, as the Knowledge we have from the clear and distinct Perception of the Agreement, or Disagreement of our own Ideas’. For Locke, faith is uncertain because the belief we take to be revelation is actually revealed by God, and it is only probably true. Faith is not knowledge. The claim here is that through faith we are not able to achieve certainty, while through reason we can. For Locke,

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282 Locke, Essay, IV, III, 14.
284 Locke, Essay, IV, XVIII.4.
propositions of faith cannot be known because the source of their validity is not our natural faculties; they are less assured than what can be known by experience. Faith therefore cannot be considered as knowledge. Even in the *Essay* there is one passage where Locke explicitly held that faith does not give us knowledge. This occurred in the chapter entitled ‘Knowledge of the Existence of other Things’ which was in the context of a discussion of spirit (angels, demons, etc.). There he maintained that though we have ideas of spirits, nevertheless we do not know that such things exist. Why not? Locke’s answer was clear:

We have ground from revelation, and several other Reasons, to believe with assurance, that there are such Creatures: but our Senses not being able to discover them, we want the means of knowing their particular Existences…And therefore concerning the Existence of finite Spirits, as well as several other Things, we must content ourselves with the Evidence of Faith…For however true it may be, e.g. that all the intelligent Spirits that GOD ever created, do still exist; yet it can never make a part of our certain Knowledge.²⁸⁵

Faith, Locke said, ‘is the Assent to any Proposition, not thus made out by the Deductions of Reason’.²⁸⁶ ‘For Matter of Faith being only divine Revelation, and nothing else, Faith, as we use the Word, (called commonly, Divine Faith) has to do with no Propositions, but those which are supposed to be divinely revealed’²⁸⁷ In another place he asserted, ‘Faith gave the Determination, where Reason came short’, and any proposition ‘of whose Truth our Minds, by natural Faculties and Notions, cannot judge, that is purely a Matter of Faith, and above Reason’.²⁸⁸ So we can see that Locke’s challenge on faith was obvious: propositions on Faith is fall short of Reason; it is a self-evident truth that has not been supported by

²⁸⁵ Locke, *Essay*, IV, XI, 12; according to Locke, believers other than St. Paul assent to his account in Romans of the plan of salvation, but since Paul himself could be absolutely sure that God revealed those things to him, he did not merely judge them to be true, since judgment is exercised only about matters of which there is some doubt…when Locke talks about Paul’s apprehension of the doctrines of which he had written in his epistles, he says that the apostle ‘was no way at an uncertainty, nor ever, in the least, at a loss concerning any branch of it’. Therefore, for Locke, Paul could not have simply judged the plan of salvation to be true. Paul knew it to be true. See John Locke, *An Essay for Understanding of St Paul’s Epistles*, vol. 8 (London: W. Otridge and son, 1812), pp.1-24.


experience. So is Locke an atheist? Locke himself seems not to doubt about the existence of God. In the end Locke allowed 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.\footnote{Locke, Essay, IV, XIX.14-16.} Locke claimed, ‘whatever GOD hath revealed, is certainly true, no Doubt can be made of it’.\footnote{Locke, Essay, IV, XVIII, 10.} In Locke’s final conclusion about God was that reason can demonstrate the existence of God, and faith could assist and improve reason ‘by new Discoveries of Truth’.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 3.} Truths of reason, although ‘not exhaustive of all truth, are known, while truths of faith, which are merely believed, enhance or complement reason’.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 2.} We can therefore see that eventually Locke proposed the ontological argument as similarly as Descartes,\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 2.} and used the argument of the intelligent design to argue for an Eternal Being. Locke regarded the truth about the existence of God is similar to an analytic truth. He said: ‘It is as certain that there is a God... this be the most obvious truth that reason discovers, and though its evidence be (if I mistake not) equal to mathematical certainty: yet it requires thought and attention’.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 3.} Locke ‘knows also that nothing cannot produce a being; therefore something must have existed from eternity’.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 2.} Locke then argued from human intuitive perception of their own existence for the existence of God.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 3.} ‘In the next place, man knows, by an intuitive certainty, that bare nothing can no more produce any real being, than it can be equal to two right angles’.\footnote{Locke, Essay IV, X, 3.} Locke continued, ‘If, therefore, we know there is some real being, and that nonentity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident
demonstration, that from eternity there has been something’.\textsuperscript{298} This is the principle of Causal Adequacy, Descartes appealed in his meditations. This is to say, since a thing made by something cannot have greater power than its source, and since an eternal being should always be the most powerful one and be the first source of all things, the eternal being should possess perception and knowledge. It is because we as a humanity have perception and knowledge in us.\textsuperscript{299} Locke therefore argued that if nonexistence of God is true, then no knowledge is possible; but since knowledge is possible, the existence of God is evidently true. Locke concluded, ‘thus, from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own constitutions, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth,—That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being’.\textsuperscript{300}

We can see that Locke is an empiricist, who insisted all knowledge is derived from sensory experiences. The human mind receives from the senses the image of the simple ideas, and reflects those ideas, combine them, to form new image of the complex ideas. In other words, through sensation and reflection human obtain knowledge. All knowledge, Locke insisted, obtained by this process should be certain; that means for Locke knowledge is always with full degree of certainty. Locke continued, however, knowledge about God is not certain, because it cannot be sensed by or reflected from sensation. It is about knowledge of Faith. Faith is not certain knowledge; it is from the revelation of God. But we have to notice that Locke is not an atheist. He chose to regard the direct revelation from God or the revelation from the Scripture to be a true proposition. Revelation could be believed as truth, though, under Locke’s epistemology, it is not a knowledge but Faith. Faith is to believe revelation as certain and truth.

\textsuperscript{298} Locke, \textit{Essay} IV, X, 3.
\textsuperscript{299} Locke, \textit{Essay} IV, X, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{300} Locke, \textit{Essay} IV, X, 6.
5.1.3 Peter Browne’s theologizing of the Essay

Wesley assimilated and adopted the ideas of John Locke in forming his epistemology. However, Wesley was concerned with ‘the human knowledge in both the natural and supernatural’. Therefore, while Locke has emphasized natural senses and limited faith or supernatural things to a knowledge of belief or uncertain knowledge, Wesley, on the contrary, was developing from Locke an epistemology that valued ‘spiritual senses as well as those senses in the physical domain’. But the influences on Wesley about this concern should also refer to Browne’s The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding which Wesley acclaimed. ‘You are not required to believe any mystery. Nay, that, great and good man, Dr. Peter Browne, sometime Bishop of Cork, has proved at large that the Bible does not require you to believe any mystery at all’.

During the early weeks of 1727, in the letters to Susanna, Wesley devoted part of Friday mornings to direct study of the Essay. And on Christmas Eve, 1730, he finished filling a 103-page bound quarto notebook with his abridgment of the Procedure, Extent, and limits of Human Understanding by Peter Browne, the Irish Bishop of Cork and Ross, and philosopher (died 1735). Browne followed the Essay’s philosophical principle to claim that there are things beyond reason in the rationally attested system of Christianity. Browne and Locke were on the same track with regard to the human knowledge of God. Browne

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304 Brantley, Locke, Wesley, p.95; and see also Donald A. Bullen, A Man of One Book?: John Wesley’s Interpretation and Use of the Bible (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2007), p.135; see also Wesley Centre Online, ‘Editor’s Introductory’, Notes 2, in John Wesley, Letter of John Wesley in 1731, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1731/
305 Peter Browne, The Procedure Extend, and Limits of Human Understanding (Munich: Zenys, 1729).
affirmed the two basic tents of Locke’s epistemology, namely that humans are not furnished with any Innate Ideas of things material or immaterial\textsuperscript{307}, and that the senses are ‘the only Source and Inlets of those Ideas, which are the entire Groundwork of all our Knowledge both Human and Divine’.\textsuperscript{308} Browne wrote:

It is not reasonable to imagine that this should be performed by giving us any Faculties entirely 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...\textsuperscript{309} ‘No; Divine Information gives us no New Faculties of Perception, but is adapted to those we Already have’.\textsuperscript{310} ‘The Mind of Man...hath no Direct Perception or Immediate Consciousness beyond things sensible and human.\textsuperscript{311}

We can see that Browne in Procedure, like Locke in the Essay, intended to argue that the eye could awake the mind at once to ‘see’ into the spirit of things and to rise to an immediate and accessible form of religion. Browne described this full perspective on the way the Essay was employed to provide philosophical substance for eighteenth century religious thought. For both Locke and Browne, the idea of God is a human construction. 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 and Locke.

However, Browne was in some ways more extreme in his empiricism than Locke. He dissented with Locke about his indiscriminate use of the word ‘idea’ to refer to ideas of both sensation and reflection. This is to say, Browne rejected the Lockean way to treat perception of agreeing or disagreeing ideas to be the understanding of knowledge. He also rejected Locke’s inference that reason deserts us where we have no ideas.\textsuperscript{312} Browne thought that Locke’s approach considered humanity too passive in inferring and

\textsuperscript{307} Browne, The Procedure, p.383.
\textsuperscript{308} Browne, The Procedure, p.55.
\textsuperscript{309} Browne, The Procedure, p.472.
\textsuperscript{310} Browne, The Procedure, p.473.
\textsuperscript{311} Browne, The Procedure, p.477.
\textsuperscript{312} Locke, Essay IV, XVII, 9.
apprehending ideas, even the complex ideas produced by the mind were regarded as passive ideas by Browne.\textsuperscript{313} Locke’s use of ‘idea’ was too imprecise for Browne as it seems 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.’\textsuperscript{314} Browne repeated this points several times in his treatise.\textsuperscript{315} Browne argued 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.’\textsuperscript{316} Humanity, in Browne’s view, through the ‘pure Intellect’, is creative in formulating ideas. There are three kinds of human creativity suggested by Browne: complex notions or concept, which is different from Locke’s complex ideas ‘because they involve more than the largely passive recombination of sensations’;\textsuperscript{317} knowledge about spiritual and immaterial being; and ‘all true illation, or the actual inferring one thing from another; and in effect all knowledge whatsoever that is not intuitive’.\textsuperscript{318} Therefore, Browne rejected Locke’s ‘ideas of reflection’, and replaced it by the notion of ‘consciousness’, i.e. in Browne’s thought, it is where the idea of ‘spirit’ is formulated. The human intellect ‘makes up a sort of complex notion or Conception of it, by first adding together the Operations of our Mind, such as Thinking and Willing, and the several modes of them; and then Substituting them so combined, to represent the Perfections of a Being or Substance of which we have no Proper Idea; and of which we form the best Idea we Can form that of the most spirituous part of material substance.’\textsuperscript{319}

\textsuperscript{314} Browne, \textit{The Procedure}, p.64.
\textsuperscript{316} Browne, \textit{The Procedure}, p.63.
\textsuperscript{317} Pedlar, ‘Sensing the Spirit’, p.170.
\textsuperscript{318} Browne, \textit{The Procedure}, p.422.
\textsuperscript{319} Browne, \textit{The Procedure}, p.102. Browne further criticized ‘When the Ideas of Sensation and Reflection are
Then how can Browne demonstrate the existence of the Divine Spirit? It seems, as John C. English stated that Browne filled in the ‘attributes of the One by applying the “perfections” of the human mind - especially its power, wisdom, and goodness - to the “perfections” of the Divine Mind, insisting all the while that they are incommensurable’. Both Locke and Browne affirmed faith is the only means that can support the existence of God and his attributes. The knowledge provided by revelation is considered to be the primary knowledge of God, in which the natural knowledge of God is secondary and supplements to the knowledge from the revelation. The contents of the Scripture is always undoubtful and genuine; it is the ‘testimony’ of God who does not lie.

However, some may request for an evidence to support the testimony of God or faith to be coming from God, the supernatural Being, instead of constructing by the natural human being. While Locke defined ‘faith’ as ‘Assent founded on the highest Reason’, Browne cited Heb. 11:1: ‘Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’, and claimed this verse concluded with the suggestion that sensory experience is of no help in acquiring knowledge about spiritual world. However, Hebrews 11:1 also suggests that faith could help to access to the unseen spiritual world. Browne claimed ‘faith is primarily the attitude of mind which believes truths about an unseen spiritual world...(in) which reason is unable to discover…but which satisfies the demands of reason for evidence’. Browne offered three kinds of proof for the basis of faith: ‘moral evidence’, which indicated the supremacy of the teachings and personal characters of Jesus as described in the Scripture;

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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’. See, Browne, *The Procedure*, pp.68-69.

‘sensitive evidence’, which means the miracles carried out by the prophets, the apostles and Jesus; and thirdly the ‘argument from Old Testament’, which means the prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{322} We can see that in Browne’s method, Browne had not referred to the spiritual senses - it is not a significant concept in his thought; and Wesley departed radically from Browne. Instead, Wesley found it significant to recognize the experience of the Spirit, in which the spiritual senses play an important role in realizing spiritual knowledge.

5.2 John Wesley’s Epistemology

5.2.1 John Wesley and the Eighteenth century epistemology

Wesley committed to Lockean empiricism as an epistemology for natural things. Richard Brantley argued that Locke’s sense-based epistemology became a major source of knowledge in Wesley’s theology. Brantley has described Locke's influence on Wesley. ‘Wesley mastered the \textit{Essay}, followed its principles, spread its message, reconciled it with his faith, and incorporated it into his philosophical theology.’\textsuperscript{323} According to Brantley, Locke's theory of knowledge provided ground for Wesley’s Methodist revival, ‘lending to it the conviction that true knowledge comes from sense perception along with reason’.\textsuperscript{324} Therefore, unlike the epistemology of Descartes that emphasized \textit{a priori} knowledge, Wesley rejected the notion of innate ideas. For example, Wesley showed us his views on Locke in his \textit{Remarks upon Mr. Locke’s ‘Essay On Human Understanding’} in 2 April 1781.\textsuperscript{325} In these remarks, Wesley expressed his agreement on Locke that no innate ideas are in fact existed, and confirmed Locke’s conviction that ‘all our ideas come from sensation or reflection’.\textsuperscript{326} In

\textsuperscript{322} Browne, \textit{The Procedure}, pp.251-252.
\textsuperscript{323} Brantley, \textit{Locke, Wesley}, p.17.
\textsuperscript{324} Brantley, \textit{Locke, Wesley}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{326} Locke, \textit{Essay}, II, I, 2. See also Pedlar, ‘Sensing the Spirit’, p.87. After affirming these foundational principles found in Locke’s Essay, Wesley goes on to provide a litany of errors and defects in the work.
Conyers Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*, he claimed, ‘the credibility of witnesses depends on a variety of principles wholly concealed from us’, and Wesley denied with this Middleton’s premises in his ‘Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton (1749)’. Instead Wesley seems to accept that all knowledge is derived from our senses. Thus the senses and reason produce in us together the possibility of the real knowledge. As Randy Maddox explained, in the controversy of rationalism and empiricism, ‘Wesley self-consciously sided with the empiricist denial of innate ideas.’ Throughout his work Wesley would often quote the Aristotelian slogan, ‘nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses.’ For Wesley, as Theodore Runyon stated, the denial of innate ideas and the corresponding denial of the self-sufficiency of human reason are followed from the doctrine of the Fall; these attracted Wesley into the Lockean approach.

But Brantley continued, ‘Locke's empiricism (i.e. his epistemology of sense perception) directly informs the religious “epistemology” whereby Wesley claimed the saving faith he felt was his.’ For Brantley, ‘The Lockean language of experience...enabled (Wesley) to raise his ineffable experience of grace to graceful and cogent expressions of methodology’. Brantley saw a strong confluence of idea between John Wesley and John Locke. According to Brantley, he noticed Wesley acclaimed *The Procedure of Browne,* and at one juncture,

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329 Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p.27.
Wesley preferred Browne to Locke. He wrote in his journal on 6 December 1756, ‘I began reading to our preachers the late Bishop of Cork’s Treatise on Human Understanding, in most points far clearer and more judicious than Mr. Lock’s as well as designed to advance a better cause.’\textsuperscript{334} Therefore, as John C. English noticed, ‘Brantley goes further: Wesley, inspired by Locke’s disciple, Peter Browne, was led to draw an analogy between sense perception and experience of the Divine. Brantley argues, as the physical senses are to knowledge of the visible world, so the spiritual senses are to knowledge of the invisible realm’.\textsuperscript{335} The notion of spiritual senses of Wesley thus began, most obviously from Browne, with the empiricist notion of sense experience.

However, Brantley’s argument shown above was not adequate. Wesley had not developed the concept of spiritual senses directly from Locke or Browne. It is because Locke and Browne viewed human knowledge come merely from sensory experience alone; for them, the existence of the spiritual things are only supported by ‘Faith’. Therefore, Wesley’s epistemology should not be interpreted merely through Lockean or Browne lenses. Indeed, as mentioned, Wesley received his University education and started his ministry at the time when John Locke had the greatest impact in the British universities, and in Wesley’s abridgment, there are more than three months in the making, marks the evidence of his direct study of the \textit{Essay} in 1725 during the time he begins his Bachelor of Arts and being elected as a Fellowship at Lincoln college, Oxford.\textsuperscript{336} However, Wesley did not take the \textit{Essay}’s points uncritically. Wesley committed to empiricism as an epistemology for natural things, but he viewed, in contrast to the empiricist, none of human senses can reach to the knowledge of the spiritual thing.

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\textsuperscript{335} English, ‘John Wesley’s Indebtedness’, p.55; see also Brantley, \textit{Locke, Wesley}, pp.49, 51.
\textsuperscript{336} Brantley, \textit{Locke, Wesley}, p.29.
\end{flushright}
none of our senses, no, not the sight itself, can reach beyond the bounds of this visible world. They supply us with such knowledge of the material world as answers all the purposes of life. But as this was the design for which they were given, beyond this they cannot go. They furnish us with no information at all concerning the invisible world.\textsuperscript{337}

Wesley insisted, the experience of the Spirit as something which makes spiritual things known. Wesley then based on his empirical position on the natural knowledge to analogize something which is incapable of being explained by the natural knowledge, i.e. the explanation of the spiritual things.

Wesley then claimed all those who are ‘born of God’ have received a new sense faculty above the natural faculty of sensation. They may thus through the means of grace to receive spiritual senses to see, hear, feel, taste and smell realities that are not available to the natural senses. By means of this faculty, they may experience ‘God and the things of God’. Indeed, this faculty is said to be supernatural, and therefore is entirely distinct from and prior to natural sensation and to reason or mind. Mark Mealey argued that the concept of spiritual senses is not a kind of empiricism which sustains that all knowledge should be based on the five sensory.\textsuperscript{338} Wesley was careful not to reduce theological questions to philosophical questions. Wesley’s idea of spiritual sensation is not a philosophical but a theological idea.\textsuperscript{339} Wesley only tried to employ Lockean method to articulate, or at least to intimate, a correspondence between sensory perception and the awareness of God. Wesley was careful to avoid that humanity can easily know the common ground between faith and empiricism. 

\textit{An Earnest Appeal} was careful to stress that natural understanding cannot apprehend spiritual


\textsuperscript{338} Pedlar, ‘Sensing the Spirit’, p.86.

truth. Knowledge from visible to invisible cannot occur, declared Wesley, ‘till the Almighty
come in to your succor, and give you that faith you have hitherto despises’. Wesley added
or modified the Brownean, and indirectly Lockean, understanding of sense-based method to
access the spiritual knowledge about God. What happened, then, would be that: Wesley
read Locke and Browne’s epistemology, but he may not fully satisfied with them. Wesley
needed some way to support empirically the knowledge about the spiritual thing; he required
a sense that can deduce spiritual knowledge. Wesley then recalled that the concept of the
spiritual senses incessantly from long history of Christianity and John Norris’ works. As
John C. English argued, ‘One reason why Wesley was attracted to the books of John Norris is
this: he found in Norris something which he had missed in John Locke and Peter Browne’.341

John Norris lived through the year of 1657 – 1711, in which the paradigm had successfully
shifted from medieval scholasticism to new intellectual modern philosophy. He was born 2
January 1657 in the village of Collingbourne-Kingston, near Ludgershall in Wiltshire where
his father was a minister. In 1670, before he moved to Exeter College, Oxford, in 1676, he
attended Winchester School and receive classical education, as that which Samuel Wesley
entered342 At the University, he studied scholastic philosophy, but at the same time some
elementary level of mathematics and natural philosophy.343 In 1680, he was also elected
Fellow of All Souls. Later in 1684, he received his MA and was ordained. At the same
year, he studied under Dr. Henry Moore, a mystic divine in Christ’s College in Cambridge.

He had also opened ‘a correspondence with the learned Lady Masham, D. Cudworth’s
daughter, and the ingenious Mrs. Astel’.344 It totally took 9 years for Norris to study, write

340 Cited in Brantley, Locke, Wesley, p.50.
341 English, ‘John Wesley’s Indebtedness’, p.60.
343 Mordechai Feingold, ‘The Mathematical Science and New Philosophies’ in Nicholas Tyacke (ed), The
Published by N. Bangs and J. Emory), p.60.
and preach at Oxford.\textsuperscript{345} It was during this period that his interest in Platonic thought as well as his own philosophical ideas were first developed. In 1689, he married and was appointed rector at Newton St Lowe, a village just outside Bath. Three years later in 1692, he was elected as the rectory of Bemerton, near Sarum for his well-performed merit. He moved to become rector of Bemerton, and remained there until his death in February, 1711.\textsuperscript{346} During the period between 1725 and 1735, there were at least fifteen items of Norris that Wesley had read, e.g. \textit{Practical Discourses, Cursory Reflections, Practical Treatise concerning Humility, Treatise Concerning Christian Prudence, The Charge of Schism, Spiritual Counsel, Miscellanies, and Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible Word} where in this work Norris opposed Locke.\textsuperscript{347} In 1734, Wesley republished in shortened form of Norris’s \textit{Treatise Concerning Christian Prudence} and his \textit{Reflections upon the Conduct of Human Life}.\textsuperscript{348} He was impressed by Norris’s works. According to John C. English, Wesley has kept Norris’ books for the rest of his life; this is a signal that Wesley treated Norris very seriously.\textsuperscript{349} English argued, ‘(Wesley) found in Norris something which he had missed in John Locke and Peter Browne. The contrast has to do with humanity’s knowledge of God. For Locke and Browne, this knowledge is indirect and mediated; for Norris, it is direct and immediate’.\textsuperscript{350} In fact, before his University education, his parents had already taught him the possibility of a direct and immediate knowledge of God. English even proposed that, because of this family background, Wesley would have heard and accepted the philosophy of Norris.\textsuperscript{351} In Norris’ works, he employed different terms, such as ‘vision,’ ‘intuition,’ ‘discernment,’ ‘comprehension,’ and ‘participation’, to mean the action to the knowledge;

\textsuperscript{345} Mander, \textit{The Philosophy of John Norris}, p.2.  
\textsuperscript{347} Green, \textit{The Young Mr. Wesley}; and see Heitzenrater, \textit{Wesley and the People Called Methodists}, pp.513-514, see also Henry Moore, \textit{The Life of the Rev. John Wesley}, vol. I, p.60. 
\textsuperscript{348} Mander, \textit{The Philosophy of John Norris}, p.204.  
\textsuperscript{349} English, ‘John Wesley’s Indebtedness’, p.57. 
\textsuperscript{350} English, ‘John Wesley’s Indebtedness’, p.60. 
\textsuperscript{351} English, ‘John Wesley’s Indebtedness’, p.60.
among them, ‘perception’ would be his most favourite one. Norris said that humanity gets ‘an intellectual view or Perception’ of God ‘even in this life, tho’ not by abundance of degrees so clear and perfect as we hope to have hereafter, when our Vision of him shall be Beatifick.’ Such a perception of God, for Norris, is both ‘Direct’ and ‘Immediate.’ Having the perception of God, the humanity is said to be ‘experimentally certain’ in the knowledge of God. Wesley brought Norris’s thought to his theology a principle that God can be known directly and immediately. We are not to demonstrate that Wesley adopted uncritically from Norris's epistemology. We only demonstrates that Norris's theory of knowledge did provide way for Wesley to develop a more mature view on faith and religion. Wesley then began to use the concept of the spiritual senses to explain and be apologetic to the Christian faith and religion.

Although Wesley seems to learn from Norris, Wesley’s realistic use of the language of spiritual sensation stood in remarkable continuity with numerous pre-modern uses of the language. For example, the concept of the spiritual senses had been discussed in Plato’s philosophy. It is a concept Plato in the Republic referred to the ‘eye of mind’ (or ‘vision of the soul’). Wesley has studied Plato. He encountered Plato’s concept of the spiritual senses, when he read the writings of the Christian Fathers. Wesley published chapter 1 of an abridged version of the homilies of ‘Macarius the Egyptian,’: ‘The soul that is privileged to be in communion with the Spirit of His (Christ’s) light, and is irradiated by the beauty of the

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unspeakable glory of Him who has prepared her to be a seat and a dwelling for Himself, becomes all light, all face, all eye; and there is no part of her that is not full of spiritual eyes of light. Augustine of Hippo also employed the concept. When Augustine described the limitation of legitimate exegetical pluralism in his Confessions, book 12, he spoke ‘You will surely not assert to be false what the truth proclaims in a loud voice to my inner ear (aurem interiorem) concerning the true eternity of the creator, namely that his nature will never vary at different times, and his will is not external to his nature.’ Augustine described that he used his ‘inner ear’ and ‘inner eye’ (interior oculo) to perceive metaphysical ‘truths’ for all legitimate interpretation. Wesley also quoted from the Confessions, book 7, chapter 10, in the Letters to Mr. John Smith:

And being admonished by all this to return to myself, I entered into my inmost part, with you as leader, and I was able to do so because you were my helper. I entered within and saw, with my soul's eye (such as it was), an unchangeable light. It was shining above the eye of the soul and above my mind, not that ordinary light visible to the flesh nor something of the same kind.... Your light was not that kind but another kind, utterly different from all these. Nor was it above my mind... as the sky is above the earth; it was higher than my soul because it made me.... Whoever knows truth knows that Light, and whoever knows it, knows eternity.

According to Mealey, the language of spiritual senses was widely employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by people with various background, like the Cambridge Platonists, Fransis Hutcheson, and those who advocated the ‘religion of heart’, including pietist, puritan, and Catholic traditions, such as Arndt, Zinzendorf, Edwards, and Pascal.

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359 Augustine, Confessions, 12.19.28-12.20.29.
Wesley, of course, was familiar with these sources.\textsuperscript{361}

But what are the spiritual senses? Theologically speaking, spiritual senses are powers given to human soul by Holy Spirit for the sake of understanding, through which the activity of divine grace can be immediately presented to the human mind.\textsuperscript{362} So how would Wesley speak of spiritual senses? Wesley used the language of spiritual senses as an analogy for the knowledge of God. For example, in An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Wesley analogizes with the concept of the physical senses to illustrate the concept of the spiritual senses.\textsuperscript{363}

Wesley argued, if anyone is to reason justly of ‘the things of God,’ he must make true judgments on the basis of clear apprehension that ‘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…(i.e. the thing of God)’.\textsuperscript{364} Further, because the natural senses are ‘altogether incapable’ of discerning spiritual things, we must have spiritual senses to discern the things of God. Wesley stated,

Not all those which are called ‘natural senses’, which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of a spiritual kind, but spiritual senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. It is necessary that you have the hearing ear and the seeing eye, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be ‘the evidence of things not seen’ as your bodily senses are of visible things.\textsuperscript{365}

\textsuperscript{361} Pedlar, ‘Sensing the Spirit’, p.86; and Mealey, Taste and See, pp.20-30.
\textsuperscript{362} ‘To sense is to know a thing as present’, Bonaventure wrote ‘…Spiritual knowledge has become akin to sensory knowledge. The soul sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feel truth’; see Kleinberg Aviad, ‘A Short Discourse on the Spiritual Senses’ in his The Sensual God: How the Senses Make the Almighty Senseless (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p.64.
Here, we see that Wesley accepted knowledge should be sensory based, however at the same time, he pointed out that natural senses cannot discern the knowledge about spiritual thing. Spiritual senses therefore are needed for spiritual knowledge. Wesley continued, “‘God, who commanded light to shine our of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And elsewhere the same Apostle speaks of “the eyes of” our “understanding being opened”. 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”.[366] Wesley explained such a knowledge of spiritual things or of God is given by God. In other words, the spiritual senses which are used for ‘seeing’ the knowledge of God is indeed a key come from God. Spiritual sense is given by the God for knowing Him. On the same token, in the Earnest Appeal, he explained, spiritual sensation is ‘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.[367] It follows that no spiritual knowledge can be appreciated if these ‘internal senses’ have not yet been inspired by the Holy Spirit;[368] Wesley explained ‘as you cannot reason concerning colours if you have no natural sight…so you cannot reason concerning spiritual things if you have no spiritual sight,’[369] it is because ‘the ideas of faith differ toto genere from those of external sensation’. [370] With the spiritual senses opened, ‘enlightened reason’ is able to ‘explore “even the deep things of God”, God himself “revealing them to you by his Spirit”’.[371] Wesley simply wanted to claim that ““Spirit searchest all things, yea, even the deep things of God,” and revealeth them unto the sons of

men; so that thereby the darkness of their understanding is expelled, and they are enlightened with the knowledge of God.’

Therefore we can see that, for Wesley, the Spirit is directly experienced, when the means of grace are used Wesley stated, ‘all (spiritual) inspiration, though by means, is immediate’. More, 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 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 should 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’. Similar statements can be found in various places in Wesley’s writings. So, Wesley believed that God and the things of God must be communicated by way other than the physical senses. For Wesley, there is in reality one basic experience, understood not merely as a subjective state but as an objective contact with the reality of God. This experience is the spiritual sensation in Wesley’s theology. Spiritual sensation is not an experience of a concept of God, an image of God, language about God, or a symbol of God,

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375 The spiritual senses are spoken of as ‘inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things’ in John Wesley, ‘The Spirit of Bondage and the Spirit of Adoption’, I.1, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 1, p.76. 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’ in John Wesley, ‘The New Birth’, II.4, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 1, pp.402-403; The physical senses, and therefore all natural reason, on which they are based, ‘have nothing to do with the invisible; they are not adapted to it’, John Wesley, Walking by Faith and Walking by Sight, 6, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 2, p.424; see also John Wesley, A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton, VI.II.9 and John Wesley, The Scripture Way of Salvation, II.1.
but an experience of God. Neither this is the experience of an emotion related to God, but just of God himself. Some people tried to locate Wesley within a natural anthropology, and interpreted his works accordingly. However, any attempt to locate this experience within natural human faculties, such as mind, imagination, will or emotion must fail, since Wesley thinks of the spiritual senses as being a supernatural faculty. As Mark Mealey put it, ‘any attempt to locate this experience within a natural epistemology, as a philosophical category, must also fail’, ‘For Wesley the spiritual senses are an organ to experience God directly and immediately and cannot be located in any natural human faculty’.

With regard to experience God directly and immediately, Wesley further explained and made it more clear in *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, when Wesley offered 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*. In respond to Dockwray’s attack that ‘the operations of the Spirit are not subject to any sensible feeling’, Wesley wrote, ‘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.’ Wesley continued 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.’ In the works of Wesley from the mid-1740s onward, we can find the similar emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley in 1760 spoke, ‘Not in a gross, carnal sense, as the men of the world stupidly and willfully misunderstand the expression; though they have been told again

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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’.\textsuperscript{380} So also in 1790, he spoke of the language of ‘taste’, ‘sight’ and ‘feeling’ as ‘figurative expressions’.\textsuperscript{381} We can see that in obtaining the genuine knowledge of God, for Wesley, it lies more on the power and initiative of the Holy Spirit than the human mind. For Wesley the initiative of our spiritual senses to experience God lies with God rather than with the capacities of our reason or the human spirit. Wesley said with regard to the new birth, that ‘In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: There is a real as well as relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel “the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”’.\textsuperscript{382} In \textit{Letter to Bishop of Gloucester}, he stated,

“Godly men feel inwardly God’s Holy Spirit inflaming their hearts with love.” (Homily on certain places of Scripture, Part I) “God give us grace to know these things, and feel them in our hearts! This knowledge and feeling is not ourselves. Let us therefore meekly call upon the bountiful Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to inspire us with his presence, that we may be able to hear the goodness of God to our salvation. For without his lively inspiration we cannot so much as speak the name of the Mediator: “No man can say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost…”” (Homily for Rogation Week, Part III).\textsuperscript{383}

It is not humanity who takes the initiative in feeling the Spirit; it is the gift from God. It is always God who takes the initiative to inspire humanity. It is God or the Holy Spirit who takes the initiative to awaken spiritual senses of the humanity; and by this, humanity can know God. In another passage, he also stated, ‘From this passage I learn…That the anointing,

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  \item \textsuperscript{381}John Wesley, ‘On Living Without God’, 11, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 2, p.484.
  \item \textsuperscript{382}John Wesley, ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation’, 3.4, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 1, p.385.
  \item \textsuperscript{383}John Wesley, ‘Farther Appeal’, V.26, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.75.
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mentioned in the First Epistle of St. John, “abides in every Christian”… “Make him know and feel, that there is no other name given under heaven unto men whereby we can saved” “If we feel our conscience at peace with God, through remission of our sins, all is of God” (Homily on Rogation Week, Part III).\textsuperscript{384} We can see that ‘feeling’ is a vital term for Wesley, which serves as a sensations bringing the spiritual senses to the ‘heart’; and spiritual sense is given by Holy Spirit, which cooperates with the five senses in such a way that the reality or the knowledge of God is experienced when the means of grace are used (Here is to emphasize that in order to obtain the reality or the knowledge of God through receiving spiritual senses given by Holy Spirit, Wesley insists the means of grace should be used) Joseph W. Cunningham further explained, ‘Wesley…direct encounter was descriptive in terms of feeling stimulated by the presence of the Divine, a feeling that transcends and incorporates the human agent’s knowing faculties…The direct witness is sensed spiritually by faith, which…is not part of our functional epistemic equipment’.\textsuperscript{385} It is within God’s power made upon humanity the spiritual senses to experience God when the means of grace are used, not by human epistemic faculty, we obtain the knowledge of God. Feeling awakened by the Holy Spirit therefore for Wesley provided humanity spiritual senses that leads to reflective combination of these spiritual data, and finally leads to inward and relational knowledge of God. Feeling then is like a sensory experience to awake the mind to see the unseen God. Therefore such a spiritual feeling can also be called a spiritual sense awakened by the Holy Spirit. Wesley identified his understanding of the spiritual senses as ‘being inwardly conscious of’ the operations of the Spirit, i.e. the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Wesley posited that there are two witnesses of the Holy Spirit, namely the indirect witness of

\textsuperscript{384} John Wesley, ‘Farther Appeal’, V.25, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 5, p.75.

our spirit, and the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. The indirect 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. ‘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 Spirit); secondly, I am thus “led by the Spirit of God” - he will easily conclude, “Therefore I am a ‘son of God’”’. Beyond this, Wesley proposed that there is a ‘direct witness’ of the Holy Spirit, which he defined 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’. This supports the possibility of the immediate witnesses of the Holy Spirit that Wesley maintained ‘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 (Without means). But all inspiration, though by means, is immediate.’ Wesley continued, ‘Faith, according to the scriptural account, is the eye of the new-born soul. Hereby every true believer in God “seeth him who is invisible”’. The believers ‘seeth the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’; and ‘beholdeth what manner of love it is which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we’ ‘should be called the sons of God’. Faith is the ear of the soul, awakening a sinner to ‘(hear) the voice of the Son of God, and lives’: ‘Son, thy sins are forgiven thee’. Faith is like the sensory of the soul of

Christian, which helps Christian to ‘(taste and see) the good word, and the powers of the world to come’; and ‘hereby he both tastes and sees that God is gracious’, ‘and merciful to him a sinner’. Through Faith, Christian can perceive the existence and the presence of God, even in the invisible and eternal world, where ‘he lives, moves, and has his being’. Thus Christians do, through faith, feel ‘love of God shed abroad in his heart’. We can see that according to Wesley, faith is a media of the reception of the spiritual senses on God and things of God. Faith thus enables the spiritual sensation to witness directly the Holy Spirit for the experience of God and the things of God when the means of grace are used. For Wesley, a theological reality is best expressed by the analogy of the senses.

We can see that Wesley did draw a connection between empiricism and the entire range of eighteenth century faith, moving from philosophy, like that of Locke, Browne and Norris, to theological method to apply sense-based reason with the modification to assert the way of knowing God. But we should always notice that for Wesley the knowledge of God is always ‘relational’: Knowing God, for Wesley, is not merely to read about God and gain knowledge of God, but knowing Him inwardly in person, in relation and in communion with Him. It is an inward piety. It is an inward knowledge. It is about relationship. Therefore the epistemology of Wesley does not limit the experience that leads to knowledge to sensory experience alone, but includes the spiritual sensations awakened by the Holy Spirit; the spiritual senses of humanity awakened by the Holy Spirit could make genuine inward and relational knowledge of God possible. This epistemology completes our understanding on how Wesley obtained the inward and relational knowledge of God: ‘knowing’ of God inwardly is happened through discerning the spiritual senses awakened by the Holy Spirit.

392 Brantley, Locke, Wesley, p.68.
through the use of the means of grace, and this knowing is all about relationship with God. Wesley did not bypass the human understanding, but insisted human understanding is not always the beginning. It is God who takes the initiative to disclose Godself to humanity, and God could not be known until the divinity is known through spiritual senses awakened in human heart by the Holy Spirit. Knowing God for Wesley should be an inward knowledge and always increase in divine-human relationship.

5.2.2 Christian antiquity and the Wesley’s idea of spiritual senses

After reviewing Wesley’s epistemology of the spiritual senses, we know Wesley insisted the knowledge of God should be spiritually sensed-based. The next question that we need to concern is about how Wesley thought humanity could realize properly the spiritual senses awakened by the Holy Spirit. Wesley’s opinion on the question may simply be: let the past speaks to us. Indeed, ‘let the past speak to us’ was Wesley’s opinion with regard to Christian antiquity. For Wesley, humanity should not neglect the past to realize the spiritual senses awakened by the Spirit. As discussed in an early chapter, Wesley thought that by appropriating Christian antiquity, the humanity can share the ancient virtues of the ancient writers/Fathers. This paper argued that, in Wesley’s view, this sharing of ancient virtues would allow individual Christians to receive properly the spiritual senses awakened by the Holy Spirit, so as to obtain the knowledge of God. In the Preface to the Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, Wesley stated,

Yet farther: (The Fathers) were not only such eminent men, but they were also persons of consummate piety; adorned with all those Christian virtues which they so affectionately recommend to us.

Such reason have we to look on the writings of these holy men, as containing the pure, uncorrupted doctrine of Christ.

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Appropriating Christian antiquity for sharing its virtues ‘affectionately’, therefore, becomes the reception of spiritual senses, which helps to obtain ‘the uncorrupted doctrine of Christ’, i.e. the knowledge of God. In other words, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) leads to the knowledge of God. Wesley stated,

I reverence them (the ancient Christians), because they were Christians, such Christians as are above described And I reverence their writings, because they describe true, genuine Christianity, and direct us to the strongest evidence of the Christian doctrine…

Wesley here affirmed again that he could look from the ancient Christians a ‘true, genuine Christianity’, that is again, the knowledge of God.

But we have to bear in mind that such ‘true, genuine Christianity’ for Wesley is always a relational knowledge about Christ, the God. In other words, the knowledge of God that is obtained by appropriating Christian antiquity is an inward knowledge, which is existentially significant to the divine-human relationship. Wesley appealed to some of the Fathers and said, ‘This old religion…is no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved, as the fountain of all the good we have received’. Wesley explained ‘the old religion’ leads us to the loving of God, i.e. a relationship with God. He then added, ‘This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages…It is clearly expressed…in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus and Macarius’. Therefore appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) for Wesley eventually, through sharing the ancient virtues for the reception of the spiritual senses, helps for acquiring inward and relational knowledge about God. This

\[\text{Wesley, vol. 7, p.527.}\]
\[\text{397 John Wesley, ‘Foundation of the City Road Chapel’, II.I, , in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 1, p.494.}\]
knowledge is not about hermeneutics, is not to know more about God, but be conscious of God, and achieves inward piety with the Spirit, which deepens relationship with God. Epistemologically speaking, the logic is that when a person appropriates Christian antiquity, a person is awakened by Holy Spirit the virtues of Christian antiquity. The virtues of Christian antiquity, therefore are understood as an instant experience a person feels at that particular moment. This instant experience a person feels, through faith, can be treated as the humanity’s spiritual senses, that are what the inward knowledge of God and thus the relationship with God based. Thus for Wesley, Christian antiquity is not considered merely historical events, but a channel for receiving spiritual senses. Appropriating Christian antiquity is to share the ancient virtues which help to receive properly the spiritual senses awakened by the Holy Spirit, in which the inward and relational knowledge of God can be obtained, i.e. also the deepening of the relationship with God. Simply speaking, since the means of grace for Wesley are instruments God uses to strengthen the human relationship with God, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) then becomes a mean of grace for Wesley.

Indeed, Wesley’s epistemology allows that practicing and listening to the past to discover the ancient virtues and thus receive the spiritual senses awakened by the Spirit, can successfully lead humanity to be aware of the inward and relational knowledge about God. Apart from that, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) for such knowledge of God, for Wesley, can avoid the misunderstanding about the knowledge of God as well. It is because

The authors of the following collection, were contemporaries of the holy Apostles….We cannot therefore doubt, but what they deliver to us is the pure Doctrine of the Gospel.398

…we cannot with any reason doubt of what they deliver to us as the gospel of Christ but ought to receive it.  

For example, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) can avoid the interpretation of the knowledge about God becoming mystical. ‘You receive not the ancient, but the modern Mystics, as the best interpreters of Scripture: And in conformity to these, you mix much of man’s wisdom with the wisdom of God: You greatly refine the plain religion taught by the letter of Holy Spirit, and philosophize on almost every part of it, to accommodate it to the Mystic theory’. Although Wesley is, with the influence from the mystic and Moravian, in some extent mystical, Wesley is still against mysticism. It is because by being mystical, a person is indeed seeking a mystical sense that gives direct and inward idea to him/her to have a unique knowledge of God. This seeking of mystical senses is different with Wesley’s seeking for spiritual senses for the knowledge of God. Wesley’s emphasis behind the objection of mysticism is that mysticism devalues the means of grace. Wesley stated, ‘I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics: under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace.’ Wesley also stated, ‘All means are not necessary for all men: therefore each person must use such means, and such only, as he finds necessary for him. When the end is attained the means cease’. Here Wesley explained, the means of grace is devalued because such a mystical experience provides people direct access to the divine, no means of grace is thus needed. On the contrary to mysticism, Wesley insisted that it is by

402 Wesley continually argued that when the means cease for knowing God, people become passive to the outward work. They will do outward work only if they are moved to do so. ‘Having thus attained the end,
appealing to the practices and beliefs of Christian antiquity, humanity, through this mean, can develop transcendent virtues of Christian antiquity which helps to receive the spiritual senses awakened by the Spirit; with that spiritual senses, humanity can be aware of the inward and relational knowledge about God. In other words, in Wesley’s points of view, appropriating of Christian antiquity to share its virtues for the reception of the spiritual senses, are treated as a mean of grace to ‘know’ God, i.e. eventually to reach inward piety and to deepen the relationship with God.

In the next chapter, we will discuss deeper Wesley’s understanding on the means of grace, and develop argument supporting that appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as a mean of grace for Wesley.

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the means must cease...They work likewise all good works essentially, not accidentally, and use all outward means, only as they are moved thereto.’ See John Wesley, ‘Letter to Brother Samuel, XIX, 23 November, 1736’, in Emory (ed), *The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley*, vol. 6, p.602.
Chapter 6: Applying the concept of means of grace in Christian antiquity

6.1 What is the Means of Grace for Wesley?

‘God can give the end without any means at all,’ Wesley insisted, we ‘have no reason to think he will.’ Rather, we should ‘constantly and carefully use all the means which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace.’

The means of grace are channels ‘through which the grace of God is conveyed’. Wesley’s definition of the means of grace also involves the possibility of humanity receiving or discerning grace. Wesley’s definition of the means of grace raises questions about the nature of grace. Grace becomes ‘the central concept that describes the mediatorial power of the means of grace’. The different means of grace work together to connect humanity to grace. However, Wesley did not understand grace to be a substance to be poured into the believer. Grace is a relationship between God and humanity. Therefore, participating in the means of grace are going to encounter God’s presence and interact with Him. The ‘outward’ means of grace are means to ‘inward’ religion. God normally meets persons in the means of grace.

John Wesley explained, the means of grace ‘lies in the heart, in the inmost soul’, and is aimed toward the participation in divine life. John Wesley described the participation in

divine life as full communion with God. In the conclusion of his sermon on \textit{The New Creation}, he wrote ‘And to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit.’\footnote{John Wesley, ‘The New Creation’, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 2, p.87.} In simple words, participation in the divine life, as Wesley described, is ‘being renewed in the image of God, and having communion with God, so as to dwell in God and God in you.’\footnote{John Wesley, \textit{Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament}, Chapter I. note v4, vol. II (London: Thomas Cordeux, 1813), p.321.} The means of grace in other words directly relate us to the communion with God. The Holy Spirit communicates directly to people the heart of God expressed in Christ through the means of grace. Those who are going to seek God should participate in the means of grace. By doing so, a person can experience the presence of God and his love.\footnote{Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, p.170.} In this way, people participate in God through the power of Holy Spirit. Thus using the means of grace, Wesley thought, believers can participate in God and thus ‘see’ and ‘feel’ God.

According to Henry Knight, for Wesley ‘seeing’ and ‘feeling’ God are an experience occurred when the means of grace is used. Indeed, the means of grace is important for Christians because it helps them grow in Christ with various affections such as love.\footnote{Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, pp.40, 58.} Wesley defined ‘inward feelings’ as ‘being inwardly conscious of’ (or knowing).\footnote{Wesley, ‘Letters to Mr. John Smith’, XLI.6, in Emory (ed), \textit{The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley}, vol. 6, p.641.} Therefore for Wesley, human awareness of God is equivalent with the feelings of God. In other words, to participate in the means of grace is to encounter God’s presence, and continuously to know or be conscious of God more, i.e. inwardly feeling God. However, the means of grace is not only to enable one to know God inwardly, but to increase in the knowledge of God. God is increasingly and experientially known. This is what the means of grace enable, i.e. the means of grace enable an inward feeling and the knowledge of God which inwardly invite a
distinctive relationship with God, and provide a way for that relationship to grow and deepen over time to achieve finally a communion with God. To participate in the means of grace helps to increase the inward knowledge of and thus the relationship with God via the presence and transforming power of God. The relationship between God and humanity is enriched and increased through participating in the means of grace. Wesley advised that ‘In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing look singly to the power of his Spirit and the merits of his Son.’\textsuperscript{414} By doing so, the human soul is renewed in term of righteousness and holiness. If the means of grace do not enable growth in ‘Christ likeness,’ they are worthless.

However we have to notice that the means of grace are not to become the legalistic way we ‘earn’ our salvation. The means of grace are not to be seen as a way we can gain power apart from God. The means of grace do not enable humanity to own the Holy Spirit, but are means employed by the Spirit to convey grace.\textsuperscript{415} The means only possess power because of the Spirit. Thus, access to the means of grace does not mean that the divine power can be possessed by people. Wesley admonished us in his sermon \textit{The Means of Grace} that ‘(God) can convey his grace, either in or out of any of the means which he hath appointed’. ‘There is no power in this. It is in itself a poor, dead empty thing: separate from God…’\textsuperscript{416} Therefore, to participate in the means of grace aims not at receiving salvation by our own work, but through participating in the means of grace, Christ meets us. Therefore, it is not sufficient to simply use the means of grace; we need to interact with the means of grace through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit and the humanity’s


\textsuperscript{415} Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, p.30.

participation in the means of grace complement with each other.\textsuperscript{417} A true desire for participating in the means of grace is not a desire to obtain grace or to possess God; rather it is a desire to know God inwardly which invites a distinctive relationship with God by humanity’s living in response to God’s love. That is why participating in the means of grace could lead to distinctive relationship with God, because what a person do is in fact responding God’s love, and an action of offering him/herself to God. By participating in the means of grace, a person’s love and gratitude to God, love to his/her neighbour, trust and hope upon God’s promises, and his/her confessions and repentance in light of God are usually expressed.\textsuperscript{418}

In Wesley’s sermon on \textit{The Means of Grace}, Wesley also argued that people with some degree of repentance and faith can join in the means of grace even if they do not have full assurance. One does not have to realise full assurance so as to use them. Rather, one may use the means precisely because of one’s trust is in God. According to Gordon Rupp, because of Wesley’s ‘optimism of grace’, a person, no matter how ‘corrupted’ he/she is by Reformed standards, is able to participate in acts of goodness, i.e. the means of grace, through the power of grace.\textsuperscript{419} The means can enable the grace that is needed to realize full assurance. To use the means of grace in this manner is to look ‘for the blessing of God therein,’ to believe ‘that whatever God has promised, he is faithful also to perform.’\textsuperscript{420} The basic of our trust comes from God’s promise but not the means of grace itself. The means of grace reminds us who God is and his promises. This participation in the means of grace cannot guarantee salvation, but might awaken faith.\textsuperscript{421} The means represent God’s activity of

\textsuperscript{417} Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, pp.48, 62, 69.
\textsuperscript{418} Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, p.170.
salvation in human lives. It is because God’s presence is occurred to those who participate in the means of grace. God’s presence is ‘objective’, in that it evokes affections and invites imagination while it resists the projections of humanity’s own imagination and desires on to it. We should bear in mind that intentionality is important for participating in the means of grace; a person could find some means of grace a useful mean for getting connected with God, only if he/she intends to participate in it for discerning the presence of God, instead of the mean itself. If a person fails to participate in the means of grace correctly, he/she will be incapable of sustaining a proper relationship with God, and therefore no growing could be seen in his/her Christian life. But when humanity participates in the means of grace properly, they are lifted up to participate in the divine or the communion with God. In other words, means of grace avoid hindrances to growth and encourage a progressively a deeper knowledge of and closer relationship with God. Through an ongoing relationship with God, the means will never mistakenly replace God and become the object of the relationship; on the other hand the means will hinder the substitution of ‘precarious inward motion’ for a true knowledge and relationship with God. The means of grace ‘will work against one’s forgetting God or confusing God with self; they will help ones truly know who God is and, as a consequence... who God calls a person to be’.

But what are considered Wesley’s means of grace? Usually, two kinds of typology are used to describe the means of grace. First is ‘general’ and ‘particular’ means of grace. The second typology is instituted and prudential means of grace. The instituted means of grace are those means selected by God which is universal to the church in all ages, eras, and in all cultures. Wesley identified prayer, Eucharist, and searching the Scripture as the instituted means of

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grace established by Jesus himself. He later expanded the list by adding fasting and Christian conference (or conversation). In contrast, the prudential means of grace have been established by the church over the years. The prudential means of grace alternate in various ages, cultures and individual person; this shows God is never confined to use instituted means only, but also can use any means, such as classes, bands, and love feasts, in any times and situations to meet people.\footnote{424}{John Wesley, ‘Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others’, in Jackson, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, VIII: 322-24.} Within the prudential means of grace listed by Knight, it includes ‘reading all devotional classics and edifying’.\footnote{425}{Knight, The Presence of God, p.5. The prudential means of grace, according to Knight, include works of piety, works of mercy, particular rules or acts for holy living, class and band meetings, prayer meetings, covenant services, watching night services, love feasts, visiting the sick, doing all the good one can and doing no harm, reading devotional classics and edifying literature; see Knight, The Presence of God, p.5.} Reading the patristic texts are the prudential means of grace by Knight, which enables the growth of divine-human relationship. Indeed, as shown previously, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) for Wesley conduces inner transformation in human heart for a deeper relationship with God, we would thus say that appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as mean of grace for Wesley. In other words, humanity is invited into a transforming relationship with God, which largely takes place when a person participates in the means of grace by appropriating Christian antiquity.

In addition to the prudential means of grace, we could also find that Christian antiquity can also be identified as a mean of grace by Wesley’s concept of the general means of grace; and John Wesley had addressed the concept of the general means of grace to the people called Methodist in Conference in 1745. Although the concept has relatively not been paid much attention, the general means of grace is in fact significant in understanding how God meets his people. In the Minutes of the 1745 Conference, Wesley had presented the general means of grace: ‘Q11 How should we wait for the fulfilling of this promise (of entire sanctification).
A. In universal obedience; in keeping all the commandments; in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily. These are the general means which God hath ordained for our receiving his sanctifying grace. The particular are prayer, searching the Scripture, communicating, and fasting.\(^{426}\) We can see that as Wesley described, the term ‘particular means’ are associated to those means Wesley normally called the ‘instituted means of grace’, while the general means of grace are less concrete, and identified as those practices and approaches that intentionally arouse one’s motivations in thought, word, and action towards God. Wesley did further develop the concept of the general means of grace in the \textit{Large Minutes}. In the late edition of the \textit{Large Minutes} Wesley listed out all means of grace in relatively detail; the instituted and prudential means of grace were explicitly listed as in others of his writings, while the general means of grace was listed in less discrete and board approach. This list of the general means of grace is similar to that of the earlier listing in the 1745 \textit{Minutes}, but some means are excluded (universal obedience, keeping all the commandments) and some are taken in (watching, exercise of the presence of God).\(^{427}\)

After his explanation on the instituted and prudential means of grace, Wesley wrote, ‘These means may be used without fruit. But there are some means which cannot; namely, watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, (and the) exercise of the presence of God’.\(^{428}\) ‘Watching’ and the ‘exercise of the presence of God’ are related to ‘do no harm’ and ‘avoiding evil’; ‘denying ourselves’ and ‘taking up our cross’ are described notably as actions of ‘(doing) all the good one can’ by Wesley.\(^{429}\) Watching, Wesley said, is an ‘earnest, constant, preserving exercise;’ it implies ‘steadfast faith, patient hope, laboring love,


\(^{427}\) Knight, \textit{The Presence of God}, p.125.


unceasing prayer,’ and ‘the mighty exertion of all the affections of the soul….’ 430 Watching is to discern God’s will by inwardly focusing on God, ‘gain power to do it,’ and thereby grow in grace.431 ‘Watching requires wholehearted effort. This shows its close relationship to the exercise of the presence of God’.432 On dissipation from 1784, Wesley particularly mentioned the general means of grace, he called it, ‘the exercise of the presence of God’.433 Andrew C. Thompson explained, it is ‘emblematic of the type of religious life required to check dissipation and continue the growth in holiness of heart and life’.434 Watching and the exercise of the presence of God are mutually reinforcing, which is attempting ‘to set God always before you’ and ‘to see his eye continually fixed upon you.’ 435

In 1760, Wesley further described the contribution the general means of grace could bring in his sermon Self-Denial, in which Jesus’ calling to deny oneself and take up the cross (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23) are considered as two general means of grace. In Self-denial, Wesley said that ‘to deny ourselves is to deny our own will where it does not fall in with the will of God, and that however pleasing it may be’ and ‘(Self-denial is to) deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to God….’ 436 Knight stated, ‘Self-denial is a deliberate turning from a way of life contrary to God or a way leads away from God’.437 Moreover, if self-denial is to remove all barriers when one approaches God, then taking up one’s cross is the action to obey God’s will. A cross, Wesley said, ‘is anything contrary to our will, anything displeasing to our nature. So that taking up our cross goes a little farther

432 Knight, The Presence of God, pp.122-123.
than denying ourselves; it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task...’ Taking up a cross means that ‘we voluntarily suffer what is in our power to avoid’ through embracing the will of God. Self-denial in other words is the precondition for taking up one’s cross. Therefore, in pursuing the general means of grace, for Wesley, it is always cyclical: while the exercise of the presence of God and taking up one’s cross are reinforced by the practices of watching and self-denial which counteract dissipation, practice of watching and self-denial are also increased in Christian life through faith, hope and love which are expressed in the exercise of the presence of God and taking up one’s cross.

Wesley in the *Large Minutes* also raised up some questions, in order to give examples of the general means of grace, in which the examples include Watching, Denying ourselves, Taking up our Cross, and Exercise of the Presence of God. According to Thompson, Wesley, by asking these questions, aimed at arousing reflections on how the general means of grace should be practiced daily. Thompson stated, ‘the *Large Minutes* support the notion that the general means of grace are intended collectively as a broad approach’ to confirm the faith by ‘intentional self-examination about all aspects of one’s daily habits’. By doing so, one can via participating in the general means of grace attains inward piety by which one is through God’s grace adapted to God’s will. Therefore participating in the means of grace, one is in fact inwardly transformed and could produce fruits. Thompson continued, ‘unlike the bare activity of verbal prayer or receiving the Lord’s Supper, for instance, the kind of contemplative work represented by the general means of grace is not feasible apart from

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441 John Wesley, ‘Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others’, Q48, in Emory (ed), *The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley*, vol. 5, p.228.
full-hearted engagement’. 443

We can see that ‘it is not that the general means of grace produce faith in one who does not have it; faith is a pure gift of God’ 444: ‘We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God’. 445 The transformation that the general means of grace bring to believers is not the transformation of the outward behaviour, but the transformation of the inward life. The general means of grace bring humanity to have a regular self-examination and self-correction, so as to make humanity committed to the will of God with all their heart. Therefore, through the general means of grace, i.e. searching self-examination and reflecting daily on one’s attitudes and motivations to faith, faith is assured and developed. By participating in the general means of grace, which carries out regular self-examination and correction, ‘one can hope to have Christian virtues formed in the soul’. 446 Wesley stated,

Keep close, I beseech you, to every means of grace. Strive to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of God blameless, “giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure: Add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; to patience godliness; to godliness brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness charity.” – For “if these things,” say St. Peter, “be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus you will give the best token of your thankfulness to him for what he hath done for your souls; and you shall not long hence in heaven sing his praise with your happy brethren, gone thither before you. 447

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447 John Wesley, ‘Journal on 1 April 1762’, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 4, p.120.
When humanity manifests Christian virtues, they gain a ‘right state of soul,’\textsuperscript{448} to form inward piety that cause one to be conscious of God, and thus have a deeper relationship with God. Wesley continued, ‘Be constant in every means of grace. He will be found of them that diligently seek him. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”’\textsuperscript{449} Such an embodiment of Christian virtues which brings inward piety and deepens the relationship with God, is the essence of ‘inward religion’ for Wesley. We can now see that by participating to the general means of grace, one can bring outward actions through carrying out self-examination to attain a deeper relationship with God. In other words, to participate in the general means of grace is to experience God, know God more, and further build a relationship with God. As a result, the general means of grace do not go ahead of faith but presuppose it and empower it.\textsuperscript{450}

6.2 Appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as Means of Grace for Wesley

As discussed early, Wesley thought that the inward and relational knowledge of God should not completely be separated from appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use). This means that Wesley insisted practicing and listening to the past to discover the ancient virtues to help to receive the spiritual senses awakened by the Spirit can successfully be aware of the whole history of salvation in relation to Christ, i.e. the inward and relational knowledge of God. Since, as also discussed early, by participating to the general means of grace, humanity can acquire Christian virtues through the practices of the self-examination and correction, which truly helps humanity to know who God is, and thus guarantees the presence and continues the growth of an ongoing relationship with God.\textsuperscript{451} This paper therefore supports that we can apply Wesley’s concept of the general means of grace to

\textsuperscript{448} John Wesley, ‘Circumcision of the Heart’, 3, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 1, p.147.

\textsuperscript{449} John Wesley, ‘Journal on 1 April 1762’, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol. 4, p.120.

\textsuperscript{450} Knight, The Presence of God, pp.125, 176.

\textsuperscript{451} Knight, The Presence of God, p.48.
explain that Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity serves as a mean of grace. This would happen in two ways. First, Christian antiquity serves as the means of grace since it helps to avoid misunderstandings on the knowledge of God which otherwise could distort the relationship with God and thereby hinder growth. Second, Christian antiquity serves as the general means of grace because when one reads and proclaims the ancient text, it enables and invites a distinctive virtue of the ancient Church to receive the spiritual senses, which provides a way for the inward piety and knowledge of God, as well as the divine-human relationship to grow and to be deepened consistently over time. We can thus see that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) for Wesley is coherent with what John Wesley taught: ‘the whole value of the mean of grace depends on those means of grace leading us to deepening relationship with God’. Therefore we can draw a conclusion that Christian antiquity serves as means to enable the inward and relational knowledge of God through which a human relationship with God can be increasingly enriched over time. The relationship between Christians and God through this means of grace is grown. The growth of Christian life is enabled and invited, formed and shaped through Christian antiquity. Appropriation of Christian antiquity is for Wesley a mean of grace that helps Christian approaching God.

But we have to note that Wesley is never a slave to Christian antiquity. Wesley refused to place Christian antiquity against Scripture and other means of grace. Wesley counsels activity, participation, interaction through Christian antiquity to neither neglect nor rest in this means of grace. Moreover, Wesley’s view is not to focus merely on practices and ritual of Christian antiquity. Instead, he desisted Christian antiquity to become the obstacles of the love of God; he concerned that Christian antiquity should be means that God uses to enable

and evoke love. Wesley insisted, one could attain or remain perfected in love by using all the means of grace, and we have shown that Christian antiquity would remain for Wesley as one of the means for a transformation of human heart.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Starting from Outler, who in 1964 demonstrated a connection between John Wesley’s thought and Eastern Fathers, Wesleyan scholarship moved the focus of the studies gradually towards the linkage between John Wesley and Christian antiquity. Outler showed that Wesley drank deeply at the well of patristic Eastern patristic theology.453

The findings led to a conversation in Oxford in 1982, which included Outler, Ted Campbell, Roberta Bondi, and Bengt Haglund.454 In the conference, it was concluded that one of the potential developments for Wesleyan studies could to launch in a new direction about how Wesley understood Christian antiquity. Many scholars started doing their research in that direction, among them, Ted Campbell who published a critical work, *John Wesley and his use of Christian Antiquity* which made a good collation of Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity over his writings, such as sermons, journal and letters. Campbell discovered that Wesley did apply Christian antiquity on his arguments throughout his various kind of writings. To analyze and manage these uses of Christian antiquity in Wesley’s writings, Campbell found that Wesley used Christian antiquity in three prominent ways: the first one is a polemical way, being those instances where Wesley called upon early Christian customs or teachings in order to contradict arguments, and to refute the practices or beliefs of the polemicist’s opponents. The second is a conservative way, which is Wesley’s apologetic use of Christian antiquity to defend doctrines, structures, and customs of the established church. The third one is a programmatic way, which entails Wesley’s references to the Fathers in order to support ideas, practices or even virtues that he thought to be important for his own time, in order to see restoration and revival for the Christianity of his age.

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Having considered the research findings of the twentieth century, the paper has described a new vision of Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity. Instead of looking at Wesley’s use of Christian antiquity in the ways Campbell did, this paper was argued that Christian antiquity is one of the authorities John Wesley has appropriated in order to deepen the Christian relationship with God. Wesley explained ‘the old religion’ leads us to the love of God, i.e. a relationship with God. His appropriation of the Christian antiquity is coherent with the understanding about Wesley as a practical theologian, who is concerned not with speculative theology, but with personal encounter with God for spiritual growth. John Wesley’s appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) helps to deepen the relationship with God.

In order to understand how the appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) can lead to the deepening of divine-human relationship, the theology and epistemology of John Wesley have been reviewed. The theology of John Wesley helps to explain how John Wesley appropriates Christian antiquity, while the epistemology of John Wesley helps to explain how his appropriation of Christian antiquity could deepen the relationship with God.

This paper has shown that the theology of John Wesley is not developed from a single source. John Wesley was exposed to thought at home which concerned the primitive Church. John Wesley had a good soil for his establishment in High Churchmanship from his parenthood. But apart from Wesley’s parenthood, his High Churchmanship had also been established from the Nonjuror tradition.

The influence of Wesley’s parenthood and the Nonjurors, eventually made his theology up for High Churchmanship and the primitive rules. He was a High Churchman and pursues a Christian reform according to the primitive rules throughout his life. Therefore when Wesley sought for Christian reform, the beliefs and practices of the primitive church did play a very important role for Wesley. He learned from the primitive church the purest form of Christianity. The primitive church is the model that John Wesley appealed to, to carry out the Christian reform.

However, the High Churchmanship is not the only source for his theology. He met Moravians, that had complemented with his High Churchmanship to formulate his theology. Wesley was attracted by Moravians’ assurance of salvation, which help him to receive the Aldersgate experience on 24 May 1738. From Wesley’s connection with the Moravians, Wesley learnt a sense of piety that emphasizes the religion of heart and the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley started to understand that the witness of the Spirit is a critical quality that one should have for the assurance of salvation.

All these experiences are important for Wesley, because they fostered Wesley’s sense of piety, which developed upon his High Church theology a pietistic view. From the biography of John Wesley, now, we can see that his theology consists of both High Church tradition and a pietistic sense of inward piety. This theology enables Wesley to use Christian antiquity as a means for receiving ‘spiritual senses’. Apart from that, Wesley has developed an epistemology that explains how such spiritual senses eventually could lead to increase in the knowledge about God and thus increase in the divine-human relationship.

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456 Watson, Pursuing Social Holiness, pp.32-34.
With regard to the epistemology of John Wesley, we should not ignore that he was growing up at Oxford at a time empiricism was critically influential. John Locke was the important philosopher of that period. Wesley agreed with Locke that knowledge should be sense-based. Therefore in terms of physical knowledge, it should be supported by the five senses. Peter Browne, an early eighteenth century theologian, tried to explain Locke’s *Essay* in a theological way. Browne insisted the sole source of ideas is direct sensation from the external world. It follows that, according to Browne, the knowledge of God can only be indirect, because God is a spirit, whose concept cannot be supported by the material world. It should be the result of reasoning about experience. The Lockean and Brownean approach to acquire knowledge rejected any immediate experience of God. This is a conviction that Wesley could not accept. Instead, Wesley held that humanity can experience and seek God directly.\(^{457}\) Wesley therefore recalled from various Christian ancient literatures, and the recent scholar, John Norris, about the concept of ‘spiritual senses’. Wesley thus built upon them and insisted that humanity needs ‘spiritual senses’ to know God. Spiritual sense is a sense capable of discerning the object of spiritual kind and the things of God. With this understanding, spiritual senses become a medium to facilitate the knowledge of God. This is to say that the knowledge of God is obtained by humanity in a sense-based way through the spiritual senses.

Therefore we can see that under Wesley’s theology, by approaching the means of Christian antiquity, a person can receive spiritual senses, while under Wesley’s epistemology, a person who receives the spiritual senses can increase in the knowledge of God. Since knowledge for Wesley is always indicating a relational knowledge; it is about an inward relationship, thus the increase in the knowledge of God for him means the enrichment of the divine-human

relationship. Increase in the knowledge of God is the same as increase in the relationship with God. Therefore when the epistemology of John Wesley explains that spiritual senses are needed for obtaining the knowledge of God which directly influences the divine-human relationship, this paper argues that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) is a means to receive the spiritual senses, by which the relationship with God can be enriched.

This argument supports that the appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as a means of grace for Wesley. Since the knowledge of God and relationship with God are the sides of the same coin for Wesley, we can expect that participating in the means of grace conduces inner transformation in human heart for a deeper relationship with God. As shown previously, appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) is a means to receive spiritual senses, by which deeper relationship with God can be enriched; this paper would thus conclude that appropriation of Christian antiquity serves as means of grace for Wesley. In other words, humanity is invited into a transforming relationship with God, which largely takes place as a person participates in the means of grace by appropriating Christian antiquity.

Lastly, this paper also shows that Wesley used the concept of the general means of grace. According to Wesley, all Christians should encounter growth in Christ when they participate in the general means of grace: self-scrutiny, self-denial, taking up our cross, and exercise of the presence of God. Since by appropriating Christian antiquity, humanity would experience God’s presence, which motivates people to exercise self-scrutiny, self-denial and taking up our cross, and shape them into a deeper relationship with God. Thus, therefore, supports that appropriation of Christian antiquity (reading or taking for use) could serve as a

458 John Wesley, ‘Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others’, Q48, in Emory (ed), The Works of the Late Reverend John Wesley, vol.1, p.137.
general means of grace for John Wesley.

Throughout the paper, we see that Wesley’s vision of ancient Christianity is a means used by God to renew Christians and the Church of his day. This renewal of the Church and Christians is not going to copy the formal and ritual practices of the ancient church, but is an attempt to seek from the ancient practices or beliefs spiritual senses for enriching the relationship with God. With this study of the means of grace in Wesley, then, it is proposed to put Wesley’s vision of Christian antiquity within his concept of the means of grace. We, eventually, conclude that the appropriation of Christian antiquity for Wesley is relevant as a means of grace which brings renewal to the people who are called Methodist.
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