Scripture and Providence:
The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament

by

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ABSTRACT

The conviction that the Old Testament struggles to function as Scripture for Christians in the modern west has a long history. The first to identify the problem was likely eighteenth-century natural philosopher John Hutchinson. Hutchinson complained that the Old Testament had fallen into disrepute because, while people were praising Newton as the font of natural philosophical wisdom, they should have been looking to Moses. Hutchinson accordingly devised an ingenious method of interpreting the words of Moses as natural philosophical emblems. Hutchinson's disciples applied Hutchinson's method to the full range of Scriptural words. In the process, they made the providential significance of the full range of natural and historical objects dependent upon their reinterpretation as Scriptural figures. The way the Hutchinsonians were able to make all Scriptural words beneficial for providential discernment enabled them to defend the Old Testament as an equal partner in the Christian canon of Scripture.

It was as a historical document that the Old Testament was called into question in eighteenth-century England. In a context captivated by the ability of the new empirical science to illumine the providential order of nature, people questioned the ability of history and historically contingent disciplines to provide similar illumination.
It is thus that Newton’s protégé Samuel Clarke dismisses the Old Testament as antithetical to principles of natural religion. The arduous journey to resuscitate the Old Testament I document, therefore, was a battle against the Newtonian assumption that nature alone could serve as the basis of a providential vision of the world. It was equally, however, a struggle against the Newtonian assumption that conceptual frameworks should be imposed on history to locate providential order. Hutchinsonian Scriptural interpretation rejects conceptual approaches to providential discernment and therefore denies that philosophies of history are necessary or beneficial. The alternative path to providential discernment it provides is an invitation to people of all ages and intellectual abilities to reflect upon the objects they encounter in their everyday lives in light of Scriptural revelation. And as such, it is not just a call to acknowledge the Old Testament. It is an invitation to intellectual humility.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation traces the quest to defend the Old Testament in eighteenth-century England through the works of Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), John Hutchinson (1674-1737), George Watson (1723-1773), George Horne (1730-92), and William Jones of Nayland (1726-1800).1 It does so by engaging two concepts: Scripture and providence.2 On my account a text functions as Scripture not merely when it is held in high regard; it functions as Scripture when it has an immediate claim over the lives and conduct of its readers because of its divine origin.3 It is not immediately apparent how the ancient words of the Christian bible can function in this way. To begin, the laws and injunctions contained therein were written to other peoples, in other contexts. Furthermore, much of the material in the Christian bible can be described as descriptive rather than prescriptive, whether poetry, discourse, or history. Christians have nevertheless consistently maintained that the Old and New Testaments, in their entirety, are Scripture. They have affirmed, first, that the Old and New Testaments, in their entirety, reveal God’s workings with the world, and second,

1 The William Jones studied in this work is commonly referred to as “William Jones of Nayland” to distinguish him from the great eighteenth-century Orientalist Sir William Jones.


3 Although I will focus on Christian Scripture the same principle applies to the Scriptures of other religions. Documents or collections of documents are regarded as Scripture when they are held to be either explicitly or implicitly imperatival, containing injunctions that are located within a larger revelatory scheme.
that they do so in a way that makes them morally binding. The Scriptural status of the Old and New Testaments has historically relied upon a doctrine of providence, even though this doctrine has largely functioned at the level of what Charles Taylor calls “background understanding.” If the Scriptural status of any part of the Christian canon, or the canon as a whole, becomes problematic at a given historical moment there is a strong possibility, therefore, that this development is symptomatic of shifting understandings of providence.

This dissertation investigates the crisis in the Scriptural status of the Old Testament that had its rise in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and I will argue that this crisis was instigated by an emerging understanding of providence that held that nature, rather than history, is the realm of God’s beneficent government.5

4 In his article, “Two Theories of Modernity,” Taylor complains that theorists have often been content to describe transitions taking place at the cusp of modernity in terms of shifts in explicit doctrine. Taylor argues that this favours the prejudice that “modernity arises through the dissipation of certain unsupported religious and metaphysical beliefs.” Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” Hastings Center Report 25, no. 2 (1995): 28. Taylor insists that there are two deeper levels of understanding that theorists must acknowledge. The first is the symbolic, which expresses itself in rituals, symbols and works of art. The second is what Taylor calls “embodied background understanding.” Ibid., 29. By this Taylor means the “unformulated (and perhaps even unformulable) understandings . . . that could be formulated as beliefs, but aren’t functioning as such in our world.” These include my “understanding of myself as an agent with certain powers, of myself as an agent among other agents,” and Taylor adds, my understanding of myself as “an agent moving in certain kinds of social spaces, with a sense of how both I and these spaces inhabit time, a sense of how both I and they relate to the cosmos and to God.” Ibid., 29. It is evident from what Taylor says, that he thinks that differing interpretations of providence powerfully operate on the level of “embodied background understanding,” Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2007), 13-14. My work focuses on philosophies of history because although philosophies of history tend to be explicitly articulated, they play an important role in pointing to background understandings about the nature of providence.

5 Throughout this work I have elected to speak of the eighteenth century rather than “the Enlightenment.” I have done so to avoid the “Whiggish” connotations of the term and because the term “the Enlightenment” has become highly contested. See note 25 below. Many scholars have come to reject the notion of a unitary transnational “Enlightenment project” driven by the skeptical philosophies of freethinkers. J. C. D. Clark’s English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) was influential in this regard as it forcefully challenged the traditional emphasis that intellectual historians placed on deists, philosophes and other radical reformers. The classic interpretations of the Enlightenment along these lines are Paul Hazard, La Crise de la conscience européeene (Paris: Boivin, 1935); The European Mind: The Critical Years, 1680-1715, trans. J. Lewis May (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); and Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, 2 vols.
The crisis bears contemporary significance, not merely because the Old Testament continues to struggle to function as Scripture in the modern west, but because it played an important role in forging modern understandings of God’s relation to history and the nature of history itself.6

The conviction that the Old Testament struggles to function as Scripture for Christians in the modern west has a long history. At the end of the nineteenth century A. F. Kirkpatrick (1849-1940) complained that the Old Testament had “become a discredited, and therefore disused book.”7 Kirkpatrick, however, was not the first to publicly decry the downfall of the Old Testament. That honour should be given to Hutchinson. In his 1724 work Moses’ Principia Hutchinson argued that the eclipse of Old Testament authority should be placed squarely on the shoulders of Newton and his disciples. According to Hutchinson the Old Testament had fallen into disrepute because while people were praising Newton as the font of natural philosophical wisdom, they should have been looking to Moses. Ironically, the posthumous publication of Newton’s The Chronology of Ancient Kingdom’s Amended in 1727 pointed to what the


7 Kirkpatrick set out to refute the popular opinion that “the Old Testament is of no particular moment, all that we need being the New Testament.” A. F. Kirkpatrick, “The Old Testament in the Christian Church,” The Old and New Testament Student 13, no. 1 (1891): 8.
dissemination of his private manuscripts has now confirmed, namely that Newton and Hutchinson have a great deal in common. In particular Newton and Hutchinson share the conviction that the best way to defend the Old Testament is to demonstrate its consistency with natural philosophy. And even more importantly, I maintain, they also share a common philosophy of history, which makes this appeal to natural philosophy necessary.⁸

Newton, Newton’s protégé Clarke, and Hutchinson all uphold the Renaissance view that the history of the world is the story of the gradual corruption of pristine beginnings.⁹ This leads them to adopt the view that providence is supremely evident in nature, and that human history, as a history of decline, obscures the providential order established at the moment of creation. Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson intensify this Renaissance view to the extent that human history ultimately loses its capacity to illumine providential order. I am calling this view “devolutionary history.” Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson strive to bind the Old Testament to the providential order of creation, but they find that, as a text that deals primarily with historical particulars, it is

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⁸Philosophies of history seek to understand “the study of the past and the past itself” through “the application of philosophical conceptions and analysis.” Gordon Graham, “Philosophy of History,” in Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward Craig and Edward Craig (New York: Routledge, 2013), 356. Throughout the course of this dissertation I will emphasize the way in which philosophies of history order the past through conceptual analysis. I will, however, be using the term in a more narrow sense than Graham and other contemporary philosophers. When I speak of philosophies of history I am referring to the understanding of the term that was common until the nineteenth century. Until the nineteenth century philosophies of history were teleologically oriented. They sought to provide overarching narrative frameworks that could be applied to historical data in light of the ultimate destiny of history. Usually this meant interpreting history as cyclical, progressive, or subject to decline. I discuss this matter more thoroughly in the Conclusion of this work.

⁹Taylor regards the idea of a “true, original natural religion, which has been obscured by accretions and corruptions, and which must now be laid clear again” as an essential component of the intellectual platform of “Providential deism.” For Taylor, this idea follows from the deist emphasis upon “the notion of the world as designed by God” and a “shift towards the primacy of impersonal order.” See Taylor, A Secular, 221. My analysis is consistent with Taylor’s, although it does suggest that the idea of “a true, original natural religion, which has been obscured” both precedes deism and was far broader than the deist critique of established religion. See Chapter Two.
subject to the devolution and therefore does more to obscure this order than reveal it. Inevitably they are only successful in their defense of the Old Testament to the extent that they are able to represent it as non-historical. The irony, however, is that the extent to which they manage to do so is also the extent to which they fail in their defense of the Old Testament as Scripture, for the extent to which the Old Testament is able to engage the providential order of historical existence is the extent to which it has the potential to serve as a guide to human life and conduct.

While Newton, Clarke and Hutchinson argue in ways that inadvertently subvert the Scriptural status of the Old Testament, Hutchinson’s followers (known as “Hutchinsonians” then as well as today) provide an alternative that renders the Old Testament doctrinally and morally authoritative. Hutchinson, despite himself, provided the Hutchinsonians with a theological tool that enabled them to overcome the Newtonian problematic. Of the Hutchinsonians I will focus on Watson, Horne, and Jones, and I will argue that they adapt Hutchinson’s approach to the Old Testament to create a figural view of Scripture that endues Old Testament figures with doctrinal and moral significance. This figural view of Scripture serves as the foundation of a figural, rather than devolutionary interpretation of history. For Watson and Horne—and especially for Jones—the particulars of human history are given providential signification through their engagement with Scriptural figures. Scripture is therefore considered indispensable for the discernment of the workings of providence in history and the proper human response to them.

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10 Figural approaches to Scripture trace the theological import of particular people, places, and objects, as they are picked up and developed by other canonical authors. For a contemporary introduction to figural interpretation see, Stanley Walters, ed., Go Figure! Figuration in Biblical Interpretation (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008).
Over the past thirty years the study of the history of biblical interpretation has gained momentum in large part because scholars have come to acknowledge the central place of the bible in the formation of western civilization and consciousness.\textsuperscript{11} Part of the upswing of interest can be attributed to the fact that scholars have found the history of biblical interpretation can be employed as a weapon to undermine determinate readings of Scripture.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, for some post-modern critics, the history of interpretation proves that because Scripture can be taken to mean anything, it obviously means nothing at all.\textsuperscript{13} Inasmuch as this dissertation highlights ways conflicting views of the nature of providence alter perceptions of the Old Testament, it might correspondingly be used in this regard. Nevertheless, Hutchinsonian Scriptural interpretation confirms that the hermeneutical circle becomes a hermeneutical spiral not merely on account of input from the interpretive context: the text pressures the reader’s perception of God and the world.\textsuperscript{14} It was engagement with Scripture, and particularly, with the Old Testament, that led the Hutchinsonians away from the restricted Newtonian view of providence to something far more comprehensive. And the Hutchinsonian engagement with Scripture, therefore, calls to attention the


\textsuperscript{12} See Stephen Fowl, \textit{Engaging Christian Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation} (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008). Fowl argues against both “determinate” and “anti-determinate” readings and in favour of “underdetermined” ones. Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{13} Morgan and Barton, for example, describe the problem of historical interpretation as follows: “Texts, like dead men and women, have no rights, no aims, no interests. They can be used in whatever way readers or interpreters choose.” Robert Morgan and John Barton, \textit{Biblical Interpretation} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 7. The attendant assumption that the history of biblical interpretation is largely the history of the abuse of the bible continues to be widely affirmed. See, for example, Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, “Introduction: The Lives of Mark,” in \textit{Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies}, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 14.

\textsuperscript{14} The idea that the Old Testament can “pressure” our views of God and the world is taken up explicitly in Chapter Six of this work.
importance of the Old Testament in forging Christian understandings of God’s workings with His world.

The Waning of Old Testament Authority in Eighteenth-Century England

The larger context of the Hutchinsonian project to rehabilitate the Old Testament is worth tracing now, and I will outline it in what follows even as I will return to it in greater detail throughout the course of this dissertation. To come to appreciate just why Old Testament authority was in need of rehabilitation there is no better place to begin than with the flamboyant and controversial Newtonian William Whiston (1667-1752). When Whiston gave the prestigious Boyle Lectures in 1707 they had largely been used to demonstrate how Newtonian natural philosophy could defend revelation against the criticisms of skeptics. Whiston takes another approach, albeit one that is equally Newtonian: he applies Newton’s interest in Scriptural prophecy to apologetic use. Whiston dismisses the best efforts of his fellow lecturers as failures and insists he will successfully defend Christianity by applying the Newtonian experimental method to the bible. All that this requires, according to Whiston, is to line up Old Testament texts and their New Testament fulfillments to demonstrate that they corresponded exactly.

When Whiston proceeded to match Old Testament texts and their supposed New Testament fulfillments over the next few years, however, he was horrified to discover that there is no such correspondence. He therefore postulated that the present Hebrew

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copies are different than the genuine Hebrew and Greek copies, which were extant in the days of Christ, because second century Jews “altered and corrupted their Hebrew and Greek copies of the Old Testament” to obscure what had been an irrefutable demonstration of Christ’s Messiahship. Whiston called upon his fellow textual scholars to undertake a great search for uncorrupt ancient manuscripts in order to restore the Old Testament text to its original purity. The irony is that although Whiston wanted to uphold the Old Testament, his theory compels him to argue that the Old Testament he had inherited is corrupt and useless. He might equally have concluded that exact correspondence had been obscured because his New Testament had been tampered with, but he simply took for granted that his job, as a Christian apologist, is to defend the New Testament at all costs.

Whiston’s rejection of the extant Old Testament was part of a widespread phenomenon: at the beginning of the eighteenth century in England the status of the Old Testament was at an all-time low. Over the past thirty years several studies have examined this crisis of authority. These studies confirm that the place of the Old Testament within the historical record was increasingly seen as problematic. Sheehan emphasizes the way in which the critical scrutiny of researchers led many scholars to reject the Hebrew versions of the Old Testament in favour of the Greek or Samaritan

18 Whiston, An Essay, 333.
19 Levitin comes to this conclusion in his bibliographical essay on recent work on biblical interpretation in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. He finds that the major story of the early Enlightenment isn’t the rise of skepticism but the historicization of the bible, and particularly the contextualization of the Old Testament. Dmitri Levitin, “From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to ‘Enlightenment,’” The Historical Journal 55, no. 4 (2012): 1140.
translations. Sutcliffe highlights the decline of Christian Hebraism and the attendant conviction that the Old Testament was central to the overarching shape of global history. And Stroumsa argues that the seventeenth century antiquarianization of the Old Testament that accompanied the rise of the newly conceived category of "religion" led to the Old Testament being placed on the same level as other antique and religious documents. As the place of the Old Testament within the historical record became increasingly problematic, scholars responded by recasting the New Testament as the divine testament of pure, spiritual doctrine. Reventlow argues that the ultimate rejection of the authority of the Old Testament in eighteenth-century England followed logically from the humanistic and spiritualistic tendencies that had been gaining momentum since the beginning of the Renaissance. Reedy similarly highlights the emerging emphasis upon the clear and distinct presentation of Jesus in the New Testament and concludes that this rationalistic approach to Christianity led to the degradation of the Old Testament. Hill finds that the origin of this rationalism was the failure of the Old Testament to provide consensus in the religious tumult of mid-seventeenth century England, and that this compelled Latitudinarians to rely almost exclusively on the New Testament in their attempt to forge an ecumenical vision of

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Christianity. In light of these studies it is appropriate to speak of the Old Testament as a sacrificial lamb of sorts, given over to the vicissitudes of history for the greater good of the preservation of the New Testament.

**Primitivism and the Historicization of the Old Testament**

But what exactly does it mean to say that the Old Testament was given over to history at the end of the seventeenth century? It does not mean that thinkers suddenly woke up to find that the Old Testament was, like other ancient texts, a historical document. Sixteenth-century humanists and reformers were all too aware that the Hebrew text was subject to history and therefore beset with textual accretions. And in the sixteenth century Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) had already insisted that Old Testament history must be interpreted in relation to other, profane, histories. The Old Testament was newly historicized at the end of the seventeenth century only in the limited sense that the origins of the Old Testament were historicized. As scholars began to give prominence to the human authorship of the documents in question, they began to interpret the Old Testament as a product of human history. And in the face of this

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affirmation they struggled to retain the traditional commitment to its Scriptural authority.

The fact that the Old Testament was newly historicized only in this limited sense calls into question one of the hallmarks of the so-called “Whig” historiography, the notion that that the birth of “historical consciousness” took place at the threshold of modernity.28 Keith Thomas, for instance, observes that throughout the English Renaissance, the past was “ever-present in the minds of the common people.”29 The crucial point, however, is not merely that Renaissance people had a historical consciousness, but that this historical consciousness was something quite different than that of twentieth- or twenty-first-century scholars.30 Thus, when Renaissance thinkers are identified as having historicized Old Testament origins this does not mean that they

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28 In his 1931 work, The Whig Interpretation of History Butterfield complained against the “Whiggishness” of his fellow British historians, which compelled them to interpret sequences of events as causal lines of progressive development and therefore led them to only engage particulars that could be easily conformed to this pattern. Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931), 12, 24-25. Since Butterfield’s intervention the term has been widely and pejoratively applied to histories that view the past as an inevitable and progressive march towards enlightenment, particularly in constitutional history, the history of science, and the history of philosophy. In 2005 Womersley applied Butterfield’s critique to the study of Renaissance historiography when he argued that, “the establishment of the ‘chief topic’ of the history of historiography as ‘the development of the historical-mindedness peculiar to our culture’ has ‘resulted in a serious misrepresentation’ of the subject. David Womersley, “Against the Teleology of Technique,” Huntington Library Quarterly: Studies in English and American History and Literature 68 (2005): 95. Womersley here quotes G. Huppert, “The Renaissance Background of Historicism,” History and Theory 5 (1966): 48. Despite these and other pleas, historians continue to speak of the birth of historical consciousness in the Renaissance. They often assume that the bible “became” a historical document in the seventeenth century. See, for example, Matt Goldish, Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 27; John Sandys-Wunsch, A History of Modern Biblical Interpretation (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 22, 127.


30 Childs concludes his reflections on the teaching of the Old Testament with the following observation: “the issue is not whether or not an Old Testament Introduction should be historical, but the nature of the historical categories being applied.” Childs, Introduction, 41. The job of the historian is equally not to determine whether Renaissance or eighteenth-century scholars believed the Old Testament to be historical, but to explore “the nature of the historical categories being applied.”
suddenly came to view the Old Testament in modern terms. The history that
Renaissance thinkers “gave” the Old Testament over to was neither progressive nor
secular. It had a particular form that was specific to its own context. And that form was
decisively shaped by Renaissance primitivism.

Although the term “primitivism” has come to refer to the twentieth century art
movement associated with Gauguin and others, the philosophical basis of this
movement—the notion that there exists a primitive ideal that is waiting to be
retrieved—is arguably as old as philosophy itself. Primitivism was reinvigorated in
the Middle Ages through successive waves of monastic reform, which were inspired by
the promise of a return to the pristine roots of monasticism. The most important
initiative in the history of primitivism, however, was the *ad fontes* project of the
Renaissance humanists, which sought to elevate and duplicate the best of Greek and
Latin literature, art, and architecture.

The primitivistic impulse of the humanists left its mark on almost every aspect of
intellectual inquiry from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. The Renaissance
project found its Christian equivalent in the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. It
also provided the impetus for other fields of inquiry such as ecclesiastical and universal

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31 See A. O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns
Hopkins, 1935).
32 The classic treatment of monasticism as reform is Gerhart Ladner’s *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on
One of the first historians of monasticism, John Cassian, argued that monasticism was, from the beginning,
a means of regaining pristine perfection. See Ladner, *The Idea*, 343. Ladner’s categories are helpfully
applied to medieval reform movements in Christopher Bellito and David Flanagan, eds., *Reassessing
Reform: A Historical Investigation into Church Renewal* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America
Press, 2012). See also George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, MD:
Johns Hopkins, 1948).
33 Bard Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers: A History of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Grand Rapids,
34 Alistair McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons,
history, jurisprudence, and experimental science, as well as Hermeticism, Christian Kabbalah, alchemy and other so-called “esoteric” traditions. Van Liere thus observes that, “The rhetorical architecture of Renaissance Christian humanism rested on the foundational belief that the oldest and most primitive expression of something represented its essential and perfect form.” This led Renaissance thinkers to posit that the job of the historian was to chart the gradual decay of primitive perfection. Already in 1627 George Hakewill (1578/79-1649) could complain that, “The opinion of the World’s Decay is so generally received, not only among the Vulgar, but of the Learned, both Divines and others, that the very commonnesse of it makes it currant with many, without any further examination.” As Duffy observes, “The thesis of the world’s perpetual decline was revived during the Renaissance and reached its zenith during the seventeenth century.”

Renaissance primitivism played an important role in the growth of Christian Hebraic scholarship. Since the Old Testament was thought to be the oldest extant

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35 For an introduction to these and other “esoteric” traditions see, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism (Leiden: Brill, 2006).


37 The philosophy of history of the humanists, however, wasn’t merely one of decay. They posited a history of decay in order to present their own work as light that shines in the darkness, and the powerful influence of their propaganda continues to be felt. The notion that is still with us, that medieval Europe should be called “the Dark Ages,” is a case in point. Ficino was merely expressing the common sentiment of the humanists when he said, “This century, like a golden one has brought to light the liberal arts formerly nearly extinguished: that is grammar, poetry, rhetoric, painting, sculpture, architecture, music.” Quoted in F. O. Kristeller, excerpts from “Florentine Platonism and Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism,” in Renaissance Thought: A Reader, ed. Robert Black (New York: Routledge, 2001), 226.

38 George Hakewill, Apologie . . . of the Power and Will of God (London, 1627), 9


40 Manuel observes that in the fifteenth century that Christian scholars began their concerted efforts to forge links with Judaism. Frank Manuel, The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 66. Burnett emphasizes that, “Calvin’s interaction with a medieval Jewish work shows how much research remains to be done on the penetration of Hebrew learning into
collection of writings, it was taken for granted that it had unrivaled access to the primitive ideal. Burnett speaks of the “explosive growth of Hebrew studies within schools and universities during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” and Manuel observes that by 1694 Carlo Giuseppe Imbonati (d. 1697) could survey the Hebraic scholarship of the last two centuries and list some thirteen hundred Christian authors, many of whom had composed large numbers of works.  

Arguably the most important impetus driving Renaissance Hebraists was “philosemitism,” the notion that the Jews, despite their distinctiveness, or perhaps because of it, had special access to *prisca theologia*, the true system of knowledge imparted to Adam directly from God. Hebraic studies were held in high regard because, although ancient Chinese and Egyptian were strong candidates, ancient Hebrew was most likely the *prima lingua*, the language given to Adam by God and uniquely designed by Him for the transmission of *prisca theologia* to posterity.

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41 Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, 66. It was, as Manuel observes, a “magnificent age of scholarship,” driven by scholars for whom “the production of a hundred volumes in a lifetime was considered a feat but not impossible.” Ibid., 67.


44 Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 257-59. Katz observes that, “by the middle of the seventeenth century, Hebrew was the unopposed ancient mother of languages for most English thinkers.” Katz, *Philo-Semitism*, 65. Katz also observes that the opinion that Adam spoke Hebrew was widespread through to the end of the
prima lingua, ancient Hebrew was thought to have been a language of things: it did not, like other languages, merely attach words to things by means of conventional associations. 45

The question, of course, was how to gain access to this perfect correspondence given that the extant Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament had been subject to historical corruption. Christian Kabbalists, Hermeticists, and Alchemists were convinced that once deciphered, the Hebrew characters would readily reveal their secrets. The Hebraic scholars that painstakingly created the great polyglot bibles were equally motivated by the hope that a complex textual apparatus (which in Brian Walton’s (1600-61) London Polyglot had ballooned to include the Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, Arabic, Ethiopic and Persian texts of the Old Testament) could bring the Hebrew text back to its pristine state. 46 Louis Cappel (1585-1658)—one of the greatest textual scholars of the age—was merely giving voice to widespread scholarly opinion when he argued that the divine truth of the Old Testament would only shine forth once textual accretions were eliminated. 47

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45 Because he had used Hebrew, the divine tongue, when he gave names to things, the names Adam selected were believed to be ontologically bound to the essences of the things themselves. Katz, Philo-Semitism, 55. Johann Reuchlin articulates this widespread sentiment in the following terms: “When reading Hebrew I seem to see God himself speaking . . . God wished His secrets to be known to man through Hebrew.” Quoted in Friedman, “The Myth,” 38. Christian Kabbalists such as Agrippa von Nettesheim went so far as to insist that the twenty-one letters of the Hebrew alphabet are the foundation of the physical universe because the divine names of all creatures are found in them. Philip Beitchman, Alchemy of the Word: Cabala of the Renaissance (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 81. I discuss the idea of Hebrew as the prima lingua further in Chapter Three.


47 Cappel’s conclusion that the vowel points had been interpolated no earlier than the fifth century was forwarded anonymously in the work Arcanum punctuationis revelatum (Leiden, 1624).
Hebraists were more than happy to acknowledge that Hebrew texts had been subject to corruption. What unsettled them was the work of Samuel Fisher (1605-1665), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Richard Simon (1638-1712), which emphasized that the bible was a product of human history. It is on this account that the magnum opus of the devout Anglican Hebraist John Spencer (1630-93), De Legibus Hebraeorum Ritualibus et Earum Rationibus Libri Tres (1685) became one of the most controversial books of the age. Christian scholars had long taken for granted the chronological priority of the Mosaic Law, but Spencer’s work argued that the ritual laws of the Hebrews had their origin in the idolatrous rites of the Egyptians. This was too much for Spencer’s critics to bear. In their eyes he might as well have dismissed the Pentateuch as a late medieval forgery. By giving the Egyptians priority Spencer dislodged the Pentateuch from its privileged position as the divine monument that stands at the beginning of recorded time. And in so doing he removed it from the protective covering of pre-history. Once the origin of Mosaic Law had been dragged

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48 For Fisher’s influence on Spinoza and subsequent biblical criticism, see Richard H. Popkin, “Spinoza and Samuel Fisher,” *Philosophia* 15, no. 3 (1985): 219-36. Conservative scholars fiercely defended the sole Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch against these scholars in order to protect its divine origination. Louis Ellies de Pin declared that “of all of the paradoxes which have been advanced in our century, there is none more bold . . . nor more dangerous than the opinion of those who have denied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch.” Quoted in Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 195.

49 Assmann attributes Spencer’s importance to the fact that, “with Spencer and some of his contemporaries such as Marsham and Cudworth, the discourse on Egypt leaves the confines of Hermeticism and other mystical and occult traditions and begins to speak the language of the Enlightenment.” Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). 56. Assmann attributes to these scholars a “chronological revolution” which the deists exploited in order to destroy the credibility of the Old Testament. Ibid., 91.

50 Stroumsa argues convincingly that although he has been taken to be “a deist in disguise . . . such an assessment shows a complete misunderstanding of Spencer.” Guy Stroumsa, “John Spencer and the Roots of Idolatry,” *History of Religions* 41, no. 1 (2001): 19. Spencer argues that the ritual laws of the Hebrews served simultaneously as divine concessions to human frailty and bulwarks against idolatry. In this he concedes to skeptics that particular laws are historically contingent rather than irrevocable, while nevertheless insisting that they are consistent with reason. Stroumsa, “John Spencer,” 21.
from pre-history to history not only the text of the Old Testament but its content became problematic as well. In particular, Spencer’s chronological inversion made it impossible to believe that the Old Testament was the font of *prisca theologia*, and after Spencer most Hebrew scholars came to concede that it was necessary to buttress the authority of the Old Testament by other means.\(^{51}\) Newton, however, refused to concede defeat. He laboured intensely to create a mathematically rigorous defense of Mosaic priority, and he adapted *prisca theologia* to natural philosophical context by conceiving it in mathematical and natural philosophical terms.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) Two of the most important intellectual projects of the eighteenth century intended to reinvent Old Testament authority: William Warburton’s *Divine Legation of Moses*, 2 vols., (1737-41) and Robert Lowth’s *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* (1753). Warburton’s work is a response to the notion “to have spread very much of late, even amongst many who would be thought Christians, that the truth of Christianity is independent of the Jewish dispensation.” Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist*, 3rd ed. (London, 1755), 1.5. He takes the concession that *prisca theologia* is nowhere to be found in the Pentateuch one step further by insisting that even the doctrine of a future state and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul are not to be found there. He attempts, however, to flip this argument on its head. The people of Israel must have been guided by divine providence on account of their ability to govern themselves without these and other revealed truths. Ibid., 2.376-79. Lowth and Warburton were hostile opponents, despite the fact that like Warburton, Lowth made it his life’s work to resuscitate Old Testament authority. Like Warburton’s, Lowth’s work is a response to the widespread doubt that the Old Testament is a vehicle of divine wisdom. Lowth’s solution is to draw a stark line between form and content and to concede that while the doctrines of the Hebrews may be outdated or problematic, their poetry is that “which the human mind can conceive nothing more elevated, more beautiful or more elegant.” Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (London, 1787), 37. Lowth re-centered the notion of divine inspiration on human authors, and this proved to be an enormous influence on German and English Romantics. See Gary Stansell, “The Poet’s Prophet: Bishop Robert Lowth’s Eighteenth-Century Commentary on Isaiah,” in “As Those who are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL,” ed. Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia Tull (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 223-43.

Newtonianism and Devolutionary History

The progressive aspirations of Newton and his disciples are beyond doubt, but these aspirations must not be interpreted as the eclipse of Renaissance primitivism.\(^{53}\) The Newtonians played an important role in making Renaissance primitivism palatable to eighteenth-century sensibilities. The godly future they envisioned was a retrieval of a godly past, and the natural philosophical knowledge they believed would lead them there was the knowledge of the ancients. Contrary to the popular myth, which goes back at least to Paul Hazard’s *La Crise de la conscience européenne*, scholars did not suddenly wake up at the beginning of the eighteenth century to find that they endorsed a progressive philosophy of history.\(^{54}\) In 1743 William Worthington (1703-1778) could still complain against “"the Prejudice which Men in all Ages have against their own Times, and the vulgar Opinion, that the World grows worse and worse, Mankind more degenerate, and the Season more unfavourable."\(^{55}\) Eighteenth-century thinkers continued to take for granted that there was a primitive ideal that had been obscured

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\(^{53}\) Newton’s comment to Hooke, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,” captures perfectly the tension that Newton felt between his deference for established learning and his Baconian confidence in the advancement of knowledge. Isaac Newton, “Letter to Robert Hooke,” in *Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, vol. 1, ed. H. W. Turnbull (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 416. Like the Italian humanists, Newton emphasized historical devolution in order to highlight the promise of his own scholarship.

\(^{54}\) Hazard describes the radical shift from pre-modern to modern that took place at the turn of the eighteenth century as follows: “One day, the French people, almost to a man, were thinking like Bossuet. The day after, they were thinking like Voltaire.” Hazard, *The European*, xv.

\(^{55}\) William Worthington, *An Essay on the Scheme of Conduct, Procedure and Extent of Man’s Redemption* (London, 1743), 4. For a discussion of Worthington’s progressivism see Crane, *The Idea*, 239-48. The continued importance of primitivism in the eighteenth century is clearly attested to by the explosion of societies for the advancement of primitive Christianity, of which John Wesley’s “Holy Club” is but one example. See Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London, &c.* (London, 1744). There can be no doubt that progressive philosophies of history began to gain traction throughout the course of the eighteenth century. The progressive ideal did not, however, immediately erase the primitivistic impulse. To the contrary, the primitivistic and progressive ideals not only coexisted, they often fueled one another. For eighteenth-century thinkers, the belief in the devolutionary character of history was often the basis of their claims to be able to overcome decline with progress. See, for example, Louis Whitney, *Primitivism and the Ideal of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934).
by humans. What they doubted was the ability of the Old Testament to help them access that ideal. This development can only be accounted for by tracing the way in which Newtonianism altered eighteenth-century historical consciousness.

Newton’s great achievements in physico-mathematics launched a frenzy of activity as his associates desperately tried to duplicate his success in the chemical and medicinal sciences, in zoology, and in disciplines that are now seen as decidedly un-mathematical, such as history and theology. As part of this larger trend to make all knowledge subject to the laws of nature, the quest to mathematize knowledge made the eclipse of Old Testament Scriptural authority possible. Newton and his disciples believed his mathematization of universal gravitation made it demonstrably certain, and Newton hoped to extend this certainty to Scriptural knowledge by means of the same demonstration. Specifically, he sought to provide a refutation of Spenser’s inversion that was both mathematically and empirically grounded. His failure to do so, however, left his disciples with an even greater problem than Newton himself had inherited: Newton left them with conviction that to be true is to be mathematical, and it was evident to them that the Old Testament was nothing of the sort.56

Newton and his disciples believed that contact with human history is toxic to divine truth. According to this devolutionary view of history, propositions that have their origin in human testimony, and therefore in history, are inherently less certain than propositions that are derived directly from nature.57 Newton was the first to apply

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57 Newton’s devolutionary philosophy of history contains both progressive elements and elements taken from the Renaissance history of decline. Their particular admixture gives further support to the view that Newton was a precursor of nineteenth-century positivism. Newton is confident in philosophical and
this binary to the interpretation of the bible in a systematic way. Like Newton, Whiston came to the text with his conviction that certain truth was rational, propositional and syllogistic—what he calls “mathematical.” But whereas Newton wrestles intensely with the text to present his contemporaries with an Old Testament able to produce mathematical knowledge, Whiston despairs of ever being able to achieve this end. And since the text fails to achieve his standard of mathematical correspondence all that remains for him to do is to throw it away.

In this Whiston represents a clear departure not merely from Newton, but from the traditions of Christian Hebraism and *prisca theologia* of which Newton was a part. The great Renaissance Hebraists, Walton (the architect of the London Polyglot) for example, were, like Whiston, all too aware of the corruptions of Old Testament texts. But the one thing Walton did not do—one thing he could never dream of doing—was to throw these texts away. The texts he had were the particulars he believed could be wrestled with and overcome to render the original text of the Old Testament. The same can be said of Athanasius Kircher (1602-80), who in the 1650s “cemented his reputation as the only scholar in Europe capable of translating . . . hieroglyphs.”

Kircher has been called the “master of a hundred arts,” and “the last man who knew everything,” but he was characteristic in the way he conceived of *prisca theologia* as technological progress, and he even divides history into four distinct developmental stages of growth. Jed Buchwald and Mordecai Feingold, *Newton and the Origin of Civilization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 428. It thus appears that only certain types of knowledge and certain societal elements are subject to decline, those that are inevitably implicated in history, such as religious knowledge, and religious institutions. Whether Newton speaks of history in progressive or evolutionary terms therefore depends on the subject he is discussing. This leads to a pronounced distinction between what we would now call the humanities and the sciences.

including all conceivable theological, philosophical, and empirical truths.\textsuperscript{59} This conviction led him to pour over every ancient text and monument he could find in the hopes of finding even the faintest point of contact with primal truth.

The juxtaposition of Whiston’s approach to the Old Testament with that of his Renaissance forebears brings into relief the distinction between Renaissance primitivism and Newtonian devolutionary history. For the Renaissance primitivist historical texts are held in high regard because they do not entirely obscure \textit{prisca theologia}. For the Newtonian devolutionist, however, historical and natural philosophical truths are set in opposition to one another and only the natural philosophical are accepted as verifiable. Once an idea is identified as a product of history it is summarily dismissed as having nothing of epistemological or religious value to offer.\textsuperscript{60}

Whiston is important because he boisterously proclaims opinions that his more diplomatic contemporaries are afraid to utter.\textsuperscript{61} But while Whiston’s work is perhaps the starkest example of the effect of a devolutionary view of history upon the status of the Old Testament, Whiston is not alone. His work betrays the influence of Newton’s protégé, the great Samuel Clarke. In his Boyle Lectures (1704, 1705) Clarke had argued


\textsuperscript{60} Renaissance primitivism regarded both human history and natural history as subject to decline. See, for example, Thomas Burnet, \textit{The Sacred Theory of the Earth} (London, 1684). With the rise of Newtonian natural philosophy scholars became supremely confident in the stability of the natural order and therefore moved away from the notion that natural history was subject to decline. In the eighteenth century human history was forced to bear the burden of historical devolution alone. The notable exception to this development is Whiston. See William E. Burns, \textit{An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics, and Providence} (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002).

that words and propositions could be considered mathematical when they achieve a one-to-one correspondence with objects of nature. Clarke had then applied this principle to the distinction between natural religion and Israelite religion and found that while Israelite religion is historically contingent, natural religion is grounded in the immutable mathematical truths of nature. After looking at the way in which Newton lays the foundation of a devolutionary view of history in his Old Testament interpretation I will study the Old Testament interpretation of Clarke. Clarke's dismissal of the Old Testament is central to my argument because it confirms that while Hutchinson may have been off base in his defense of Old Testament Scriptural authority, he was right both to identify that there was an prevalent problem, and that the Newton and his disciples were at least partly to blame for it.

In contrast to Newton himself, the Newtonians took for granted Spencer's chronological inversion. And once Moses had been dragged from pre-history into history they found it impossible to defend him. By leaving Moses out in the cold on account of his subjection to historical devolution, they confirm that the view that is supposed to be the climactic achievement of the “Enlightenment project,” Lessing's famous dictum that “accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason,” was already operative in early eighteenth-century England.62 The Newtonian approach to the Old Testament betrays the view that God's

62 Gottlieb Lessing, “The Proof of the Spirit and of Power,” in Lessing’s Theological Writings, ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956), 53. For Lessing, historical knowledge is made impossible by the “ugly, broad ditch” that separates humans from their history. Ibid., 55. It is worth noting that beginning in 1748 Lessing spent four years translating English and French historical and philosophical works. Taubes summarizes Lessing's basic question as follows: “How does rational Christianity, which is devoid of history, relate to the historical development of Christianity?” Jacob Taubes, Occidental Eschatology (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 131. See also Gorden E.
providential work is located in nature rather than human history. For Clarke, Whiston, and other Newtonians providence is primarily evident in the mechanistic workings of the universe according to mathematical laws, and in the principles of natural religion as expressed in incontrovertible moral laws of Christ in the New Testament. This lack of a robust account of the workings of providence within human history is behind their struggle to affirm the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. And it is equally this lack of a robust account that hinders Hutchinson's defense of the Old Testament from the outset.

**The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament**

Hutchinson's many peculiarities make him stand out from his contemporaries, but these peculiarities are largely idiosyncratic ways of dealing with assumptions he shared with them. The Hutchinsonian appropriation of Hutchinson's thought, therefore, must equally not be interpreted as guided by a peculiar obsession for obscure and obsolete ideals. The Hutchinsonians can perhaps be considered “counter-enlightenment” thinkers to the extent that they repudiated Lessing's famous dictum. But this does not mean that they should be relegated to the footnotes of intellectual histories. Their energetic, creative, and sustained response to Newtonian rationalism places them at the centre of eighteenth-century intellectual foment.


63 Newton's emphasis on the relationship between nature and providence underlies Clarke's rationalism. For Clarke, it is because human history obscures providence that providence must be discerned through reason.

64 The Newtonian attempt to bring religion into harmony with the existing mathematical order will be treated in Chapter Two.
From the beginning commentators have consistently dismissed the Hutchinsonians. Upon reading an early Hutchinsonian sermon Arthur Bedford (1668-1745) remarked, "I agreed with all the learned World, that there was nothing in it, which was worth an answer." At the beginning of the nineteenth century S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) dismissed "the Cabbala of the Hutchinsonian School as the dotage of a few weak-minded individuals," and at the end of the century Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) echoed Coleridge's sentiment. In 1974 Vivian H. Green dismissed Hutchinsonianism as "a somewhat freakish movement" that had "only a small following at Oxford." More recent writers have been less curt, but equally "Whiggish" in their appraisals. "Nowhere," laments Katz, "is [the] tendency towards 'Whig History' more apparent than in the almost complete neglect suffered by the Hutchinsonians." Nowhere, that is, except in the complete dismissal of Hutchinson himself.

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65 Arthur Bedford, Observations on a Sermon Preach’d before the Corporation of Bristol (London, 1736), 1. Bedford went on to become one of the leading opponents of the early Hutchinsonians. See also, Bedford, An Examination of Mr. Hutchinson’s Remarks (London, 1738); A Defence of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity (London, 1741).


In 1968 Carroll complained that many intellectual histories don’t even mention Hutchinsonianism. William X. Carroll, "Hutchinsonism: Une vue de la nature comme théophanie au cours du dis-huitième siècle" (PhD diss., Université de Strasbourg, 1968), 1.
The Hutchinsonians have recently received some long overdue attention. In 1994 Katz argued that they are “absolutely central to English and Scottish theology in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.”

Since 1994 a steady stream of publications have engaged Hutchinsonianism. Despite this increased interest Tarbuck could still remark in 2003 that, “no full-scale study of the movement has been undertaken.” While individual Hutchinsonian thinkers and topics have been investigated, the dearth of full-scale works has meant that these smaller studies have lacked a coherent framework. Most importantly, there is a lack of material on the relationship between the founder of the movement and his more famous disciples. One scholar has even been so bold as to argue for a Hutchinsonianism sans Hutchinson.

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73 Leighton, “Knowledge,” 171.
While the importance of Hutchinsonianism is gradually coming to light, the same cannot be said of Hutchinson, whose twelve volumes of physico-theology have been regarded as so peculiar as to defy comment. By offering a detailed study of Hutchinson’s Old Testament apologetic I am entering uncharted waters. I will locate Hutchinson’s apologetic in its Newtonian context, and then trace its development within Hutchinsonianism through to the end of the eighteenth century. This leads me to call into question facile characterizations of Hutchinson as a predominantly anti-Newtonian, and therefore “counter-Enlightenment” thinker. Once Hutchinson’s Old Testament apologetic is properly acknowledged to be at the centre of his project a very different picture comes to light: a Hutchinson that looks rather like Newton himself.74

Tracing the fortunes Hutchinson’s Old Testament apologetic in the writings of his disciples enables me to account for what is undoubtedly the most important transition in the history of the movement, the transition from an obscure coterie of zealous Hebraists to the most influential group in the Church of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. On the surface the controversies concerning Hebrew etymologies that dominated early Hutchinsonianism bear little resemblance to the establishmentarian politics of later generations. I will argue that this shift was made possible by a shift in Old Testament interpretation. Hutchinson focused on the interpretation of a handful of select Hebrew words as divine emblems that illumine natural philosophical truths. Although early Hutchinsonians were set on defending Hutchinson’s renderings, later Hutchinsonians applied Hutchinson’s hermeneutic to all

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74 As I have already suggested, this resemblance can be attributed to the fact that, like Newton, Hutchinson sought to salvage the Old Testament by attaching it to natural philosophy, and like Newton, he did so because he had been prejudiced to believe that nature rather than history is the primary location of providential order.
Scriptural words. This, in turn, compelled them to leave behind Hutchinson’s quest to create a unique Old Testament apologetic. In its place the Hutchinsonians forged an apologetic that sought to defend the Old and New Testaments on equal terms, and this broadening of Hutchinson’s hermeneutic led the Hutchinsonians to embrace a far more comprehensive view of providence than either Newton or Hutchinson was able to endorse. By interpreting every word of Scripture as potentially illuminating, they were compelled to uphold as providential far more than merely the objects of the natural world: they were able to uphold the Church of England, the English commonwealth, and countless other elements of human society as providentially ordered. I will therefore argue that the transformation of Hutchinsonianism is, at root, a movement away from a devolutionary view of history to a providential view of history that is grounded in the Hutchinsonian figural Scriptural apologetic.

Recent interpretations have tended to locate the high point of the movement in 1750’s Oxford. In actual fact, Hutchinsonian influence was greatest during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The growing prominence of the Hutchinsonians throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, both as establishmentarians and as Scriptural apologists, goes against the “Whiggish” assumption that the history of Christianity in eighteenth-century England is the story of consistent and inevitable decline. The history I will recount, however, is equally not the story of the triumphant reassertion of Scriptural authority. It is an account of Christians who struggled to uphold the Old Testament as an equal partner in the Christian canon in an age in which historically contingent truths were regarded as less certain than the truths of nature.

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75 See, for example, Leighton, “Knowledge,” 168.
76 I discuss this point more fully in the conclusion of this work.
The first three thinkers this study investigates—Newton (Chapter One), Clarke (Chapter Two), and Hutchinson (Chapter Three)—all struggled to affirm the Old Testament as Scripture in light of their commitment to a devolutionary philosophy of history. The next three thinkers—Watson (Chapter Four), Horne (Chapter Five), and Jones (Chapter Six)—rejected the Newtonian devolutionary philosophy of history, and were able in its place, to develop a providential view of history. I maintain that this transition enabled them to present a far more compelling Old Testament apologetic than their Newtonian counterparts. They inherited from Newton an extremely truncated vision of providence, and managed, nonetheless, to forge a providential vision that was willing to reflect upon the providential location of all aspects of human history and society. The importance of their engagement with Scripture in promoting this shift should not be underestimated.

Watson’s interpretation of the Old Testament grants it a central place in the providential interpretation of historical particulars. There is, however, some ambiguity in his work as to whether Scripture functions as the epistemological foundation of providential order in the world or is merely the subsequent testimony to it. I will argue that Horne takes up this second approach. Horne sees Scripture, along with the natural world and the Church, as the three primary, and ultimately independent, witnesses to the providential order established by God at the foundation of the world. For Jones, on the other hand, the testimony of Scripture, nature and the Church do not exist on the same level. The providential witness of every natural and historical object is only established when that object is reinterpreted in Scriptural language. From the point of view of traditional Christian theology, the strength of Jones’ approach, therefore, is that
it is better suited than that of Horne to protect against the danger that besets the Newtonian vision of providence—the danger of restricting God’s providential order to favorite objects or categories of objects.

With Watson, Horne, and especially with Jones we witness the flowering of a figural and tropological Hutchinsonian Scriptural hermeneutic. It is figural, not merely because it traces the development of Scriptural figures across the Old and New Testament: it is figural because it trains readers to interpret their world in figural and therefore providential terms. Likewise, it is tropological not merely because it urges readers to interpret biblical texts as morally binding: it is tropological because it employs Scripture as a tool that can be used to recast everyday realities as part of an overarching providential order. Tropological readings of the Old Testament are conspicuously absent from the writings of Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson, and this inability to render the Old Testament necessary for the discernment of conduct is the greatest failure of their Old Testament apologetics. While it is evident that such a use of the Old Testament is hindered by their devolutionary view of history, it is equally apparent that their hermeneutic buttresses this devolutionary view. The Newtonian Old Testament offers little in the way of moral guidance because its primary object is the procurement of mathematical or natural philosophical certainties.

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77 Since tropological interpretations interpret everyday realities as part of an overarching moral order they can play an important role in extending the domain of providence over the realm of human experience. And indeed, I will argue that Old Testament apologists that refuse to interpret the Old Testament tropologically often struggle to defend the Old Testament as necessary for providential discernment. Tropology is the figurative interpretation of Scripture in order to render moral guidance. For a historical introduction to the tropological interpretation of Scripture see, Henri de Lubac, The Four Senses of Scripture, vol. 2 of Medieval Exegesis, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 127-78.
The Hutchinsonian defense of the Old Testament is a forceful affirmation that the "necessary truths of reason" must not be taken to be the basis of the interpretation of the "incidental truths of history." The Hutchinsonians are to be regarded as the great opponents of rationalism in the eighteenth century because they insist that the order of the world cannot be divined by means of rational deductions from first principles.  

To follow the Hutchinsonian quest to save the Old Testament, however, is not simply to rehearse the well-trodden debates between eighteenth-century empiricists and rationalists concerning the grounds of human knowledge. The Hutchinsonians were not motivated simply to acquire knowledge, but to acquire providential knowledge. The fundamental questions Hutchinsonianism therefore raises are: is providential discernment possible? And if it is, then how might humans go about achieving it? The Hutchinsonians insist that providential discernment is possible. But they equally hold that humans must be mindful of their creaturely limitations. Humans must begin the process of providential discernment, not with abstract speculations concerning the great movement of history, but with the concrete objects that comprise human experience. And these objects, the Hutchinsonians insist, must be interpreted in light of God’s revelation, since God alone knows the true identity of the things he has made. Within their eighteenth-century context, however, what is most unique about the Hutchinsonians was not that they affirmed the empirical grounds of providential knowledge or that they insisted that this knowledge must be made subject to Scripture.

78 “At its simplest,” says Darwall-Smith, “Hutchinsonianism was a reaction to rationalism, which, it was feared, had dethroned divine revelation in favour of human reason.” Robin Darwall-Smith, A History of University College, Oxford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 271. The Hutchinsonians strongly affirmed the empirical grounds of knowledge. I discuss the Hutchinsonian sensualist epistemology in Chapter Four.
What was most unique about the Hutchinsonians was the way in which their method of providential discernment made the Old Testament central to the Christian life.
ISAAC NEWTON

Throughout his life Isaac Newton exerted an enormous amount of energy on the interpretation of the Old Testament. His primary object was to refute Spencer's chronological inversion, and he hoped to do so by conclusively demonstrating, by means of astronomical and mathematical science, that the Old Testament is the authentic record of the oldest civilization of the world. Newton, however, wasn't simply motivated by the Renaissance conviction that “older is better.” He believed that the only way to save the Old Testament from being discredited is to bind it to the primitive ideal. By locating the origin of the Old Testament at the beginning of recorded time, Newton hoped to protect it from the devolutionary force of history. He also hoped to demonstrate that, like the truths of natural philosophy, the truths revealed in the bible are grounded in the nature of things. Newton's work on the Old Testament, therefore, is the forum within which he sought to reconcile his conviction that God’s providence is supremely evident in the mathematical workings of nature with a traditional Christian affirmation of Scriptural authority.

A portion of Newton's work on the Old Testament was made available to the public through John Conduitt's (1688-1737) publication of Newton’s Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended (1728).¹ Since the dispersal and retrieval of Newton's “non-scientific” manuscripts in the Sotheby sale of the Portsmouth Collection in 1936, however, scholars have come to see that biblical studies occupied a central place in

Newton’s thought. As the manuscripts began to reveal their secrets in the post-war era, scholars quickly came to realize that the portrait of Newton they had inherited was hagiography, the fruit of Whig historiography and positivism. And the new portrait that progressively emerged looked very little like the old one.

Scholars of the new Newtonian studies maintain that Newton was not a two-headed monster: sometimes modern, sometimes ancient; sometimes “scientific,” sometimes “pre-scientific.” They maintain that Newton’s belief that the Lord God of Israel is rendered pantokrator on account of his dominion over all things brings cohesion to Newton’s various pursuits, whether “scientific,” historical, or alchemical.

As Dobbs puts it, Newton was not just “interested in finding laws of nature; his was a

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3 Positivism is the term that is associated with philosophical positions that advocate that data derived from rational and mathematical engagements with sensory experience is the only source of true knowledge. See Michael Proudfoot and A. R. Lacey, The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 311-14.

4 Margaret Jacob recalls a lecture Westfall gave in the 1970’s about Newton’s early alchemy as follows: “There were audible gasps, and under a barrage of hostile questioning Westfall retorted in exasperation ‘I did not write these manuscripts,’ or words to that effect. Very few in the audience wanted Newton to be a practicing alchemist, as well as a serious religious thinker.” Margaret Jacob, “Introduction,” in Newton and Newtonianism: New Studies, ed. James E. Force and Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2004), x.

religious quest” rooted in the “conviction that God acted in the world.” In 1993 Markley remarked that Dobbs’ groundbreaking work on Newton’s alchemy may have put “the final nail in the coffin of positivist readings of Newton by . . . demonstrating that Newton’s theocentric interpretation of nature was profoundly antimechanistic.” In 2004 Jacob remarked that, “by the 1980s everyone who studied Newton had come somewhat belatedly to recognize the importance of his theology.” This turns out to have been an exaggeration, for in 2003 Faur was able to tell the story of a Jewish Newton who rejected Christianity. In 2007 Feingold scoffed at the notion that Newton sat “long hours at his desk, missing dinners and ignoring visitors, just because the power of belief in divinity drove him on.” And in 2012 Buchwald and Feingold suggested that Newton only turned to the bible because he was emotionally vulnerable. For scholars of the new Newtonian studies, the real conundrum is not Newton, but his interpreters.

The positivist reading of Newton poses a genuine problem for the new Newtonian studies not merely because of its persistence but because it is the traditional reading. Its genealogy can be traced back to Henry Pemberton (1694-1771), the editor of the third edition of Newton’s *Principia*. As Jacob puts it, “The old positivist Newton is a dead duck, but the larger shift, one that made his alchemy an

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8 Jacob, “Introduction,” x.
12 Those that persist in rendering Newton as champion of scientific positivism are often enflamed by anti-religious sensibilities. This fact alone, however, cannot account for their position.
13 Markley, *Fallen*, 189-96.
embarrassment and that mechanized the Western understanding of nature, still needs explaining.”¹⁴ Positivist readings of Newton are only possible because of ideological shifts taking place during Newton’s lifetime—shifts he ironically helped to create.¹⁵ Unlike positivists Newton believes that the entire realm of human experience—a realm that includes everything from the findings of his optical experiments to the relics of ancient civilization—can render certain knowledge because it is subject to God’s providential governance. The difficulty Newton encounters, however, is that he equally insists that the entire realm of experience is subject to devolution. He therefore looks to ground experiential knowledge in that which is not subject to corruption. Newton’s privileging of mathematics as the ahistorical grounds upon which truth is established opened the door to positivistic readings of his work. It is also a decisive element in the erosion of Old Testament authority in eighteenth-century England. People struggled to find reasons to hold on to the Old Testament once they concluded that it was not—as Newton maintained—a wellspring of mathematical certainties.

Isaac Newton, Philologist

In his will Robert Boyle (1628-91) made the provisions for the foundation of an annual lectureship “for proving the Christian Religion, against notorious Infidels, viz. Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans.”¹⁶ The first Boyle lecturer to be

¹⁴ Jacob, “Introduction,” xi.
¹⁵ Newtonian scholars are therefore compelled to produce not merely readings of Newton with internal coherence, but readings that account for Newton’s relationship to his culture, and his relationship to Newtonianism. This, unfortunately, has not been the strength of the new Newtonian scholarship, which tends to emphasize Newton’s radical distinctiveness.
appointed was the young classical scholar Richard Bentley (1662-1742). Rather than pursue his own areas of expertise, Bentley decided to employ Newtonian science as the basis of his apologetic. In his lectures Bentley follows Boyle himself by insisting that the facts and observations of science demonstrate the existence of a rational Creator. He appeals specifically to the Newtonian theory of universal gravitation to combat the “atheistical” notion that motion and matter can account for all natural phenomena. According to Bentley, gravitation is the “energy and impression” of God in creation that demonstrates God’s continued providential oversight.

Although Newton himself famously declared in the “Scholium Generale” appended to his *Principia* that he would “frame no hypotheses” regarding the cause of

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17 Bentley has finally received his due in Kristine Haugen, *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Haugen’s useful discussion of Bentley’s Boyle lectures is contained on pages 101-105. Bentley’s lectures reached their sixth edition in 1735 and were reprinted as late as 1815. They were also translated into Latin, German, French, and Dutch. Dahm, “Science,” 175 n. 17.

18 Although Bentley is known to historians of philosophy and science as the first public proponent of Newtonian natural theology, Bentley’s engagement with Newtonian natural philosophy was at the periphery of his own scholarly career as a biblical scholar and literary critic. De Quehen insists that “his command of Latin, Greek, and biblical studies was prodigious,” and that his “grasp of critical principles … has confirmed him as ‘the greatest scholar that England or perhaps Europe ever bred.’” Hugh de Quehen, ‘Bentley, Richard (1662–1742)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/2169, accessed 22 January 2014. Levine is slightly more modest in his assessment of Bentley, but he has no doubt that Bentley was “the greatest philologist of the age.” Joseph Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 41.

19 Bentley’s appeal to Newton’s *Principia* has become, in Haugen’s words, “The most famous element” of his Boyle lectures, and deservedly so. Bentley’s appeal set the precedent for the Boyle lectures of the following decades and remains, in my estimation, a decisive moment in the history of Christian apologetics. Its influence on modern apologetic enterprises such as creation science is palpable. Creation scientists take for granted Bentley’s conviction that divine providence is most clearly seen, not in the realm of human history, but in nature. They also take for granted that scientific experimentation can discern the imprint of God’s hand on His creation. In Bentley’s own words, universal gravitation confirms that, “an immaterial living Mind doth inform and actuate the dead Matter, and support the Frame of the World.” Richard Bentley, *Eight Sermons Preach’d at the Honourable Robert Boyle’s Lecture* (Cambridge, 1724), 278.
gravity,\(^{20}\) he told Bentley “When I wrote my treatise about our Systeme I had an eye upon such Principles as might work with considering men for the beleife of a Deity & nothing can rejoynce me more then to find it usefull for that purpose.”\(^{21}\) This conviction is the basis of his statement in the Scholium that to discourse of God “from the appearances of things, does certainly belong to Natural Philosophy.”\(^{22}\) Newton was supremely confident that his mathematical principles of natural philosophy were demonstrably certain, and that they therefore provided a sure demonstration of God’s providential dominion over his creation.\(^{23}\) Thus, in Newton’s immense non-scientific labours—alchemical, theological, and chronological—his object is not merely to bring “mathematical” certainty to the subject matter at hand: in so doing he aspires to extend his proof of divine providence to all areas of human experience. The primary difficulty Newton encounters, however, is that the knowledge these disciplines provide is historically contingent, mediated by fallen and flawed human interpreters of divine order. Newton has no doubt that biblical data is subject to corruption, and this corruption is the primary obstacle he seeks to overcome in order to establish a “mathematical” Scriptural apologetic.


\(^{21}\) Isaac Newton, “Letter from Isaac Newton to Richard Bentley, 10 December 1692,” 189.R.4.47, ff. 7-8, 4r. Trinity College Library, Cambridge, UK. Newton proceeds to explain to Bentley how the system of the world requires the existence of a divine power not merely for its constitution but also for its preservation. Ibid., 8r. I have retained the original spellings in my quotations of all the scholars I quote in this study.


\(^{23}\) Following Descartes, Newton’s work attempts to achieve what Brown calls, “the regularization of providence.” It is easy to see how Newton struggled to account for the providential character of history given this emphasis on regularity. See Stuart Brown, “The Regularization of Providence in Post-Cartesian Philosophy,” in *Religion, Reason and Nature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Robert Crocker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 1-16.
To appreciate the nature of historically contingent knowledge in Newton’s thought it is necessary to locate him within the preeminent controversy of his day: the “battle of the books.” Although the “battle of the books” has come to be interpreted as a confrontation between “Ancients” and “Moderns” over the merits of the new empirical sciences, Levine has definitively established that this was but “one-half of the argument.” Equally important was the debate concerning the merits of late-renaissance philology instigated by Bentley’s philological demonstration that the beloved Epistles of Phalaris were forgeries. It is entirely appropriate to speak of Bentley as a “Newtonian” when it comes to natural philosophy, but it is equally appropriate to speak of Newton as a “Bentleyan” when it comes to literary criticism and antiquarian research. Like Bentley, Newton wholeheartedly embraces the new philology, and like Bentley, he recognizes that the philological method must be applied consistently to every object that comes under scholarly scrutiny. For scholars that have recently published on Newton’s biblical criticism—Popkin, Iliffe, Mandelbrote, and

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24 The conflict took place on both sides of the English Channel. In France it was known as “La querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,” and in England it took the corresponding title of “The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.” The conflict is sometimes referred to as the “Battle of the Books” thanks to Swift’s polemical rendering of the controversy. See Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub (London, 1704).
26 Philology is the term Renaissance scholars used to refer to the technical study of classical texts by means of highly specialized linguistic and historical critical tools. See Levine, The Battle, 41-46.
27 Force tackles the question of Newton’s relationship to the debate between the Ancients and Moderns in his article, “Newton, the ‘Ancients’ and the ‘Moderns.’” Force’s basic argument is that Newton’s love of ancient wisdom renders him an Ancient. This conclusion is misguided on two accounts. First, as Levine convincingly demonstrates, both the Ancients and the Moderns held ancient wisdom in high regard. The Moderns held that the best they could hope for was to equal the prodigious learning of the ancients. Levine, The Battle, 34-35. Second, Force ignores “fully-half of the argument,” the argument concerning the merits of philological scholarship. And as I argue in this chapter, Newton’s wholehearted embrace of philological scholarship places him firmly in the ‘Moderns’ camp. See James Force, “Newton, the ‘Ancients,’ and the ‘Moderns,’” in Newton and Religion: Context, Nature, and Influence, ed. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999): 237-57.
28 Bentley’s refusal to exempt texts from philological study is clearly seen in his most ambitious undertaking: his collection and collation of textual variants in order to produce a critical edition of the Greek New Testament—a project that remained incomplete at the time of his death. See Haugen, Richard Bentley, 187-210.
Snobelen—there can be no doubt that Newton must be counted among the philologists. When Newton writes about the bible, he treats it as a historical artifact, and he recognizes that, as a historical artifact, it is not immune to philological criticism.

What frightened the Ancients about the philological method is that it moved the locus of authority away from the text to the history behind the text. For Bentley, the cherished texts of the classical canon are but “individual and variable pieces written in specific and differing circumstances and in need of historical explication.” Bentley gives the impression, however, that the real authority lies not with history itself, but with the philologist who holds the key to unlocking the history behind the text. His point is simple: his opponents can level every possible tool in their arsenal against him, but they cannot change what he, the expert, clearly sees, namely that the language of the Epistles is not sixth century BC Sicilian Greek. This is precisely Newton’s repeated argument in his dispute with Robert Hooke (1635-1703) and Anthony Lucas (1633-1693) over the status of his optical experiments. The empirical approach to verification promoted by Boyle and adopted by the Royal Society held that “an historically specific

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29 Richard H. Popkin, “Newton as a Bible Scholar,” in Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton’s Theology, ed. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1990), 114. Popkin goes so far as to say that the picture of the biblical text Newton presents is essentially the same as the notorious iconoclasts of the day, Baruch Spinoza and Richard Simon. Like Spinoza and Simon, he rejects the sole Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and believes that textual criticism can uncover the redactional layers of the various books of the bible. Like Simon, he also insists that the existence of multiple authors does not detract from the divine status of the biblical books. Ibid., 105. Popkin observes that Newton’s Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended “is a most interesting effort to employ newly discovered scientific findings to evaluate the historical status of the Bible.” Ibid., 111.

30 Newton admits that the Old and New Testaments, as historical artifacts, are not immune to the corrupting force of history, and he holds that his divinely appointed task, as a philologist, is to cleanse them from historical accretions. The clearest example of this approach is Newton’s unpublished work, “Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture.” Isaac Newton, Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture, New College MS 361 (4), New College Library, Oxford. In this work Newton uses textual criticism to prove that Nicene Trinitarian doctrine is not found in the New Testament.

31 Levine, The Battle, 75.
event such as an experiment or 'trial' could become more credible by being witnessed many times and in many difference places by a large group of reliable people.”

Newton, however, insists that "What’s done before many witnesses is seldom without some further concern then that for truth: but what passes between friends in private usually deserves ye name of consultation rather than contest.”

Newton affirms the importance of the crucial instance, which he believes shoulders the burden of proving the certainty of the experiment in question. In answer to Lucas’ criticisms, he asserts that the truthfulness of his own optical experiments depends upon his ability, as an expert witness, to accurately measure and relate, with mathematical rigour, his own observations.

As we might expect, Newton carries this same emphasis on his authority as an expert interpreter to his philological scholarship. As a Low churchman, he rejects the notion that priests hold the keys to Scripture, and he seems to believe that God gives the right to interpret Scripture to an “elect remnant of true believers” of which he is a member.

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33 Isaac Newton, *Correspondence*, ed. H. W. Turnbull, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 1.416. Newton’s opinion on this matter is consistent with his supreme confidence in himself and his refusal to trust other interpreters.


thinks he has the ability, not merely to “give” the biblical text over to history, but to rescue it from history as well. The way to rescue the text, Newton believes, is to bind it to a primitive ideal.

**Newton's Primitivism**

When Newton looks to the future he anticipates both purgation by fire and scientific and religious renovation. Although Newton, like other Moderns, was confident in the ultimate progress of knowledge, his deeply held belief in *prisca theologia* also led him to insist, like other Moderns, that such progress is merely the retrieval of that which has been lost to history. Newton’s confidence that he might even stand “on ye shoulders of giants,” however, stands in tension with his deeply held conviction that human corruption grows over time. This primitivistic impulse leads him to speak longingly about what might be described as three “golden ages”—that of Adam, that of Noah, and that of Jesus Christ.

Newton's natural philosophy is part of the Renaissance tradition known as “pious philosophy,” which seeks to reconcile biblical knowledge (whether Adamic or Mosaic) and contemporary natural philosophy and metaphysics. For Newton, Adam is the paragon of religious and philosophical knowledge, and all true human knowledge can be traced back to him. Noah and Jesus, like Moses and the prophets, are but

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38 Newton's belief that the best modern discoveries are but rediscoveries of *prisca theologia* calls into question, as Force demonstrates, the characterization of Newton as endorsing a progressive view of either knowledge or history. Force, "Newton," 254.


reformers; the religion of Noah and the religion of Jesus are but revivals of Adam’s primordial religion, which was based upon a simple creed, love of God, and love of neighbour.

Newton spends much more time reflecting upon the “Noachide” instantiation of primordial religion than he does reflecting upon the Adamic, perhaps because all pre-Noachide monuments have been lost to history.\(^{41}\) Nowhere is Newton’s confidence in his philological scholarship as evident as in his reconstruction of Noachide religion, which Newton calls the religion of the Prytanea. At the time of Noah, Newton maintains, “There was one Pyræum in every city placed in the principal part of the city. And in the Prytaneum was the Court where the Council or Senate of the city met.” It was also the location for the “performance of holy rites” by “the chief Magistrates of the City & the King,” which consisted of “honours & sacrifices” offered to the one true God.\(^{42}\) Newton’s reconstruction of Noachide religion is highly idealized, a utopic vision of unsullied harmony between God, nature, and humankind. As centres of both religious and natural philosophical learning, the Prytaneum were founded upon Copernican principles.\(^{43}\) The temple edifices themselves, with their hieroglyphic representations, were microcosms

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\(^{41}\) The idea that the seven principles of Noachide religion are the foundation of natural religion was important in creating the category of “religion” and in the development of modern religious studies. Guy Strousma, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), 46-49.

\(^{42}\) Isaac Newton, Draft chapters of a treatise on the origin of religion and its corruption, Yahuda MS 41, fols. 1r and 3r, Yahuda Newton Manuscripts, National Library of Israel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel.

\(^{43}\) Newton’s vision of a Noachide religion that perfectly integrated natural philosophical and religious principles is an important part of his Christian apologetic because it serves as a demonstration to the detractors of religion that such integration is possible.
of the heliocentric universe, and the sacrifices “by fire” at the centre of vestal worship
were celebrations of the heliocentric divine order of creation.44

For Newton, the only golden age that has ever approached that of Noah is that of
the Apostolic Church. One of Newton’s favorite terms for the Apostolic Church is a term
he extracts from the oracles of St. John’s Apocalypse, “the host of heaven.” Like the
Noahides before them, the host of heaven adhered to a simple creed and moral code
and refused to be dogmatic about metaphysical conclusions, particularly when it came
to differing conclusions about the nature of Christ, whom Newton refers to as “the
prince of the host.”45 Newton’s study of early Ebionite and Nazarene texts led him to
conclude that, although the Jewish Christians tended to see Jesus in primarily human
terms and the Christians tended to see him as divine, they did not let this difference of
opinion compromise their unity.46

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44 Newton is captivated by the simplicity of the heliocentric theory, and his love for simplicity extends
both to doctrinal and ethical matters. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Newton holds that the only
conviction that was binding upon the Noachides was belief in the one true God, and their only ethical
requirements were the love of God, and the love of man. The seven Noachide precepts listed in the
Babylonian Talmud are developed by Newton in his personal copy of the 1717 edition of Opticks. They
are: (1) to have one supreme Lord; (2) to not profane his name; (3) to abstain from blood or homicide,
(4) to avoid fornication, and (5) theft; (6) to be merciful to beasts; and (7) to set up magistrates. Gary
returned to these principles in his Irenicum in 1718 and Conduit believed they were Newton’s personal
creed. The fundamental importance of love of God and love of man in Noachide religion was what
convinced Newton that it was, as Trompf puts it, “the ancient basis for the principal part of the religion of
Christians.” Ibid., 219.


46 Newton calls the basic doctrinal tenets that all believers were expected to uphold “milk for babes,” and
the optional further theological discourse and study to be undertaken only by scholars “meat for men of
full age.” The host of heaven managed to successfully uphold the distinction between “milk and meat,” by
insisting that believers never compromise their unity on account of the more complicated theological
issues—centrally, the nature of the divinity of Christ. See Goldish, Judaism, 130. This appraisal of the
pristine Church is the basis of Newton’s curious defense of the Church of England. Newton holds that the
Church of England has managed to uphold the pristine distinction between milk and meat, for it does not
regard the heretical Trinitarian creeds it embraces as fundamentals. Isaac Newton, Keynes MS 3, 51,
King’s College, Cambridge, UK. See also Goldish, Judaism, 135–36; and “Newton’s,” 152–54.
Given that the Christian religion did not impose doctrinal particulars on the Noachide foundation of natural religion, it is worth asking whether it added anything new. Newton’s answer is that Christianity’s contribution is the revelation that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. The religion of Noah and the religion of Christ are the two principal pillars of his historical scheme and his normative vision. Given that the flood erased pre-Noachide history, Noachide religion stands at the dawn of religious history as the foundation of natural religion. The importance of the Christian religion, likewise, is in its foundational character, this time with respect to revealed religion. The primary importance Newton attaches to Noachide religion and Christianity follows from his overarching primitivism, his steady assumption that earlier is better.47

Newton’s work on the history of religions contains a tension between his affirmation that true religion, as natural religion, is everywhere the same, and his historicization of religion, which highlights particularity of expression. “Religion,” says Newton, “is partly fundamental & immutable partly circumstantial & mutable.”48 Ultimately, however, Newton’s affirmation of historical particularity gives way to his drive to universalize religious truth. His insistence that the pristine Church was basically indifferent to Christological doctrine severely restricts his ability to affirm the newness of Christian revelation. In 1694 Newton wrote to David Gregory (1659-1708), telling him that,

47 This primitivism, however, is also what destabilizes the importance of the Christian revelation. If earlier is always better, then the religion of Christ is inferior to Noachide religion, and even Noachide religion falls short of the Adamic ideal.
48 “The first was the Religion of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham Moses Christ & all the saints & consists of two parts our duty towards God & our duty towards man or piety & righteousness, piety which I will here call Godliness & Humanity.” Isaac Newton, A short Schem of true religion, Keynes MS 7, 1r, King’s College, Cambridge, UK.
Religion is the same at all times, but the religion which they received pure from Noah and the first men, they debased with their own inventions. Moses began a reformation but retained the indifferent elements of the Egyptians. Christ reformed the religion of Moses.49

Newton’s primitivism leads him to relativize all historical instantiations of true religion as revivals of an ahistorical core, which he calls either “natural religion” or “Noachide religion.” He therefore concludes that “all the reformations of religion, of Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Jewish prophets and Jesus, are restorations of the oldest religion in the world,” that of the venerable Noah.50

**Newton’s Devolutionary Philosophy of History**

Although Newton is happy to discuss primitive religious norms, such discussions constitute a tiny fraction of his theological and historical output. For Newton, the primary task of the historian is not to elucidate ideals, but to narrate their historical corruption. As Markley puts it, "Newton’s fascination with the origins, corruption, and cyclical renovations of a pristine monotheism locates his sprawling, if fragmentary, historical project in the context of the dominant genre of seventeenth-century historiography—universal history."51 As a Universal historian, the goal Newton sets for

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49 Newton, *Correspondence*, 3.338. Despite the apparent necessity of prophets to revive true religion, Newton seems to think that true religion is accessible to all humans, even apart from revelation. “There is,” says Newton, “but one law for all nations the law of righteousness & charity dictated to the Christians by Christ to the Jews by Moses & to all mankind by the light of reason & by this law all men are to be judged at the last day.” Isaac Newton, *A short Schem*, 2r.


himself in his interpretation of Scripture is, as Chilton, maintains, “the appreciation of the providential design of history.” And like other Universal historians, Newton holds the opinion that this providential design becomes manifest only once a conceptual scheme is imposed upon historical particulars. Accordingly, Newton’s work on ancient history outlines the devolution of Noachide religion, and his work on Church history is his articulation of the devolution of Christianity.

The ressourcement of Newton’s interest in prisca theologia has been an important component of the new Newtonian scholarship. The most well known family of manuscripts on this score is “Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae.” Knoespel describes the manuscripts in primitivist terms as “devoted to showing how ancient religious practice could reveal physical truths about the universe.” This primitivism is explicitly articulated in the first chapter of the work, which explains how the theology of ancient gentiles was philosophical in nature, including knowledge of astronomy and

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52 Chilton maintains that when it comes to biblical prophecy, this approach marks a strict departure from previous interpretations, which were largely interested in predicting the future. Bruce Chilton, Visions of the Apocalypse: Receptions of John’s Revelation in Western Imagination (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 92. Newton’s theological work is, like his “scientific” work, sustained by his belief in divine providence. As Goldish puts it, “The key element in all Newton’s theological pursuits is the action of the Supreme God’s Providence in history, particularly that of the ancient Jews and the Christian church which emerged from them.” Matt Goldish, Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 11.


54 Isaac Newton, Rough draft portions of and notes for ‘Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae’ and ‘The Original of Monarchies,’ Yahuda MS 16, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem; Three bundles of notes for a work on the ancients’ physico-theology, Yahuda MS 17, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel.

physics. The rest of the work is a demonstration of this claim through what Knoespel calls “serious discussion of natural phenomena . . . modulated through mythological narrative.”56 Nevertheless, “Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae” is equally an account of the gradual concealment and eventual disappearance of *prisca theologia*. Newton reflects upon linguistic problems associated with human nomenclature—what Bacon called “idols of the marketplace.” The work is therefore a historical account of how, after Babel, the names of biblical individuals were obscured by inaccuracies of translation, inaccuracies that inevitably led to the individuals’ veneration as gods. Newton thus uses the process of gradual linguistic obscuration to explain the emergence of pagan polytheism: the names of the first humans were eventually transferred to the stars; these stars were then attributed with animated spirits; and finally they were venerated as gods.

Newton also tells the story of the gradual corruption of *prisca theologia* through inaccurate representation in another important unpublished treatise, “The Original of Religions.” In this work Newton outlines his theory of religious devolution as follows:

> Now the corruption of this religion I take to have been after this manner. First the frame of the heavens consisting of Sun Moon & Stars being represented in the Prytanæa as the real temple of the Deity men were led by degrees to pay a veneration to these sensible objects & began at length to worship them as the visible seats of divinity. And because the sacred fire was a type of the Sun & all the elements are parts of that universe which is the temple of God they soon began to have these also in veneration. For tis agreed that Idolatry began in the worship of the heavenly bodies & elements.57

Newton here follows Renaissance tradition by laying much of the blame for this gradual devolution of primal religion at the feet of the Egyptians, and the work is predominantly

56 Ibid., 186.
57 Isaac Newton, Draft chapters of a treatise, 8r.
a historical account of how idolatry spread from Egypt to Greece, and then into Italy and the west.\textsuperscript{58}

The devolution of primal religion is also a central element in Newton’s interpretation of the Old Testament. A case in point is his exposition of 2 Kings 17:15-16.\textsuperscript{59} Newton begins his exposition with a transcription of the verses from the Authorized Version:

They followed vanity & became vain & went after ye heathen that were round about them, concerning whom ye Lord had said that they should not do like them. And they left all ye commandements of ye Lord their God, & made them molten images even two Calves, & made a grove & worshipped all ye host of Heaven & served Baal.\textsuperscript{60}

Newton’s interpretation of 2 Kings 17:15-16 as a testament to the gradual encroachment of idolatry upon true religion conforms to his devolutionary interpretation of history. What is curious about Newton’s exposition, however, is his insistence upon the constancy of idolatrous religious practice. Newton begins by stating that the idolatries of Israel can be attributed to the corruption of the ten Tribes during the Assyrian captivity. As he reflects upon this corruption, however, he concludes that Israelite religion had been idolatrous from the beginning. Newton boldly pushes Israel’s fall into idolatry past the reign of Jeroboam and into the depths of primordial history—undoubtedly to uphold his opinion that the origin of ancient idolatry must be located in the days of Noah. Newton equally insists, however, that Noachide religion was not

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 10v.

\textsuperscript{59} This exposition, which is contained in three manuscripts, totals roughly ten thousand words. Isaac Newton, Exposition of 2 Kings 17:15-16, Yahuda MS 21, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel; Exposition of 2 Kings 17:15-16, MS 130, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas; Part of an exposition of 2 Kings 17:15-17, Babson MS 437, The Babson College Grace K. Babson Collection of the Works of Sir Isaac Newton, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The material has not, to my knowledge, yet been treated in a published work.

\textsuperscript{60} Newton, Exposition, Yahuda MS 21, 1r.
utterly corrupted by the Israelite residents of Samaria. Indeed, the periodic prophetic revivals that have occurred throughout history are only possible because God manages to preserve his basic message in the face of the human propensity to idolatry. Newton concludes his exposition with the following observation: “Israel during all her abominations from first to last scarce ever forsook the true God absolutely but only corrupted his worship by mingling their own inventions with it as too many of our neighbouring christians dayly do.”61 For Newton the ubiquity of idolatry binds people from all ages together in a common predicament. This enables him to affirm that human history is, in fact, “universal.”

Newton’s voluminous reflections upon ecclesiastical history echo his reflections on ancient history. In his ecclesiastical reflections the religion of Christ stands in for the religion of Noah as the primal religion whose doctrines are infallibly true. The primary actor in the drama, however, is not Christ, but the Church, and the role the Church plays is the role Israel and the nations play in ancient history. For Newton, the history of the Church is the story of the gradual corruption of a primitive ideal. The episode in Church history that garners the most attention from Newton is the Arian controversies of the fourth century. In Westfall’s words, “The conviction began to possess him that a massive fraud, which began in the fourth and fifth centuries, had perverted the legacy of the early church. Central to the fraud were the Scriptures, which Newton began to believe had been corrupted to support trinitarianism.”62 As is well known, Athanasius plays the role of principle antagonist in this drama, but he is by no means, alone.

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61 Newton, Exposition, Babson MS 437, 2. Newton’s emphasis upon the ubiquity of idolatry both before and after Christ mutes his supercessionism.
Athanasius stands at the head of a vast horde of idolaters—Gnostic Jews, false converts from heathenism, overzealous monks, Trinitarian metaphysicians, power-mongering bishops, and superstitious Catholics. With each group the outcome is the same: the primitive simplicity of the gospel is obscured and ultimately replaced by something that is “really no gospel at all.”

Newton believes that unsavory men who “may deservedly be called the synagogue of Satan” infiltrated the apostolic church from its inception. In Newton’s mind,

a dayly flow of such converts into the Churches it could not be but that in a few years the hypocrites would be more then double or triple to the sincere not to say more then ten or twenty times their number. Now by this influx of fals converts the mystery of iniquity grew in these respects.

This reflection brings us back to Newton’s reflection upon the Assyrian exile. The Trinititarian controversies, like the exile, provoked a greater descent into idolatry, but like the exile, they cannot be seen as that which destroyed a primitive perfection that had endured for centuries preceding them. Judaism and Christianity were both poisoned at their inception. This suggests that the problem of decay is inherent in historicity. For Newton, the only place religious perfection exists is at the dawn of time,

63 For Newton, the “Corrupters of religion, ancient and modern, were legion; the contemporary papists and their antecedents, the pagan idolaters; the English sectarian enthusiasts—the new prophets—and their equivalents, the hallucinating monks of early Christianity; the Pharisical Jews who rejected Christ; contemporary deists and atheists like Hobbes and their ancient counterparts the theological Epicureans, for whom all was chance; and finally, the philosophers who mixed up metaphysics and religion, particularly the modern rationalist system-makers Descartes and Leibniz, and their predecessors the gnostics, Cabbalists, and Platonists. These were the enemies of Newton’s God.” Frank Manuel, The Religion of Isaac Newton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 21. In “Of the faith which was once delivered to the saints,” Newton claims that “system-building was pre-eminently responsible for the perversion of the only truly revealed religion, primitive Christianity.” Ibid, 22.
64 Galatians 1:7, New International Version. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the King James Version.
65 Isaac Newton, Fragment on the history of apostasy, Yahuda MS 18, 1v, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel.
with the divine mandates of Noachide religion. For Newton primitive religion is an ideal that allows him, as an enlightened philologist, to sift through the vicissitudes of history in order to distinguish the “fundamental & immutable” from the “circumstantial & mutable.” The power of history’s corrupting glare, however, is such that the immutable immediately gives way to the mutable, and the fundamental to the circumstantial.

The claim that Newton invariably reads history through a devolutionary lens is something that Manuel, the first great interpreter of Newton’s unpublished manuscripts, saw well. Manuel observed that

Most of Newton’s theological writings are devoted to exposing falsifiers of New Testament texts, prevaricators in Church Councils, corrupters of primitive natural religion, metaphysical befuddlers of the true relations between God and man.66

Newtonian history does not completely obscure primal truth, nor is it void of God’s providential oversight. Newton refuses to play the part of a primitivist who hurdles over the vicissitudes of history to reflect upon an Edenic pre-history. As a historian and theologian he gazes intently over the wreckage of human history to discern faint outlines of patterns and concepts, and he digs beneath the rubble in search of hidden gems of pristine knowledge. Newton chooses to do the work of the historian because he Newton believed that it was “Only through a circumstantial account of the degradation of the Church in a series of stages and its doctrinal deviation from the primitive creed could Christianity be stripped of its spurious accretions.”67 He mines the monuments of history because he believes they are the divinely appointed means of providing humans

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67 Ibid., 68.
access to *prisca theologia*. His great obstacle, however, is that the monuments of history do not merely tell the story of historical devolution; they are themselves subject to it.

**The Problem of Human Testimony**

The monuments of history are inherently problematic for Newton firstly on account of their origination as instantiated human testimony. As a philologist Newton refuses to take human testimony at face value and subjects it mercilessly to critical scholarship. Newton’s own intense conviction that human testimony must be subjected to criticism is helpfully understood through the lens of his work as Warden of the Mint (1696-1727), which entrusted him with the enormous responsibility of protecting the market from currency debasement. As Warden, Newton put his philological skills to practical use and he quickly became an expert at discerning the difference between counterfeit and genuine coins. Newton was just settling into this new job when he ran up against one of the criminal masterminds of the day, William Chaloner (d. 1699). Newton was forced to sift through a complex web of conflicting testimonies to bring Chaloner to justice, and the experience taught him he could trust nothing that came from human lips. Buchwald and Feingold suggest this experience intensified Newton’s skepticism concerning the trustworthiness of all human words, including words from the past: 68 “Newton grew astonishingly free in treating words from the past. He implicitly justified his occasionally extraordinary manipulations . . . by framing many statements as ‘poetical fictions,’ words that could not be trusted.” 69

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69 Ibid., 238.
Newton’s work on ancient chronology is probably the most well known aspect of his “non-scientific” output, largely due to Conduitt’s publication of *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdom’s Amended.* Both the published work and Newton’s numerous unpublished drafts and notes confirm that his primary aim is to establish the chronological priority, and therefore divine origin, of Israelite civilization. When Newton surveys ancient pagan chronologies he finds nothing but questionable logic and inaccurate tabulation: “The Greek Antiquities are full of poetical fictions;” “how uncertain their Chronology is, & how doubtful;” “And as for the chronology of the Latines, that is still more uncertain.” Concerning the Assyrians, their preeminent historian Ctesias “feigned a long series of kings of Assyria whose names are not Assyrian nor have any affinity with the Assyrian names in scripture.” And as for the Egyptians, their priests “had so magnified their antiquities before Herodotus, as to tell him that from Menes to Mæris . . . there were 330 kings whose reigns took up as many ages, that is eleven thousand years, & had filled up the interval with feigned kings who had done nothing.”

The problem of the inherent unreliability of ancient testimony is exacerbated for Newton by his refusal to rely on modern interpreters to help him sift through the

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70 Newton’s decision never to publish his historical scholarship is significant. This hesitancy can perhaps be interpreted as Newton’s implicit acknowledgement that he had failed to achieve the same degree of demonstrability in the historical sciences as he had achieved in the physical sciences.
71 Draft sections of the Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended are contained in the following manuscripts: Draft passages on chronology and biblical history, Yahuda MS 25, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel; Draft chapters of *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, Yahuda MS 26; Seven drafts of Newton’s defence of *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, Yahuda MS 27; Drafts of the ‘Short Chronicle’ and ‘Original of Monarchies.’ MS 361 (1). New College Library, Oxford, UK. Newton describes his object as follows: “I have drawn up the following Chronological table, so as to make Chronology suit with the Course of Nature, with Astronomy, with Sacred History, with *Herodotus* the Father of History, and with itself.” Newton, *The Chronology*, 8.
72 Ibid., 31r.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
wreckage of antiquity—presumably because they are equally subject to the corrupting forces that trouble human testimony. Seventeenth-century chronologists made their living by proposing novel schemes of world history. They were, however, careful to locate their work within the parameters set by Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) or James Ussher (1581-1656). Newton flatly dismisses these parameters. He moves the date of the flood back 577 years, cuts off about four centuries from Greek history, and shortens Egyptian history by six-hundred years, sometimes shifting forward established dates no less than eighteen-hundred years. He is thus “the first since Scaliger to propose a new system of technical chronology;” and like Scaliger he “boasted openly of having been the first to reveal the true epoch of the Olympiad.”

Markley sees Newton’s chronological scheme as an effort to move beyond what he “apparently sees as the conceptual dead end of relying on the Bible to secure both the meaningfulness of the history and the coherence of the natural world.” And Buchwald and Feingold conclude that he “followed Scaliger and Selden in considering pagan sources to have near parity with Scripture.” They therefore propose that Newton’s work “contributed to the eventual rejection of the hold of Scripture over

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77 Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 425.
79 Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 433.
chronology, a process initiated long before Newton by Joseph Scaliger.”80 It must be admitted, however, that Newton, like Ussher, sought to defend the chronology of the Masoretic Text over and against those offered by the Septuagint, and more generally, by the numerous unreliable accounts of pagan antiquity.81 Newton’s radical revisionism is an attempt to give Israel pride of place among ancient kingdoms. He fudges the date of the fall of Troy to establish the priority of Solomonic glory.82 He celebrates Israel’s political institutions as models for English constitutional government.83 And he seeks to establish, over and against Spencer and other renegade advocates of Egyptian priority, that the genealogy of *prisca theologia* passes from Jews to Phoenicia and Egypt, and only then on to Europe.84

In order to create a new chronological system Newton establishes a hierarchy of authority, pitting sources against one another in an attempt to secure a sure foundation: “Newton thereby reserved to himself the right to determine not just which historical sources were credible, but which parts of even these credible sources were nevertheless untrustworthy and to be discarded.”85 If Newton plays fast and loose with the words of Scripture—an accusation leveled against him even in his own day—he justifies his own deviations as necessary sins that establish the priority of Hebrew

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80 Ibid., 435.
83 Ibid., 226.
84 Ibid., 220.
85 Buchwald and Feingold, *Newton*, 221.
Scripture and Israelite civilization.\textsuperscript{86} Although Newton fights passionately to defend Hebrew Scripture, the supreme confidence he places in his own words, and the lack of confidence he places in Scriptural words may well have the effect of compromising Scriptural authority, as Markley, Buchwald, and Feingold maintain.

**Saving Language from History**

Because he is acutely aware of the difficulties inherent in the interpretation of ancient texts, Newton imposes rules of interpretation on them.\textsuperscript{87} Newton's rules, found at the beginning of an untitled treatise on Revelation from the 1670s and 1680s conceives of textual interpretation as the quest for simplicity.\textsuperscript{88} Newton seeks to “flatten out” language by eliminating all metaphorical and poetic elements.\textsuperscript{89} This quest for perspicuity led him to create a scheme for reformed spelling as well as various

\textsuperscript{86} Buchwald and Feingold claim that, “Fidelity to evidence often prompted Newton to depart from the Word of Scripture—or at least from common perception of what Biblical phrasing meant. He followed Scaliger and Selden in considering pagan sources to have near parity with Scripture when the history of gentile nations is recounted and, consequently, he felt free to supplement the spare biblical narrative with details drawn from myth or his imagination.” One example Buchwald and Feingold give in this respect is Newton’s insistence that the first world empire was in Egypt rather than Mesopotamia. Ibid., 433.

\textsuperscript{87} Although some have disputed Mamiani’s claim that Newton’s scientific method was forged as an application of his biblical hermeneutic to empirical study, Mamiani’s conclusion that Newton’s hermeneutical method has much in common with his experimental method is widely acknowledged. Newton’s opinion that Scripture and nature are to be interpreted with the same method comes from Barrow, according to Reedy. Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 56.

\textsuperscript{88} Newton articulates sixteen rules for the interpretation of prophetic language in Isaac Newton, Untitled Treatise on Revelation, Yahuda MS 1.1, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel, 12r. Kochavi crystallizes these 16 rules into 4 points: (1) the entire prophetic text must be treated as one homogenous structure; (2) the entire text must be decoded in minute detail; (3) the interpretation of prophetic revelation must be simple; (4) the interpreter must interpret the text with the aid of historic events. Matania Kochavi, “One Prophet Interprets Another: Sir Isaac Newton and Daniel,” in *Newton and Religion: Context, Nature, and Influence*, ed. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999), 109.

\textsuperscript{89} Snobelen describes this quest in theological terms. According to Snobelen Newton believes the simplicity of God guarantees the simplicity of his creation. Snobelen, “God of Gods,” 198-99.
alternative symbols and phonetic transcriptions that he hoped would contribute to the reformation of the English language.\textsuperscript{90}

Newton’s desire to overcome the deficiencies of human language is also evident in his attempt to create a universal language.\textsuperscript{91} Like many other universal language progenitors, Newton made Aristotelian taxonomy the foundation of his system because he hoped to create a language founded on the natures of things themselves.\textsuperscript{92} Curiously, Newton suddenly stopped this classification after 2400 entries. Elliot insists that Newton’s subsequent correspondence with Wilkins demonstrates that he did not immediately lose interest in his scheme, but there can be no doubt that Newton eventually decided there were more promising approaches to the problem of linguistic decrepitude. One such approach was based upon Newton’s engagement with the well-established conviction that correspondence between language and nature is to be found, not among the moderns, but among the ancients.

Although Newton believes that vernaculars are subject to the corruption of history, he retains the hope that esoteric knowledge could be extracted from ancient words. Like many of his contemporaries Newton is convinced that ancient philosophy was divided between the sacred and the mundane, and he believes that ancient sacred philosophy was esoteric, a secret system of ancient scholar-priests that preserved and


\textsuperscript{91} Mathematician and philosopher John Wilkins, one of the founders of the Royal Society, remarked that “There is scarce any subject that hath been more thoroughly scanned and debated amongst Learned men, than the \textit{Original of Languages and Letters}.” John Wilkins, \textit{An Essay Toward A Real Character, and a Philosophical Language} (London, 1668), 2. The introduction to Wilkins’ essay provides a helpful summary of the state of the question at that time. Scholars were so intent on finding or recreating the "original of languages" because of their belief that the form of history was one of decline. Newton’s interest in “the original of languages” must be placed alongside his interest in “the original of religions,” and “the original of monarchies” as but one component of his quest to overcome historical devolution.

transmitted Adamic knowledge through types and enigmas. Newton echoes Gerardus Vossius (1577-1649), Samuel Bochart (1599-1667), and John Marsham (1602-85) in portraying these scholar-priests in the Platonic mode of philosopher-kings appointed to protect *prisca theologia* from the barbaric masses. Following Vossius, Bochart, and Marsham, Newton also believes that they concealed their insights within obscure myths and hieroglyphs.

Newton applies the distinction between sacred and profane to both ancient pagan texts and to the bible. Newton’s engagement with the bible suggests that he believes much of the bible is a desolate wasteland, and that only select parts can be mined for the precious ore of sacred wisdom. If the notes Newton scribbled in the margins of his own bible are any indication as to his belief in the location of this sacred wisdom, it could almost be argued that Newton believed that *only* Daniel and Revelation contain *prisca theologia*. Newton’s willingness to treat Scripture as an unequal witness is also confirmed by his belief that the Hebrew language is uniquely endued with divine qualities. Newton believes that the Hebrew tongue contains deep secrets concerning the divine order of nature. There is some question as to whether Hutchinson ultimately regards Hebrew characters to be expendable since he regards

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93 Knoespel, "Interpretive," 188.
95 John Harrison concludes that the bible, which appears to have been Newton’s personal bible, contains "Numerous notes and biblical reference by Newton throughout and esp. at Daniel and Revelation." John Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 101. Paul Greenham, who studied Newton’s bible at Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge, confirmed this point to me in private conversation. Greenham related that the books of Daniel and Revelation are crammed with marginal notes and the pages show extensive use, and that the same cannot be said of the other biblical books.
96 Scholars question Newton’s proficiency in Hebrew; Goldish, for instance, supports John Hutchinson’s claim that Newton lacked proficiency in Hebrew. Goldish, *Judaism*, 55. See Chapter Three, note 121.
them as lifeless husks that envelop kernels of truth. There can be no doubt, however, that Newton’s approach pushes forcefully in this direction.

Newton’s fascination with Hebrew, however, is muted by his interest in what he calls “prophetic language.” For Newton prophetic language stands in for the lost *prima lingua* as that which alone is able to achieve exact correspondence between words and things. It also constitutes, therefore, the language that has the most direct access to divine knowledge. Newton regards as prophetic any word or phrase that conceals yet preserves truth from history: "John did not write in one language, Daniel in another, Isaiah in a third & the rest in other peculiar to themselves; but they all wrote in one & the same mystical language." Prophetic language therefore transcends, and is arguably indifferent to linguistic particulars. The Hebrew tongue is ultimately of no particular importance to Newton. Hebrew, Greek, and presumably Aramaic characters are all potentially “prophetic.” And in each case the kernel of esoteric knowledge is extracted from its hieroglyphic husk, and then the husk is discarded. Thus, when Newton interprets the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation he begins with a dizzying array of prophetic images, but he manages to convert them into something radically different: a series of dates.

Newton is ultimately unsatisfied with a biblical hermeneutic that simply translates esoteric wisdom into the contemporary idiom. He is, as we have seen, consistent in his historicism. He gives over to history not merely pagan texts, but also the bible itself. But for Newton, the problem isn’t just that all texts are suspect because

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97 Isaac Newton, Two incomplete treatises on prophecy, Keynes MS 5, 1r, King’s College, Cambridge, UK. Newton says that this language was known to the "sons of the Prophets as the Hieroglyphic language of the Egyptians."
they are subject to the manipulations and mistakes of human authors and transcribers. The problem with textual evidence, Newton maintains, is more fundamental still: for Newton, “Language . . . must distort by virtue of its nature from the very moment of utterance.”98 Newton therefore seeks to render truth in a form that is not subject to the vicissitudes of history, and this quest leads him away from the vernacular, away from universal language, and away even from prophetic language to mathematics.

**Saving Scripture Through Mathematics**

Elliot speculates that Newton may have ultimately left his universal language “unfinished because of the pressure of other concerns, especially the mathematical studies to which he devoted himself at Cambridge.”99 Elliot rightly wishes to affirm the continued importance of linguistic studies to Newton, but he is unable to overcome the dualism inherent in positivist readings of Newton since he draws a stark line between Newton’s mathematical interests and his linguistic work. Markley overcomes this bifurcation in his seminal work *Fallen Languages*. Like Elliot, Markley suggests Newton’s work betrays a gradual movement away from linguistic to mathematical studies. Markley, however, maintains that Newton sees mathematics itself as a language.100 This enables Harrison to trace the contours of a “single” Newton: Newton

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100 Markley’s analysis is consistent with traditional interpretations inasmuch as it admits that Newton held that mathematical knowledge was superior to historical knowledge, but it challenges them by insisting that the division between mathematical and historical cannot be neatly mapped onto Newton’s “scientific” and theological works. Since it affirms that mathematical knowledge is the goal of both his “scientific” and theological studies, it gives preference to Newton the “scientist,” but because it makes the problem of devolutionary history the grounds upon which both areas of his work are established, it grounds his “scientific” work in deeper theological concerns.
the philosopher of language. According to Markley Newton turns to mathematical language to grant him the certainty that human language is impotent to provide.\textsuperscript{101} Newton’s view that human language obscures divine truth is but one aspect of his struggle with historical contingency. For Newton human language is “fallen” because it is subject to history. Newton seeks to stabilize the historical record by binding human language to mathematical truth, and he does this by mathematizing \textit{prisca theologia}.

In his article “Newton: The Classical Scholia,” Casini argues that Newton’s retrieval of \textit{prisca theologia} is fundamentally different from that of Henry More (1614-87), Ralph Cudworth (1617-88), and the theosophic tradition. Casini argues that Newton’s unpublished “Classical Scholia”—which were intended for publication alongside propositions located in Book III of the \textit{Principia}—belong to a particular strand of the larger tradition of \textit{prisca theologia} which he calls “Copernican.”\textsuperscript{102} Like Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and their followers, Newton “understood the progress of astronomy as being also a reversion towards propositions comprehended intuitively by the Ancients.”\textsuperscript{103} For Newton, therefore, the process of interpretation of ancient texts

\textsuperscript{101} Harrison agrees with Markley on this account. According to Harrison, “The identification of mathematics as a language of nature was the final stage in the imposition of the new ordering principles to which physical objects were subject. It represents, on the one hand, the last stage in the evacuation of meaning from the natural world, and on the other the triumph of mathematical physics.” Peter Harrison, \textit{The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 262.

\textsuperscript{102} Although Newton consistently claims to revere classical learning, his distrust of historical testimony translates into a consistent reluctance to acknowledge his debt to other authors. As Casini puts it, Newton’s writings are “sparing of historical recollections or references; whether because of a precise methodological choice, or because of a reluctance to make known thoughts not expressed in a clear mathematical form.” Paolo Casini, “Newton: The Classical Scholia,” \textit{History of Science} 22, no. 1 (1984): 1.

\textsuperscript{103} Casini, “Newton,” 10. Newton believed that the Noachides were in possession of his knowledge of universal gravitation, and in the 1680s he resolved to write a great treatise in which all his mathematical conquests would harmoniously coexist with the mathematics of the ancients. Massimo Galuzzi, “Newton’s attempt to construct a unitary view of mathematics,” \textit{Historia Mathematica} 37 (2010): 548.
often becomes the activity of deciphering the intentional “encoding activity” of the Ancients.104

Newton’s biblical interpretation can equally be seen as part of his quest to extract kernels of mathematical truth concealed beneath the husk of human testimony. A case in point is Newton’s mathematical study of Solomon’s temple. Following Italian interpreter Juan Baptista Villalpando (1552-1608), Newton argues that Solomon’s temple and Ezekiel’s temple are one and the same, and he labours to reconcile their Scriptural accounts by rationalizing discrepancies as textual corruptions.105 Given that Newton believes that Ezekiel presents the most mathematically accurate description of the temple, he fudges the numbers given in 2 Kings. Newton also recognizes, however, that Ezekiel’s rendering of the temple is obscure and incomplete, and he therefore rationalizes and supplements even Ezekiel’s measurements.106

Newton's interest in biblical measurements is twofold. First, since the measurements contain mathematical data, they are relatively resistant to the corruptions that normally afflict human language. Second, Newton believes the temple is a microcosm of the universe. Since the structure of the universe is mathematical, the revelation of its structure must also be given in mathematical form. Newton’s interest in

104 Ibid., 10-11. Newton doesn’t explicitly say why the ancients encoded their knowledge, but it likely relates to their desire to protect it from the barbaric masses and transmit it to posterity.
105 Tessa Morrison, Isaac Newton’s Temple of Solomon and his Reconstruction of Sacred Architecture (Basel: Springer Basel, 2011), 39-40. Newton believes Ezekiel’s description of the temple is the most accurate description of Solomon’s temple found in Scripture, but he admits that it is not free from corruption. Ibid., 74.
106 Newton’s most prolonged engagement with the problem of the measurements of the temple is MS Babson 0434, which also includes what Morrison calls “a meticulous study of the cubit to further understand the dimensions of the temple.” Newton’s discussion here is reminiscent of Bentley’s work on the fledging discipline of Numiscences. Ibid., 62. See also, Isaac Newton, “Dissertation upon the Sacred Cubit of the Jews and the Cubits of the Several Nations,” 405-33 in John Greaves, Miscellaneous Works of Mr. John Greaves (London, 1737); Drafts concerning Solomon’s temple and the sacred cubit, Yahuda MS 2.4, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel; Of the temple & synagogues of the Jews, Yahuda MS 26.3, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel.
measurements is apologetically motivated. Newton’s decipherment of the complex web of conflicting numbers demonstrates the accordance of the Scriptural testimony with the structure of the universe, and thereby establishes Scriptural authority upon the surest foundation of all: nature. Manuel complains that Newton

had precious little interest in historical character or motivation. To know a quantity and an exact date was one of the ultimate goals of his realistic history. In the end his passion for factual detail shriveled the past to a chronological table and a list of place names. His history was sparse; specific as a businessman’s ledger, it allowed for no adornments, no excess. It had the precisianism of the Puritan and his moral absolutism; existence was stripped to a bony framework. The world had been full of deceivers—the lying chronologists, ancient and modern, and the fraudulent Athanasian Church Fathers. In separating the true from the false in myth, in the Gospel, in Greek and Roman historians, Newton was performing God’s work.”

If Newton is guilty of doing this, however, he certainly wasn’t the first.

The simplification of linguistic data and the translation of this data into mathematical syntax are fundamental to chronological science. Renaissance chronologists, however, were rarely satisfied with abstract numbers. They sought to ground their mathematical conclusions in natural philosophical structures. This accounts for the great interest that seventeenth-century chronologers had in astronomical science. Christopher Wren (1632-1723), for instance, observed that, “theology admits her debt to astronomy,” through chronology. Newton came to see

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108 The difficulty that Renaissance chronologers had is that there was no established method to determine which numbers were to be selected from the heap of ancient sources, sources that often contradicted not merely each other, but themselves. For a study of the relationship between biblical chronology and mathematics in the Renaissance see Nicolas Popper, “‘Abraham, Planter of Mathematics’: Histories of Mathematics and Astrology in Early Modern Europe,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 1 (2006): 87-106.
110 Quoted in Buchwald and Feingold, *Newton*, 118.
his appeal to astronomy as that which confirmed the certainty of his chronological scheme.\footnote{Throughout his work Newton sought to distinguish between mathematical demonstration and plausible conjecture. For example, once Newton established “when the Egyptians had embarked on astronomical observations, Newton felt secure in explaining why such interest arose among them.” Ibid., 429. Isaac Newton, Papers relating to chronology and ‘Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae,’ New College MS 361 (3), fols. 63, 129.} Bernard Fontenelle (1657-1757) thus observed that,

The principal Point of Sir Isaac Newton’s System of Chronology, as it appears by this Extract, is, by following some faint Traces of the ancient Greek Astronomy, to find out the Position of the Equinoctial Colour, with regard, to the fixed Stars, in the Time of Chiron the Centaur.\footnote{Quoted in Rob Iliffe, Early Biographies of Isaac Newton, 1660-1865 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 23.}

Fontenelle’s observation is crystallized in Newton’s declaration that, "The surest arguments for determining times past are those taken from Astronomy."\footnote{Newton, Papers relating, 166r.}

Newton’s biblical apologetic is dominated by his appeal to the mathematical structures of nature. Buchwald and Feingold observe that Newton holds that “the best kinds of ancient words were ones that could be turned into numbers,” but he also holds that the best numbers are those that were never subject to linguistic forms because they were derived from nature itself.\footnote{Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 244. Buchwald and Feingold describe Newton’s hierarchy of certainty as follows. He regards the “securely produced number,” numbers taken from his experiments, with utmost confidence. Next, are numbers “whose reliability was uncertain.” These include astronomical observations extracted from ancient testimony. And finally, the least reliable numbers are those taken from “purely textual remarks.” Ibid., 283. Newton’s desire to ground numerical data in astronomical data suggests that he did not entirely let go of the Aristotelian view that the stars are inherently stable since they stand above and beyond the world of human flux.} On one hand, Newton can be interpreted as a rationalist, as he holds that mathematical certainties are true independent of human experience. On the other hand, he is an empiricist inasmuch as the mathematical structures he seeks to discern are found in nature. Newton believes his biblical chronology is certain because his computations are astronomically grounded.
Interpretations that set in opposition Newton's appeal to nature and his appeal to mathematics are therefore questionable.115

Mathematics and Corruption

Newton appeals to mathematics in his work on the Old Testament because he believes mathematical truths stand outside of the realm of human corruption. His Old Testament apologetic therefore depends upon his ability to make that which is subject to history (the Old Testament) the purveyor of that which is not (mathematical truth). I argue that Newton turned to mathematics to provide him with the certainty that human language fails to provide, not because he rejects the doctrine of original sin, but because he believes the severity of the human ailment is such that it corrupts all historically contingent knowledge.116 For Newton mathematical structures of nature provide demonstrable certainty because they were divinely instituted prior to Adam’s fall, and are therefore not subject to it.

Peter Harrison’s The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Modern Science discusses a number of important empiricists including Bacon, Boyle, Glanville, Hooke and Locke who reject Calvinist dogma but uphold a belief in original sin. Given Newton’s location, both within the Royal Society, and the Latitudinarian establishment, he would appear to be a likely candidate for such a position. This however, is an option Harrison emphatically rejects. According to Harrison Newton is a rationalist, not an empiricist.

115 Manuel finds that the use of mathematics and empirical data allows Newton to draw together diverse strands of knowledge into a single tradition of prisca sapientia: "by using new mathematical notations and an experimental method he combined the knowledge of the priest-scientists of the earliest nations, of Israel’s prophets, of the Greek mathematicians, and of the medieval alchemists." Manuel, The Religion, 23.
116 The only place I have found where Newton discusses the doctrine of original sin is the fragment “Of the temple & synagogues of the Jews.” Newton’s view may be idiosyncratic, but he takes very seriously the Augustinian notion that sin is passed on from generation to generation. Newton, Of the temple, 4r.
This conclusion enables Harrison to present Newton as a thinker who, unlike Bacon and the empiricists, wasn’t much troubled by the epistemological effects of the fall.¹¹⁷ Admittedly, Newton’s epistemology has far more in common with that of René Descartes than it does with probabilists like Blaise Pascal, despite the fact that Newton wrote his *Principia* to subvert Descartes’ *Principia*.

Newton’s new laws of motion, however, are clearly meant to replace Descartes’ laws of nature.¹¹⁸ Newton’s chief complaint is that Descartes’ analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative, and therefore lacks specificity of reference.¹¹⁹ Newton sees mathematical knowledge as knowledge that can be assigned to particular objects through a quantitative analysis that maps spatial possibilities onto nature because he believes nature is a geometrically organized whole.¹²⁰ In Newton’s mind Descartes is guilty of providing vain “hypotheses” because he fails to substantiate his mathematical claims in this manner. In other words, Newton’s opposition to Descartes is driven by his empiricism.¹²¹ In the preface to the first edition of the *Principia* he boasts that in setting

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¹¹⁷ Harrison highlights that Newton’s quest to mathematize knowledge was consistent with Descartes’ rationalist project because it sought to overcome the probabilistic certainties of empirical knowledge. Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 237.


¹¹⁹ In Dear’s estimation Newton was right to criticize Descartes, for although his explanation has “the force of mathematical demonstration,” it “entirely ignores quantities.” For Dear Descartes’ appeal to mathematics is merely a “convenient cultural association that lends an air of authority to an argument.” Peter Dear, *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 212.


¹²¹ Although Newton’s project can be described in Cartesian terms as an attempt to lay a mathematical foundation of knowledge, this must not be allowed to obscure an even deeper association, Newton’s association with Galileo Galilei and Johannes Kepler. Galileo and Kepler, like Descartes, seek to
forth the “mathematical principles” of natural philosophy he will succeed where others have failed, and Englishmen quickly came to believe that he had fulfilled his promise. John Craig’s (1663-1731) ode to Newton is entirely characteristic: "Astronomy remain’d still in the dark till the immortal Newton gave us his Philosophical Principles of Natural Philosophy. Now we know by mathematical Demonstrations that the Sun is the center of our System." The view that Newton had made disobedient nature subject to mathematics established mechanics as the foundation of all physical sciences, and by the end of the century it was possible to endorse “Newtonianism” as the mathematical demonstration that the universe is self-regulating.

“mathematize” knowledge. Their complaint with the scholasticism of the day is not that it lacks an empirical component but that it does not have the tools to render empirical knowledge mathematical. They believe, in other words, that the way to “mathematize” knowledge is to "mathematize" nature. Newton’s own work should be interpreted along these lines. Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 10.

122 Newton, The Mathematical, 382.

123 Slaughter finds that Newton’s Principia "put an end to the debate between the empirics and the atomists and completed the rejection of Aristotle. Newton’s work demonstrated that (scientific) knowledge is gained not through empiricism alone, but through empirical observation in combination with mathematics. Newton formulated the hypothetico-deductive method where demonstration is achieved through mathematical physics . . . With Newton’s system, the end of science is redefined, not as the discovery of the nature of things but the prediction of their behavior regardless of whether their natures are known or not. With the rejection of the Aristotelian paradigm of science, classification could no longer be seen as means of explaining and representing the nature of nature. Taxonomy was supplanted by mathematics as the method and the language of science." Slaughter, Universal, 194.

124 John Craig, A letter to an unidentified recipient, 7 April 1727, Keynes MS 132, King’s College, Cambridge, UK.


In his important study on the role of mathematics in the scientific revolution, Dear concludes that Newton believes “physico-mathematics” or “mixed mathematics” is “applicable to all areas of natural philosophy, insofar as all parts of physics implicated considerations of quantity.”\textsuperscript{126} Dear maintains that Newton’s method represents a movement away from “making experience” to “making experience in order to establish physico-mathematical justifications.”\textsuperscript{127} It must equally be said, however, that quantity is inherently important to Baconian empiricists.\textsuperscript{128} Newton’s emphasis upon mathematical demonstration should therefore not be taken to exclude him from among Harrison’s Augustinian empiricists.

For Harrison, one of the hallmarks of this tradition is a deep skepticism concerning the reliability of the senses. Harrison therefore identifies Bacon’s \textit{desideratum} for improved instruments such as microscopes and telescopes as grounded in the conviction that artificial assistance for the senses is necessary in the postlapsarian world.\textsuperscript{129} Newton must be located in this tradition of skeptical empiricists, since he followed Bacon both in questioning the reliability of the sense and in dedicating himself to the creation of improved instrumentation.\textsuperscript{130} This being said, Newton’s own position intensifies that of Bacon and his professed disciples. Take Hooke,

\textsuperscript{126} Dear, \textit{Discipline}, 223. Dear argues that this view can be placed squarely at the feet of Newton’s mentor, Isaac Barrow.
\textsuperscript{127} Dear argues that this represents a movement away from “relying on patterns of gentlemanly conduct for its integrity” to relying upon “associated academic status or established disciplinary practices.” Ibid., 248.
\textsuperscript{128} In 1660 John Wilkins described the business of the Royal Society as “physico-Mathematical-Experimentall Learning.” Quoted in Dear, \textit{Discipline}, 2. The fundamental integration of mathematics and experimental science of was brought home for me when I visited to Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Each development in scientific instrumentation was designed to achieve more precise quantitative analysis than its predecessor. The various scientific instruments exhibited at the Ashmolean lend the conclusion that the Holy Grail of the seventeenth-century experimentalist was mathematical exactitude.
\textsuperscript{129} Harrison, \textit{The Fall}, 175.
\textsuperscript{130} Newton was, after all, inducted into the Royal Society on account of his improved telescope.
for example: for Hooke a good telescope is necessary because the human eye is limited in its observational powers. But for Newton, the human eye is not merely limited but also flawed.\footnote{The Newtonian revolution in optics can therefore be attributed to this intensification of the tradition. Then again, Bacon himself observed that, “In the first place, the impressions of the sense itself are faulty, for the sense both fails and deceives us.” Francis Bacon, Novum Organum: Or True Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature (London, 1620), LXX.} Newton goes well beyond previous attempts to assist the eye through improved instrumentation in his famed optical experiments by manipulating the eye \textit{itself} in order to investigate how this alters sensory data.\footnote{Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 36.} Newton was the first to recognize that colours that appear identical may in fact only be sensibly so. He believes that the eye is irreparably deceptive, and therefore must not be relied upon to judge the physical characteristics of light.\footnote{Ibid., 87-89.}

That Newton’s own empirical approach is an intensification of Baconian skepticism is also clearly seen in Newton’s approach to measurement. Newton performs his experiments repeatedly, tabulates the results, and then calculates the mean of all the numbers he has collected. Buchwald and Feingold describe the function of the mean in Newtonian computation as “the weapon with which he slew the inevitable dragons of sensual error.”\footnote{Ibid., 93.} It must equally be said, however, that Newton’s empirical method can be interpreted as an acknowledgement that sensual error can \textit{never} be overcome.

Whereas Boyle, Hooke, and other members of the Royal Society kept refining their measurement techniques in the hope of acquiring a single measurement that achieved
perfect accuracy, Newton recognized that the best he could hope for was approximation.\textsuperscript{135}

Harrison rightly observes that the importance of experiments ultimately becomes somewhat muted in Newton’s method. As Snobelen puts it, Newton boasts that he has “proved everything by geometry and only made use of experiments to make them intelligible and convince the vulgar.”\textsuperscript{136} Harrison interprets this conviction as Newton’s rejection of the empiricist tradition. If Newton ultimately steps outside of the empiricist tradition however, it is not because he minimizes the powers of original sin but because he intensifies the Baconian position by conceding that postlapsarian sensual limitations can never be overcome. Newton maintains that in a fallen world senses are rendered inherently “weak, unreliable, and inadequate to probe the hidden structure of phenomena.”\textsuperscript{137} When Newton celebrates the certainty of his own findings in relation to the hapless hypotheses of Cartesians and the groundless speculations of the scholastics, he certainly sounds like a rationalist. His conviction that he occupies a privileged position as an interpreter of divine mysteries likewise implies that he ignores the epistemological consequences of the fall. Nevertheless, Newton’s confidence in mathematical demonstration must ultimately be attributed to the fact that he


\textsuperscript{137} Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 89.
believes mathematical structures exist outside of human history, and are therefore not subject to corruption.  

The founding fathers of the empirical method placed a strong emphasis on divine inspiration and personal experience because they understood that their experiments were located within the contingent realm of experience. This circumspect acknowledgement is the basis of their emphasis on the precariousness of all postlapsarian experimentation. It equally serves to explain, however, why Newton believed “he had proved everything by geometry and only made use of experiments to make them intelligible and convince the vulgar.” Experiments could not possibly serve as the foundation of his natural philosophical system: how could they, since human experience is always subject to corruption? As Dear puts it, Newton believed that "A knowledge of past events was not true knowledge; a knowledge of the current state of affairs was itself mere history." What Newton needed, and what he believed he found in mathematics was an epistemological foundation that was not subject to the vicissitudes that marked the experiential realm. Newton regards the touch of fallen

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138 Newton’s view clearly echoes Bacon and Locke. In *Novum Organon* Bacon remarked that the “faulty meaning of words cast their rays . . . on the mind itself.” In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke suggested that, “the very nature of words makes it almost unavoidable for many of them to be doubtful and uncertain in their significations.” Quoted in Buchwald and Feingold., 243. Buchwald and Feingold observe that Newton’s hierarchical ordering of the trustworthiness of human testimonies is closely related to a hierarchical ordering of different types of testimony. At one end of the spectrum is “the securely produced number;” next in line is the number “whose reliability was uncertain,” and least reliable is “the purely textual remarks” that he finds in the sources he reads. This astute observation is open to misinterpretation. For Newton, the devolution from certainty to uncertainty takes the form of the movement away from the mathematical to the linguistic. Ibid. This does not mean, however, that some numbers that are inherently inferior to others. *All* numbers are inherently stable but the stability of some numbers has been obscured by the extent of their engagement with human history, which is why Newton believes in the superiority of astronomical data. Astronomical data are to be preferred because they are derived from the mathematical structures of nature rather than from history.

139 Harrison points out that many Renaissance thinkers treated the terms "experimental" and "experiential" synonymously. Harrison, *The Fall*, 132.

140 Dear, *Discipline*, 11.
humans as inherently corrupt and corrupting. If human sin plays such a decisive role in Newton’s linguistic and historical studies, how could it play no part in his “scientific” work? Harrison’s interpretation ultimately falls back onto traditional dualistic renderings of Newtonian psychology. Medusa rears her ugly head once again: Newton the rationalist ignores the problem of human sin in his “scientific” work but is secretly consumed by it in his private theological musings.

Newton’s appeal to mathematics demonstrates he is consistently troubled by epistemological problems associated with human sin. Newton’s solution to these problems is to translate human experience into mathematical syntax. Whether alone in the laboratory or pouring over ancient manuscripts,

Newton strove to convert fallible human information into quantified knowledge based on reliable numerical data. For Newton, numbers were what counted: words were slippery, as suspect as the stories dreamt up by the counterfeiters he persecuted at the Mint.141

Nevertheless, the point isn’t just that Newton turns to mathematics to resolve his epistemological quandaries in both areas of his thought, natural philosophy and theology. The point is that Newton is driven by the same question in both domains: how can human experience be rendered as the bearer of divine truth? As Markley puts it, Newton’s "fragmentary universal history becomes the analog of his scientific efforts to uncover the means to reclaim humankind from corruption."142

Conclusion

Newton passionately believes that the natural world and human history are both subject to divine governance. His remarkable success in demonstrating God’s governance of the natural world through his mathematization of natural law can be appropriately described as “mathematizing providence.” He anticipated that a similar demonstration in the realm of human history could be achieved through the same process of mathematization. This accounts for the strategies of providential discernment outlined in this chapter: Newton’s concerted efforts to translate biblical idiom into chronological data, his intense interest in the measurements of the temple, and his mathematical interpretation of *prisca sapientia*. It must be emphasized, however, that Newton’s devolutionary philosophy of history was not merely what provoked these efforts. It provided a conceptual framework that enabled them to be presented as mechanisms of providential discernment. For example, Newton’s mathematical demonstration that Israel is the first civilization carries no providential import until it is located within Newton’s larger devolutionary scheme.

Iliffe remarks that when Newton died in March 1727, “there was feverish activity to record, describe, explain and praise Newton’s life and works.”\(^\text{143}\) Newton was heralded as

The greatest of Philosophers, and the Glory of the British Nation. Who by the Strength and Compass of his Genius, the vast Extent of his Capacities, and the Depth of his Judgement, together with the indefatigable Diligence and Application, has given greater Light to Philosophy, than all the Industry of former Ages.

\(^{143}\) Iliffe, *Early*, xii.
Newton’s reputation rested entirely on the success of his “scientific” endeavours. Mist’s Weekly Journal boasted that Newton,

> By his subtil Speculations, and uncommon Penetration in the Principles into the Principles of Things, has discovered to the World, and established upon the undeniable evidence of Demonstration, what was once look’d upon as dark and inexplicable, and beyond the Limits of human Knowledge. Who by the most accurate Reasonings and Deductions has traced out the abstrusest Causes, solved the most difficult Phaenomena, and laid down such incomparable Rules and Propositions as may hereafter be the Foundation of new Improvements and Discoveries.\(^\text{144}\)

The elevation of Newton to the status of immortal genius contributed to the elevation of empirical science as that which alone could grant infallible certainty.

Conduitt’s controversial decision to publish Newton’s The Chronology of Ancient Kingdom’s Amended the year after his death, however, made things difficult for Newton’s disciples and eulogizers.\(^\text{145}\) There was considerable public interest in the manuscript, but when it was published the reviews were mixed.\(^\text{146}\) Some of Newton’s allies defended and even praised the work. Many others, such as Newton’s erstwhile confident Whiston, vigorously attacked it.\(^\text{147}\) One of the central issues in the ensuing

\(^{144}\) A letter reacting to Newton’s death from Mist’s Weekly Journal, Keynes MS 129.13, King’s College, Cambridge, UK.

\(^{145}\) Newton had aimed to establish the same certainty in his historical studies that he had established in his “scientific” studies. One of the reasons he did not publish his historical studies was his fear of controversy. But the fact that Newton seemed to be continually revising his historical studies also suggests he withheld publication because he was never fully satisfied with them.

\(^{146}\) Buchwald and Feingold, Newton, 331.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 352. Whiston summarily dismissed The Chronology as Newton’s own curious invention, based partly on “historical Authors; but partly, upon the Poetick Stories of Mythologists laid together by himself; and partly, nay principally, upon fond Notions, Vehement Inclinations, and Hypotheses of his own.” Unlike Newton’s natural philosophical work, his chronology is “an Imaginary or Romantick Scheme . . . built upon no manner of real foundation whatsoever.” William Whiston, A Collection of Authentick Records Belonging to the Old and New Testaments (London, 1728), 962-64. Quoted in James Force, William Whiston: Honest Newtonian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 141. Although interest in historical chronology was already on the wane at the time of publication, Katz calls Newton’s work, “a minor bombshell.” Katz, God’s Last, 101. It is probably taking things too far to speak, as Buchwald and Feingold do, of a “war on Newton” in England. If there was a war on Newton, it was surely in France. Newton’s system was diametrically opposed to those of two of France’s brightest lights, René-
controversy was whether the historical disciplines could, in fact, be successfully mathematized.\textsuperscript{148}

Buchwald and Feingold conclude that although “Newton’s greatest legacy was the conviction that, in principle, every natural phenomenon can be described by a mathematical law . . . he failed in his attempt to extend mathematical dominion over human civilization.” The question many scholars found themselves asking in the wake of this disappointment was, “If even Newton was wrong, what could be hoped by those who laboured after him?”\textsuperscript{149} This perceived failure of Newton’s chronological system unwittingly contributed to the separation of “sciences” and “humanities” which proved fertile soil for the development of positivism.\textsuperscript{150} In the 1690s John Locke had already recognized that “Newton had achieved a level of demonstrative rigor that was probably inimitable in spheres outside natural philosophy.”\textsuperscript{151} As we shall see in the next chapter of this work, Newton’s admirers were nevertheless quite eager to try. One thing, however, that they were quite unwilling to do was to follow Newton in his quest to generate mathematical knowledge from the Old Testament.

\textsuperscript{148} Jean Hardouin, for instance, “disapproved altogether of geometers and mathematicians invading the precincts of history.” Ibid., 379. In the long run, however, the \textit{philosophes} came to agree with Newton that history could be made “scientific” by means of making it subject to rational inquiry. Peter Gay, \textit{The Science of Freedom}, vol. 2, \textit{The Enlightenment: An Interpretation} (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), 378. Many eighteenth-century historians, such as Edward Gibbon, believed that mathematics could play an important role in this development. See F. P. Lock, \textit{The Rhetoric of Numbers in Gibbon’s History} (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2012).

\textsuperscript{149} Quoted in Fara, ”Newton,” 327.

\textsuperscript{150} Newton’s work was part of a larger trend, which is helpfully discerned through the study of the semantic shift of the term \textit{historia}. In the Renaissance \textit{historia} was an umbrella term that included both natural history and classical history. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, natural history was taken to be part of physics rather than history. Brian Ogilvie, ”Natural History, Ethics, and Physico-theology,” in \textit{Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe}, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy Siraisi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 98.

Newton defended the Old Testament as a tool that could demonstrate the providential order of history, but his appeal to mathematical natural philosophical structures as the basis of providential order ultimately made implausible and unnecessary his appeal to the Old Testament. The problem Newton bequeathed his disciples, however, wasn’t just that his work led many to doubt that, as a historical document, the Old Testament could generate mathematical knowledge. The problem was that his disciples took for granted Newton’s assumption that authentic knowledge is, if not mathematical, then at least natural philosophical in orientation. Thus, while thinkers such as Hutchinson might well have argued that the Old Testament was a valuable religious text, able to offer spiritual guidance for daily life, they took for granted that what was required was an intellectually rigorous defense of the Old Testament, which could only be achieved by demonstrating its accordance with natural philosophy. If the natural philosopher was bound to be disappointed by Newton’s performance, the devout Christian even more so. Newton offered those seeking to live their lives in conformity with God’s governance very little in the way of assistance. The full extent of this failure becomes crystal clear in the work of Clarke, Newton’s closest disciple.
SAMUEL CLARKE

In 1990 Peter Harrison remarked that, “For all of the deists, and for many rationalistic divines as well, the fundamental theological question of the age of reason was how revealed religion was related to natural religion.”¹ Recent work on natural theology in the early Enlightenment has confirmed, however, that interest in the relationship between natural and revealed religion was not confined to progressive thinkers. In 2009 Wayne Hudson argued that by the 1730s the crucial issue for British Christians, in general, was "whether Christianity was to be understood as a universal law of nature or as a historically positive religion."² For leading Anglican divine and philosopher Dr. Samuel Clarke, the answer is clear: Christianity—and specifically, the Reformed Church of England—is the nearest approximation to natural religion that can anywhere be found. Clarke emphasizes the importance of conformity with natural religion because he believes that the principles of natural religion, like mathematical laws of nature, are certain, demonstrable, and immutable. He therefore devalues outward expressions of human religion as the mere husk that conceals the kernel of true religion, principles of natural religion grounded in these universal laws. When Clarke applies this conviction to his reading of biblical and ecclesiastical history, he

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finds that the religious observances of Old Testament Judaism and Catholicism hindered Jews and Catholics from following the true light of nature.\(^3\)

As a mathematician Newton sifts through human testimony to extract quantitative data, but for Clarke the logician, the term “mathematical” becomes synonym with “consistent with reason” or “consistent with natural law.”\(^4\) For Clarke, therefore, mathematics becomes an evaluative tool that can be applied to all human testimony, even testimony void of quantitative data. Doctrines and texts that fail the test of mathematical certainty are rejected as products of human idolatry that are void of providential import. The two great failures in this respect are Trinitarian doctrine and Old Testament religion. Having rejected Newton’s attempt to mathematize the Old Testament, Clarke creates a fourfold dispensational scheme, which passes from the establishment of natural religion to its Israelite devolution, to the establishment of revealed religion to its Trinitarian devolution. Within this scheme the New Testament is celebrated as the revealed articulation of the immutable principles of natural religion, which is monotheistic rather than Trinitarian, but the Old Testament, encumbered as it is by human religious accretions, is given over to devolutionary history and its status as Christian Scripture is thereby thoroughly compromised.

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\(^3\) In the hands of Picart and Bernard this approach was famously applied to the religious observances of the known religions of the world. See Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010).

\(^4\) Clarke’s appeal, like that of Descartes, is largely void of quantitative analysis, and in this Newton’s criticism applies equally to him.
English Spiritualism and the Status of the Old Testament

The status of the Old Testament in England was severely compromised at the beginning of the eighteenth-century, and I maintain that Clarke should be placed at the centre of this development. Christopher Hill's *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* highlights the central role that the Old Testament played in the mid-seventeenth-century ferment, and his analysis suggests that it was the status of the Old Testament, rather than the bible as a whole, that was diminished by this complicity. For the divines of the Restoration settlement, the New Testament was seen to offer an amenable alternative to the theocratic vision of the Old Testament, for it taught, as Hill points out, that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world. It was, therefore, a spiritualist

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5 Hill argues this “breaking of the absolute authority of the Bible in all spheres is one of the many triumphs of the human spirit.” Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), 436. Hill’s analysis, like so many other “Whig” interpretations of early modern thought, over-emphasizes the extent of the deist challenge to biblical authority and cannot be sustained in light of the dominant role that the bible played in practically all aspects of eighteenth-century English life. Hill does make several important observations, however, that confirm that while biblical authority may not have been destroyed by the tumult of mid-century, it was certainly altered by it. One of the most important changes was an increasing refusal to concretize the experience of Old Testament Israel. The English would, of course, affirm their identity as God’s chosen people well into the twentieth-century. This vision, however, came to be cast in increasingly abstract and spiritualistic terms as the quest to establish theocratic forms receded into the past with the solidification of the Restoration settlement. As visions of theocratic rule gave way to pragmatic compromise, militant millenarianism gave way to pietistic millenarianism. With the hopes of a Congregationalist establishment thwarted, John Bunyan was forced to concede as he gazed longingly out of his prison window that the city of God was a celestial city.

6 Hill finds that it was easy for warring parties to appeal to the Old Testament because of its extensive historical record, but he argues that in Restoration England the spiritualistic vision of the New Testament came to be seen as an amenable substitute. Hill finds, however, that the New Testament was ultimately left behind as well: “Because the Bible could be all things to all men, a book for all seasons, it ultimately lost its usefulness as a guide to political action.” Hill, *The English*, 415. Nevertheless, the preference that eighteenth-century Christians came to have for the New Testament was more than just a turn towards pietism. As Josiah Woodward’s *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London* (London, 1744) demonstrates, early-eighteenth century London was swept up in the quest to uncover and reinstitute the historic form of Apostolic Christianity.
vision of Christianity that decidedly favours the New Testament that became entrenched in the Williamite and Hanoverian establishments.\(^7\)

Hill is not the first to draw attention to the growing preference that the English had for the spiritual gospel of the New Testament. His work complements Henning Graf Reventlow's magisterial *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, which traces the development of humanistic and spiritualistic impulses in England from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In Reventlow's work these impulses lead to the outright rejection of the Old Testament by key representatives of what he calls the "late stage" of deism (cir. 1730-1745), Thomas Chubb (1679-1747) and Thomas Morgan (d. 1743).\(^8\) In Reventlow's account Morgan is the true hero—or villain—and the latter's magnum opus, *The Moral Philosopher* (1737), is the apogee of a tradition. Reventlow argues that Morgan's work

> Represents a landmark in English intellectual history because it denotes the definitive end of the Old Testament in this role. Though large and imaginative books appeared, to defend it against Morgan... the days when it had normative validity for the contemporary forms of church and state had gone for ever.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) The spiritualism I am here referring to is often referred to as pietism. It is an interpretation of Christianity that emphasizes personal piety and heavenly salvation rather than embodied religion as expressed in sacramental worship, institutional religion, or societal reform. The spiritualistic vision that characterized the Latitudinarian establishment is starkly presented in Benjamin Hoadly's notorious sermon, *The Nature of the Kingdom or Church, of Christ. A Sermon Preach'd before the King at the Royal Chapel at St. James's, on Sunday March 31, 1717* (London, 1717). Within the new establishment the doctrine of *adiaphora* played the crucial role of subverting the attempt of dissenters to revive theocratic visions based on Old Testament precedents. In this, the Latitudinarian preference for the New Testament can be seen as part of their attempt to uphold the new regime.

\(^8\) Reventlow points out that the Old Testament is excluded from being a legitimate part of the Christian bible in Chubb's posthumous writings, and he observes that Chubb's approach corresponds to earlier Puritan perspectives in which the Old Testament is seen to promote a Jewish religion antithetical to Christianity: it depicts a violent God, and one that reveals laws and doctrines that contradict common sense. Chubb's antipathy towards the Old Testament was hardly novel among the deists, and Reventlow wonders whether Chubb's dismissal of the Old Testament can be traced to Morgan's influence. Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 395.

\(^9\) Ibid.
For Reventlow, Morgan’s outright rejection of the Old Testament builds upon the tradition of ethical rationalism that instrumentalizes knowledge of God as the means to moral virtue, and the direct source of this tradition in Morgan’s thought is Clarke.¹⁰

My account of the degradation of the Old Testament in early eighteenth-century England is intended to complement Reventlow’s incisive genealogy. He rightly insists that the deist polemic is an important marker in shifting cultural perspectives on biblical authority. But like Hill, he overemphasizes the importance of deism. Reventlow’s implicit justification for this emphasis is his belief that, as forbearers of “the Enlightenment,” the deists were the prophets of modernity. Specifically, he appeals to the now-deconstructed assumption that there was “a heyday of popular deism.”¹¹ Reventlow’s conclusion that the deist repudiation of the Old Testament signals an important intellectual and cultural shift at the cusp of modernity is unassailable. His problem is that he makes the views of those at the margins of intellectual opinion representative. It is, after all, a little odd that it falls to Morgan (Reventlow calls him but “little known”) to usher in not merely the modern perspective on the bible, but modernity itself. Morgan simply isn’t able to carry this load. His work cannot serve as proof that the days when the Old Testament “had normative validity for contemporary forms of church and state had gone forever,” because he stood at the fringes of society.

¹⁰ For Morgan, as for the early deists, the telos of both natural and revealed religion is the formation of virtuous men, and this is the basis of his conviction that natural and revealed religion are equivalent. Reventlow points out that Morgan is following Tindal exactly when he defends the New Testament as the best rendering of the religion of nature. Reventlow, The Authority, 397.
¹¹ Reventlow, The Authority, 355. As Barrett puts it, to view “eighteenth-century Europe through the prism of the deistic philosophes is simply to accept uncritically the world as the philosophes claimed they saw it.” S. J. Barnett, The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 16. Barrett observes that although historians traditionally assumed that anyone who emphasized natural religion was a deist, there were so few deists that the Anglican clergy often seemed confused about who they were arguing against. Ibid., 19.
Like most deists, Morgan was a dissenter and a social outcast, and his polemic had as much to do with the fact that the priests held the keys of Scripture, as it was a complaint against Scripture itself.¹²

The importance of Morgan’s rejection of the Old Testament is that it is a beacon that draws our attention to the larger crisis in the function of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture that was taking hold in both Church and society. Truth be told, Morgan’s polemic is, in itself, rather uninteresting. From the middle of the seventeenth through to the beginning of the nineteenth century there were numerous dissenting voices that challenged the Scriptural consensus that undergirded English religious and political life. Although the most able polemists were skillful at brewing up controversy, the majority went almost completely unnoticed. As J. C. D. Clark points out, “the response of orthodox churchmen was more widespread, more scholarly, and polemically more effective.”¹³

The point is not so much that Morgan was without influence—indeed his works were devoured by the *philosophes*—but that tracing his influence is unnecessary

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because his position was already operative in the mainstream. Morgan was a devoted follower of Clarke, and his work is primarily important, I maintain, as a sort of exposé. Clarke would have denied Morgan’s declaration that the Old Testament is a useless historical artifact, but the pieces of the puzzle Morgan puts together to render this conclusion are present in Clarke’s work, and most importantly, in his neglect of the Old Testament.

Clarke’s Importance

A chance encounter with Whiston in a Norwich coffee house in 1697 was one of the decisive events in Clarke’s life. Their conversation concerned the new Newtonian

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14 As we shall see in Chapter Three, John Hutchinson decried the downfall of the Old Testament a full thirteen years before Morgan published The Moral Philosopher. See Chapter Three.
15 Reventlow, The Authority, 397.
16 These include the disparaging of historical data as subject to corruption, the historicization and therefore dismissal of Mosaic Law, and the emphasis on the spiritual and immutable principles of natural religion. It must be added however, that while Morgan, like Clarke, should be located within the Reformed tradition of Old Testament interpretation, Morgan departs from this tradition through his rejection of not only judicial and ceremonial law, but moral law as well. Morgan, The Moral, 400. I will argue that this important difference is minimized by the fact that Clarke degrades the Old Testament to the extent that the moral law contained therein is of questionable value.
17 Clarke went to Gonville and Caius College at the age of sixteen and was assigned to a tutor by the name of Ellis. James Ferguson, An Eighteenth Century Heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke (Kineton, UK: Roundwood, 1976), 7. Ellis gave Clarke his first great project, the task of translating Jacques Rohault’s treatise on Cartesian philosophy into Latin. Clarke later expanded the work to the extent that the extensive notes refuting Descartes played a central role in the early dissemination of Newtonian philosophy. At Cambridge, Clarke studied classics, philosophy, mathematics and divinity. His proficiency in such a wide array of subjects was unremarkable, and indeed was considered essential for anyone with serious scholarly aspirations. But his ability to remain “up to date” with the latest insights in these diverse fields throughout his life stands out even in his own day. Ibid., 4. Clarke’s protégé Ashley Arthur Sykes boasted that at College Clarke “excell’d in natural Philosophy, in Mathematics, in Divinity, in Critique [classical studies], as if he had made but one of them his sole study. Indeed, whatever Science, or whatever branch of Knowledge he applied himself to, he was so great a master of, that had another excell’d in any one of those extensive parts of Literature, in the same degree as he excell’d in every one of the, he would on that sole account of deserved the reputation of a great man.” Ashley Arthur Sykes, “The Elogium of the late truly Learned, Reverend and Pious Samuel Clarke,” in Historical Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Samuel Clarke, 3rd ed. (London, 1748), 1. As a mature scholar Clarke made lasting contributions to all four fields; in philosophy: A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Hobbs, Spinoza, and their Followers (London, 1705), A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation (London, 1706), A Collection of Papers, which Passed Between the Late Learned Mr. Leibnitz and Dr. Clarke (London, 1717); in the
philosophy, and Whiston, the only student known to have attended Newton's early lectures and actually understood them, was astounded at Clarke's profound appropriation of the Newtonian vision.\textsuperscript{18} Perceiving that Clarke was no ordinary undergraduate, Whiston introduced him to his patron, John Moore, Bishop of Norwich (1646-1714). Within a year Clarke was ordained to the priesthood and established as Moore's personal chaplain.\textsuperscript{19} In 1706 Moore, eager to find Clarke opportunities equal to his considerable talents, gave him the living of St. Benet Paul's Wharf, the Welsh church of London, and also had Clarke appointed as chaplain in ordinary to Queen Anne (1665-1714).\textsuperscript{20} In 1709 Clarke was appointed to St. James Westminster (Picadilly) upon Moore's recommendation, a post Clarke retained for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{21} Among Clarke's parishioners were geologist John Woodward (1665-1728), whom we will encounter in Chapter Three, and Newton himself. St. James was no ordinary living. It was, in the words of Clarke's twentieth-century biographer James Ferguson, "one of the most important in London and probably the most fashionable."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 8; Michael Buckley, \textit{The Origins of Modern Atheism} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 168.
\textsuperscript{19} Buckley, \textit{The Origins}, 169.
\textsuperscript{20} Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 35.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{22} See also Gerald Cragg, \textit{Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 34. Cragg calls St. James' Westminster "one of the leading pulpits in England." At the heart of Picadilly, an upscale new subdivision just to the north of Westminster Palace, St. James was the parish of many of the most influential members of the court. The prestige of association with St. James was such that pews had to be purchased, and Clarke had a vestry of twenty-five of London's most notable citizens, including Newton himself, to help with the maintenance of parish life. Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 200. Newton also served as governor of the smaller King Street Chapel in Clarke's parish. Ibid., 216.
As rector of St. James, Clarke was strategically positioned at the centre of English ecclesiastical, intellectual, and political life. The living of St. James was highly coveted as the ideal stepping-stone to ecclesiastical preferment.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, even after the publication of his notorious Antitrinitarian work *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* and his trial before Convocation in 1714, Clarke was offered preferment and was reportedly even considered for Canterbury.\textsuperscript{24} As late as 1727 Clarke was offered the see of Bangor, and Queen Caroline (1683-1737) sent Prime Minister Walpole (1676-1745) himself to convince Clarke to accept the post.\textsuperscript{25} 1727 was also the year in which Newton’s lucrative post of Master of the Mint was reserved for Clarke when it was evident that the author of the *Principia* was dying. Clarke, however, submitted to Whiston and Thomas Emlyn’s (1663-1741) pleas that he decline the post, and Clarke seems to have concluded that his priestly vocation required him to teach the faith of the Apostolic Church to his parishioners with singular dedication.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} The three rectors that preceded Clarke were all elevated to the bishop’s bench—two of them to Canterbury. St. James’ was consecrated in 1685. Thomas Tenison, the first rector, was elevated to the see of Lincoln and then Canterbury; his successor, William Wake, also went to Lincoln and Canterbury; Thomas Trimnell was consecrated Bishop of Norwich, and then Bishop of Winchester. Ibid., 198.

\textsuperscript{24} Ferguson has no doubt that Clarke would have been elevated to the see of Canterbury had he not espoused heretical views. James Ferguson, *The Philosophy of Dr. Samuel Clarke and its Critics* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974). 9. Voltaire praised Clarke as “le plus clair, le plus méthodique & le plus fort, de tous ceux qui ont parlé de l’être suprême.” Voltaire, “Platon,” in *OEuvres de Voltaire*, vol. 20 (Paris, 1879), 229. Voltaire calls Clarke “une vraie machine à raisonnements.” Voltaire tells the story that when the queen wished to confer the see of Canterbury on Clarke, bishop “Gibson informed her that Clarke was the wisest and most honest man in her kingdom, but that he lacked one qualification for the position: he was not a Christian!” Buckley, *The Origins*, 172; Voltaire, “Lettre VII,” in *OEuvre de Voltaire*, vol. 22 (Paris, 1879), 100-102.

\textsuperscript{25} Although Clarke ultimately refused the discussions were said to have extended well into the night. Clarke insisted that he would not accept preferment that required him to sign the thirty-nine articles. Ferguson, *An Eighteenth*, 209.

Clarke had no mean influence as priest and preacher. The popularity of his sermons was second only to those of Archbishop John Tillotson (1630-94). Bishop Benjamin Hoadly (1776-1761) revered them as classics, claiming that they “must last as long as any language remains to convey them to future times,” and Samuel Johnson thought they were the best sermons in the land. In addition to his sermons, Clarke’s reputation rests on his two sets of Boyle lectures, which went through twelve editions in the eighteenth century. To many of his contemporaries the lectures presented a “final and convincing” refutation of deism. Even deist Matthew Tindal (1657-1733) confessed, “I own, the Doctor got immortal Honour by that Discourse; how ’tis admir’d, the seventh Edition shews.” Bishop William Warburton (1698-1779) quoted with approval Voltaire’s verdict that Clarke was “a reasoning engine.”

Clarke also received considerable recognition as a philologist. His Latin translation of Newton’s Opticks was considered a masterpiece and was decisive in the

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27 A collection of one hundred and seventy-three Clarke sermons went through eight editions from 1730 to 1751.

28 William Seward, “Samuel Clarke,” in Anecdotes of some Distinguished Persons, Chiefly of the Present and Two Preceding Centuries, vol. 2 (London, 1796), 335. Seward also claims that Johnson held that Clarke was “the most complete literary character that England ever produced.” See also, Cragg, Reason 34.

29 Clarke’s Demonstration was published separately in 1705 and 1706, and his Discourse in 1706 and 1708. They were published together in 1711, 1716, 1719, 1725, 1728, 1732, 1738, 1749, 1766, and 1767. Hoadly chose not to include Clarke’s Boyle Lectures in his edition of Clarke’s collected works, perhaps because they were so widely available.

30 Ferguson, The Philosophy, 9. Clarke’s influence was felt across the Atlantic, but in the nineteenth century American theology and philosophy intentionally distanced itself from the great Newtonian thinker. See Brooks Holifield, Theology in America: Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the Civil War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 180.

31 As a philosopher Clarke ranked second in popular opinion only to Locke. Ferguson, An Eighteenth, 40-41. For his doctoral defense he defended the propositions that ‘No Article of the Christian Faith delivered in the Holy Scripture, is disagreeable to Right Reason’ and ‘Without the Liberty of Humane Actions there can be no Religion.’ Benjamin Hoadly, preface to The Works of Samuel Clarke, vol. 1, ed. Benjamin Hoadly (London, 1738), vi. It was a performance long remembered as a virtuoso display of the fast decaying art of formal academic disputation. In his late 1770s the Reverend Henry Yarborough recounted how “he never was so delighted in his life with any academical exercise of that kind.” J. J., “Anecdotes relative to the great Dr. Samuel Clarke,” The Gentleman’s Magazine: And Historical Chronicle 53 (1783): 228.
dissemination of Newtonianism on the continent.\textsuperscript{32} An accurate assessment of Clarke’s influence must also acknowledge Clarke’s importance in the dissemination of Antitrinitarianism.\textsuperscript{33} His \textit{Scripture-Doctrine} is without question the most important Antitrinitarian text ever written in the English language. It had an immediate impact on England’s religious landscape, and played a decisive role in winning over prominent intellectuals Daniel Whitby (1637-1726), Ashley Arthur Sykes (1684-1756), John Jackson (1686-1763), and probably Hoadly, to the Antitrinitarian cause. Clarke was also reputed to have won over no less a figure than Queen Caroline herself.\textsuperscript{34} For churchmen fearful that the assault on Trinitarian doctrine was about to bring both church and state to ruin, Whiston was seen, in Cragg’s words, as “an irritant rather than a menace.” Clarke, on the other hand, “was a personal and intellectual force of the first magnitude.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Bentley, often considered the greatest textual scholar England ever produced, refers to Clarke’s philological skill in the highest terms. Bentley went out of his way to secure for Clarke a manuscript of Caesar’s commentaries from King’s Library. Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 21.

\textsuperscript{33} Clarke’s Trinitarian theology is best described as subordinationist. He insists that while the Son can perhaps be called “God” on account of his participation in the Godhead, it is probably best not to do so, since he is not God in the same sense that the Father is God. The Son’s divinity is derivative from and dependent upon the divinity of the Father. Clarke’s formulation suggests the view that Christ is not God to the same extent that the Father is God. Following Newton, Clarke was intent on preserving the providential dominion of God the Father, and he worried that Nicene Trinitarian doctrine compromised this authority. Sarum observed that, “The \textit{Necessary Existence of One} only GOD, and the \textit{Impossibility of the Existence of More Than One} [Clarke] justly esteem’d as the Foundation of All.” Benjamin Sarum, preface to \textit{Sermons on the Following Subjects} . . . (London, 1743), 1.xxxvii; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, x. Clarke’s quest for the simple and primitive Trinitarian doctrine led him to reject the Nicene definition, and in particular, the notion that God is three persons (\textit{hypostases}) in one being (\textit{ousia}). For further discussion concerning Clarke’s views see note 99 below.


\textsuperscript{35} Cragg, \textit{Reason}, 34.
In our day Clarke’s towering influence on intellectual life in the first half of the eighteenth century has been all but forgotten; his sermons lie hidden in the pages of dusty volumes, and the decisive influence of his Antitrinitarianism has come to be considered relevant only to historians of Unitarianism. As for his classical scholarship, it is largely unknown even to scholars familiar with Clarke’s work.\textsuperscript{36} If Clarke is recognized today, it is as a philosopher—specifically as a Newtonian philosopher. And yet, even in this capacity he is often regarded as little more than Newton’s minion, undoubtedly because his correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz remains his only work that continues to be widely read.\textsuperscript{37} The fact that Clarke had, in his own day, a powerful influence upon the theological and philosophical landscape of England is important to my argument. First, his prominence and popularity ensured that his approach to the Old Testament was widely disseminated. And second, because he operated at the centre of English society, his own approach must be taken seriously as an approach that was operative in the mainstream.

\textsuperscript{36} This ignorance is at least partially justified given that Clarke’s masterful translation of the \textit{Iliad} remained incomplete at the time of his death.

Clarke on Natural and Revealed Religion

Shortly after the publication of Newton’s *Principia* British intellectuals began to attempt to “mathematize” their respective disciplines. Following Newton, scholars sought to bring mathematical certainty to their disciplines by establishing their work on the foundation of mechanical and quantifiable natural laws. In 1701 George Cheyne (1671/72-1743) published *A New Theory of Continu’d Fevers*, which explained fevers mechanically by arguing for a reductionist chemistry founded on Newtonian physics. Cheyne claimed to have been inspired by the need for a “Principia Medicinae Theoreticae Mathematicae,” the way forward having already been shown “by that stupendously Great Man, Mr. *Newton*” who has provided “the only key, whereby the secrets of Nature are unlock’d.”38 In 1702 Richard Mead (1673-1754) followed suit by publishing *A Mechanical Account of Fevers*. “It may be hoped in a short time,” said Mead, “that mathematical learning will be the distinguishing mark of a physician from a quack.”39 Alexander Pitcairne (1652-1713) proposed a mechanical account of the lungs, John Freind (1675-1728) gave a mechanical account of menstruation, and James Keill (1673-1719) proposed a mechanical interpretation of animal secretions.40 These endeavors were at the cutting edge of what quickly became a European-wide phenomenon: the quest to mathematize all natural processes.41


41 Thackray, *Atoms*, 83. Newton paved the way for this development when he claimed, in his letter to Oldenberg, that, “the science of colours was mathematical, and as certain as any other part of Optics.” Samuel Horsley, ed., *Isacii Newtoni Opera Quae Estant Omnia*, vol. 4 (London, 1782), 342. For the influence of Newton’s experimental and mathematical method on eighteenth century science see Rob
Natural philosophers, however, weren’t the only ones who hoped to make use of mathematics. Theologians and ethicists pursued a similar program, spurred on by Newton’s example. In 1799 John Craig (1663-1731) published *Theologiae Christianae Principia Mathematica*, which proved the certainty of biblical events using Newton’s method of fluxions. Newton’s disciple Colin Maclaurin (1698-1746) held that the certainty of mathematics was “the surest bulwark against the skeptics.”

Maclaurin proposed a mechanical view of morality based on mathematical principles, and used Newton’s law of universal gravitation to prove the existence of God. The most famous attempts to mathematize providence, however, were undoubtedly the Boyle lectures—particularly those of Bentley, Whiston, Clarke, and William Derham (1657-1735). Bentley, Whiston, Clarke, and Derham effectively appealed to the popular opinion that the conclusions of Newtonian physico-mathematics were deductively certain, and they all attempted to bind the Christian religion to physico-mathematics to render it immune to criticism.

The task Clarke sets for himself in his first set of Boyle lectures, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, is to lay the foundation of natural religion, and in his second set, *A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*, he hopes to establish the truths of revealed religion upon this foundation. Clarke argues in his *Discourse* that the doctrines and moral duties presented in Scripture demand our

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adherence because they are, at the same time, the “unchangeable obligations of natural religion.” According to Clarke, natural religion outlines the essential elements of revealed religion in the form of a “superstructure” within which are placed Christian doctrines. At bottom, natural and revealed religion are one and the same, differing only in terms of precision of articulation.

Clarke claims that, “Mathematical Reasonings may be applied to Physical and Metaphysical Subjects.” By this he means that the entailment relations of deductive logic secure a certainty in metaphysical subjects that approaches or equals that of physical subjects that rely explicitly upon mathematical deductions. As a Newtonian Clarke believes that to be mathematical is to be certain, and he boasts throughout both sets of lectures of having secured his conclusions on account of a mathematical method. In his first set of lectures Clarke employs his mathematical method to establish “a chain of twelve propositions” which secures “the existence, the omnipresence, the omnipotence, the omniscience, and the infinite wisdom and

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45 Samuel Clarke, preface to A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion (London, 1706). Clarke acknowledges that mathematical certainty is difficult to achieve when dealing with moral subjects, but he nevertheless insists that he will manage to get as close to this divine standard as possible. Clarke, Discourse, 17. Clarke claims to distinguish between mathematical and moral considerations, but this distinction clearly breaks down in practice, since all true moral principles are bound to the laws of nature, and are therefore “mathematical.” Ibid., 80. Men are obligated, by means of natural reason, to discern moral obligations in the same way that they can be expected to perceive the truthfulness of the most obvious mathematical propositions. Ibid., 203.

46 Samuel Clarke, A Collection of Papers, Which Passed Between the Late Learned Mr. Leibnitz, and Dr. Clarke (London, 1717), 73; Benjamin Hoadly, ed., The Works of Samuel Clarke, vol. 4 (London, 1738), 606.

47 Samuel Clarke, preface to A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Hobbs, Spinoza, and their Followers (London, 1705). For a clear example of this mathematical method, see Clarke’s defense of the infinity of God. Ibid., 70-74.

48 In Clarke’s Discourse he boasts, for example, that his previous work, Demonstrations, achieves a “demonstrative force of reasoning, and even Mathematical certainty.” Clarke, A Discourse, 17.
beneficence of the Creator as plainly as Euclid demonstrates the equality of the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle."\textsuperscript{49} These truths concerning the being and attributes of God, which Clarke proves in his first set of lectures, are reintroduced as laws of nature in his second set. They are givens, which cannot be altered, and yet, they do not, in themselves, constitute natural religion. Natural religion is the set of moral duties derived from them. Clarke knows his Aristotelian logic, and he therefore insists that the duties of natural religion presented in his \textit{Discourse} are as certain as the attributes of God he has established in his \textit{Demonstrations}.\textsuperscript{50}

Clarke claims that the moral maxims of his \textit{Discourse} are derived from the divine attributes he has established in his \textit{Demonstration}. But he begins his \textit{Discourse} by praising “the clearness, immutability, and universality of the laws of nature,” and it turns out that it is natural law rather than the being and attributes of God that guarantee the certainty of his moral maxims. The certainty accorded to divine attributes in his \textit{Demonstrations} and moral obligations in his \textit{Discourse} is derived from a common source: natural law.\textsuperscript{51} As natural laws, moral laws follow from what Clarke calls the “fitnesses” of things.\textsuperscript{52} Fitnesses are eternal and unchangeable relations between given

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\item[\textsuperscript{50}] Clarke's Boyle Lectures play a leading role in Buckley's landmark work \textit{At the Origins of Modern Atheism} because they present a form of Christian theology that is philosophically attractive but void of Christian particularity. Buckley highlights the way Clarke's natural theology imitates Newtonian mathematics. Buckley says that Clarke “is not the first to take Newton's natural philosophy and construct a systematic natural theology, but he is probably the best.” Buckley, \textit{The Origins}, 173.
\item[\textsuperscript{51}] Clarke insists that as natural laws, the being and attributes of God he proves in his \textit{Demonstrations} carry mathematical certainty. But the fact that Clarke does not actually derive moral laws from them in his \textit{Discourse} suggests that Clarke's \textit{Demonstrations} are inadequate as a basis for natural religion.
\item[\textsuperscript{52}] Stoic influences can be readily discerned in Clarke's appeal to the course of nature. Stoic ethical ideals were intended to shape human life “in accordance with necessities that govern the world into which we are all born.” Genevieve Lloyd, \textit{Providence Lost} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 130. Like Newton, Clarke firmly believes that his conclusions are merely the retrieval of truths known to the ancients. Clarke, \textit{Demonstration}, 47. Clarke's devolutionary view of history can be clearly perceived in his
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situations and moral obligations, “which have not their origin from arbitrary and positive institutions, but are of eternal necessity in their own nature.”

Thus the practice of natural religion is the cognitive identification of given relations and the will to act in conformity with them. Clarke describes these relations as both natural and moral laws.

For Clarke, the duties of natural religion are obligations imposed upon humans by nature itself. Stephens observes that for Clarke, “The law of nature thus becomes a code of absolutely true and unalterable propositions, strictly analogous to those of pure mathematics.” By declaring these moral laws to be eternal and necessary, Clarke seems to be assimilating ethics to mathematics. Ferguson complains that Clarke tends to hypostasize abstractions. This complaint echoes that of Clarke’s great antagonist, Daniel Waterland (1683-1740), who maintained that by seeking to establish unalterable rules for moral action, Clarke sets up “some co-eval and extrinsic principle

low opinion of contemporary philosophical authorities (Newton excepted). He has a clear preference for ancient philosophy in general and Plato in particular. Clarke, Demonstrations, 66-77; Discourse, 77, 89-90, 98-99, 109, 115, 192, 198-99, 208-209, 213, 216, 221-22, 228, 238, 243-44, 246-47, 255, 274, 293, 299. Clarke acknowledges, but minimizes Plato’s endorsement of polytheistic worship. Clarke, Discourse, 221-22. Clarke also praises Plato for identifying that divine revelation is a necessary supplement to the light of natural reason. Clarke, Discourse, 243. Clarke includes far more references to Plato and other ancient philosophers in his Discourse than his Demonstrations. This suggests that Clarke ultimately finds himself in need of an authority to supplement the testimony of nature in his construction of the moral principles.

Ferguson, The Philosophy, 174.

Clarke, A Discourse, 3. For a more in depth treatment of Clarke’s ethics see James Le Rossignol, The Ethical Philosophy of Samuel Clarke (Leipzig, 1892).

Stephen, History, 124.

Like Clarke, Locke believes that Mathematics is the paragon of certainty, and he speculates that Mathematics can help ethical theory become a science that produces authentic knowledge. John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (London, 1706), 491. Buckley observes that Clarke’s method follows from “appearances” to God, and in this Clarke duplicates Newton’s method of analysis-synthesis. Buckley, The Origins, 90.

Ferguson, The Philosophy, 211.
to which God is joined and which he is obliged to follow.”

Waterland’s ally, takes this argument one step further: “One would be tempted to think, if all this is true, that this same nature and fitness of things is Deity, and rather deserves the name of God.”

The priority that Clarke’s ethical theory gives to established relations with natural laws, however, was praised as much as it was derided. Tindal, for instance, celebrates the priority Clarke gives to natural law as a sure demonstration of his own conviction concerning the equivalence of natural and revealed religion. Tindal observes that Clarke makes the moral laws of nature so perfect “as to take in every thing that God requires of Mankind.” Tindal therefore argues that according to Clarke’s scheme true Christianity is “as old as creation,” because it is a moral system that urges Christians to conform behavioral patterns to the nature of things. Tindal believes Clarke has successfully established the principles of natural religion upon mathematically certain

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59 John Gill, The Moral Nature and Fitness of Things Considered (London, 1738), 5. One of Clarke’s most vocal opponents was William Carroll. In his Remarks upon Mr. Clarke’s Sermons, Preached at St. Paul’s against Hobbs, Spinoza, and other Atheists (London, 1705) Carroll claims that he will demonstrate, first, that “Mr. C. by the Sceptical Hypothesis he imploys, Absolutely cuts off all Possible Means of Knowing the Nature, or of Proving the Existence of the One Only True God, against Hobbs, Spinoza, or any other Atheists whatever.” Second he claims that he will show that “in Reference to God, or Spirits, he reduces Humane Understanding, to the most incurable State of Scepticism.” Interestingly, Carroll claims, like Clarke, to make use of a mathematical method. He boasts that he will prove these first two points geometrically.” Finally Carroll, proposes to demonstrate that Clarke’s “Sermons do rather Establish than Destroy, do rather Confirm than Confute Spinoza’s Hypothesis.”

60 Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation (London, 1730), 319.

61 Tindal argues as follows: if there was “from the beginning but one true Religion, which all Men might know was their duty to embrace; and if this is true, I can’t well conceive how this character can consist with Christianity; without allowing it, at the same time, to be as old as the Creation.” Tindal, Christianity, 7-8.
laws of nature, and he concludes that in so doing Clarke demonstrates that revelation is superfluous.\(^{62}\)

Tindal’s astute analysis highlights Clarke’s dilemma. If revelation is found to be equivalent to natural religion, then revelation is unnecessary. But if revelation contradicts natural religion, then revelation is false. Because natural law functions as an independent standard of authentication for Clarke, he is forced to alternate between demeaning natural religion in order to emphasize the necessity of revelation and praising natural religion in order to affirm the rationality of revelation.\(^{63}\) On one hand he insists “Reason itself, without Any Revelation, was abundantly sufficient to lead men from the wonderful operations of unintelligent and lifeless Matter, to the Knowledge of an Intelligent, Living, and Al-wise Cause,”\(^{64}\) but on the other, he says that “The Light of nature, and Right Reason, was altogether insufficient to restore true Piety.”\(^{65}\) To be fair to Clarke, however, it must be said that while he consistently emphasizes the equivalence of natural and revealed religion, his position is not without nuance. Clarke does have some means to affirm the necessity of revelation; means afforded him by his dispensational interpretation of history.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 335. Tindal knows that Clarke desperately wants to affirm the necessity of revealed religion. His point however, is that this stubborn conservatism is in consistent with Clarke’s premises. Tindal find that for Clarke revealed religion cannot possibly add anything to natural religion: “external Revelation can’t alter the Nature of Things, and make that to be fit, which is in itself unfit; or make that necessary, which is in itself unnecessary; it can only be a Transcript of the Religion of Nature.” Ibid., 334.

\(^{63}\) Ferguson finds that “the doctor’s scheme is an inconsistent one: at first he adequately demonstrates that the law of nature is all-sufficient, perfect and clear; then all these admissions are retracted.” Ferguson, An Eighteenth, 236.

\(^{64}\) Samuel Clarke, One Hundred and Seventy Three Sermons on several Subjects and Occasions, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1734), 14; The Works, vol. 1, 14.

\(^{65}\) Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, 3rd ed. (London, 1711), 228; Tindal, Christianity, 376. The difficulties Clarke encounters as he tries to insist upon the correspondence of revealed religion with natural religion, while nevertheless insisting that revealed religion is necessary, can also be seen in Locke’s The Reasonableness of Christianity. John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity: As Delivered in the Scriptures, ed. John Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).
Clarke’s Dispensational Scheme

Like Newton and other “moderns” Clarke celebrates advances in natural philosophy, but he insists that progress is not possible in matters of religion. “Matters of speculation grow and improve over time,” says Clarke, "But Matters of Revelation and divine Testimony are on the contrary complete at first; and the Christian Religion was most perfect at the Beginning." Following Newton, Clarke gives a historical account of the devolution of religion. Clarke’s account takes the form of a dispensational scheme in which natural religion devolves into Israelite religion, and then is revived through the revelation of Christ, only to be overcome, once again, by Roman Catholic idolatry. It turns out, however, that the devolutionary force of history is such that true religion can only exist in abstract, rather than historical form.

For Clarke natural religion is the religious component of natural law. As such it was enshrined in nature before the dawn of human history, and its precepts remain unalterable since they are immune from the vicissitudes of human history. This being said, Clarke also celebrates natural religion as the pristine religion of the first humans, those living in “the state of nature.” For Clarke, the state of nature is the dispensation that extends from Adam to Moses. Clarke describes the state of nature as the

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66 Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, viii; Clarke, The Works, vol. 4, iii.
67 Clarke’s affirmation that the religion of those living in the state of nature was salvific is important to his theodicy. Clarke affirms this sufficiency in opposition to the favorite deist assertion that the claim that revelation is necessary for salvation negates the justice of God. According to Clarke, “They who obeyed the word of God, according to the manner in which it was then respectively revealed to them, were each of them entitled to the Benefit of the whole salvation; and, notwithstanding their different degrees of Knowledge, are all of them finally to be gathered together into One in Christ; so that He, to whom much is revealed, shall have nothing over; and He, to whom was revealed but little, shall have no lack; when, at the consummation of all things, they shall all meet in one great and general Assembly of the first-born which are written in Heaven; Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles; and whosoever have in all Ages, after
condition in which “God made himself known to men by the arguments of reason.”

Clarke insists that those living in the state of nature had true knowledge of God and that this knowledge was salvific. He also affirms, however, that this knowledge was deficient in order to justify the necessity of further revelation. The sufficiency of natural religion turns out to be an entirely hypothetical sufficiency, for the state of nature was actually far from idyllic.

Clarke, in true Latitudinarian fashion, insists that the doctrine of original sin is a monstrous human innovation because it minimizes human moral responsibility and power. The doctrine of the fall, however, continues to play a central role in Clarke’s thought as the foundation of his philosophy of history. Following Newton, Clarke insists that human history is the story of the gradual encroachment of idolatry upon the principles of natural religion. In Clarke’s estimation human “idolatry” is “the principal of all the Works of the Devil, and the most immediate and direct opposition to God.”

Clarke privileges Romans 1:20 as the starting point of his philosophy of history because it shows how humans

changed the Truth of God into a Lye, worshipping and serving the Creature instead of the Creator, who is Blessed for ever; Idolatry quickly spread itself into Many Branches; And as Some worshipped the Host of Heaven, the Sun and Moon,

the pattern of these great Examples, obeyed the Commandments of God as made known to them, whether by the Light of Nature, or by the Law of Moses, or by the Gospel of Christ.”

Although many of Clarke’s contemporaries were eagerly reflecting theologically upon the peoples of newly discovered worlds, Clarke is cautious to avoid speculations concerning “primitives,” and he confines his reflections upon the state of nature to his dispensational scheme.


and Stars, because of their beauty and Usefulness; so Others, carried away with flattery towards their Kings and Governors, deified and worshipped, and their Deaths, those who in their life-time, for exercising lordship over them, had been stiled Benefactors.\textsuperscript{71}

The immediate impact of idolatry is such that Clarke ultimately concedes that only Adam and Eve lived in a true state of nature: in the original uncorrupted state of human nature right reason was sufficient, but after the fall, “there was plainly wanting a Divine Revelation, to recover Mankind out of their universally degenerate Estate, into a State suitable to the Excellency of their Nature.”\textsuperscript{72}

For Clarke, the purpose of all true religion is to make men more virtuous.\textsuperscript{73} He therefore insists that the design of Christ’s religion “is to amend and reform the Manners of Men,”\textsuperscript{74} and he defends Christianity as the religion best suited to this task. To make true on this claim Clarke has only one perfect standard to appeal to, the only religion that was both instituted by God and free from human corruption: natural religion. He therefore insists that,

The whole intent and office, the whole end and design, both of the Light of Nature, and of the Gospel of Christ; is to teach men to judge and distinguish rightly, concerning this great and essential Difference of Things; to show them the

\textsuperscript{71}Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 14; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 14.

\textsuperscript{72}Clarke, \textit{Discourse}, 10. Clarke’s account of the growth of idolatry is almost identical to that of Newton. Clarke conceives of this process as having taken place in three stages. First, men set up in opposition to God "some imagination of their own, if not as a formal Object of Worship, yet at least as that to which Alone they ascribe all those great Effects, which are indeed the bountiful Gifts of God to Mankind." Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 13; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 13. Next, they began to worship these objects as false Gods, "not indeed totally in exclusion of, but in conjunction with the Worship of the One True God of the Universe." Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 14; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 14. This initial polytheism obscured the continual worship of God, and led to the idolatrous worship of God through "representing him under visible and corporeal images." Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 15; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 15. Finally, idolatrous worship led to the rejection of God as men began to seek after "other mediators rather than Christ the only true mediator." Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 16; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 16. For Clarke, the growing force of idolatry in human history is such that it has the potential to overwhelm all religious institutions.

\textsuperscript{73}Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 12.

\textsuperscript{74}Samuel Clarke, \textit{One Hundred and Seventy Three Sermons}, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1734), 412; Clarke, \textit{The Works}, vol. 2, 203.
Importance of acting wisely in this matter; and to warn them of the Consequences of whichever part they take.\textsuperscript{75}

The Christian religion, like natural religion, is a moral system that produces authentic divine worship by promoting good deeds.

Clarke is, however, consistent in his insistence that while the end and design of the natural religion and revealed religion are equivalent, they are not equally successful in the accomplishment of the task. Both teach that “that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,”\textsuperscript{76} but revealed religion brings something new. With the Christian revelation comes “the glorious Appearance of * the Great GOD, and [of] our Saviour Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{77} The message of Christ is a “most clear and full discovery of the Will of God; Teaching us, in a more exact and perfect manner than ever.”\textsuperscript{78} And for Clarke the comparative perspicuity of the revelation of Christ both informs men of their duty and equips them to successfully undertake it.

Throughout his life Clarke was an ardent defender of the New Testament. Clarke frequently appeals to the clarity of the moral law as revealed in the obligations of the gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{79} Clarke’s first published work, *Three Practical Essays* (1699), is an attempt to present the original simplicity of Christian worship, baptism, confirmation,

\textsuperscript{75} Clarke, *One Hundred*, vol. 2, 50; *The Works*, vol. 2, 49.
\textsuperscript{76} Clarke, *One Hundred*, vol. 2, 369; *The Works*, vol. 2, 172.
\textsuperscript{77} Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine*, 38; *The Works*, vol. 4, 19.
\textsuperscript{78} Clarke, *One Hundred*, vol. 2, 277; *The Works*, vol. 2, 76.
and Eucharist. Clarke’s premise is that the theological and practical disagreements that had long obscured the performance of Christian rites could be set straight by a clear exposition of Christ’s ordinances concerning them. His second work, A Paraphrase of the Four Evangelists (1702) follows a similar line of reasoning. Clarke’s impetus for the project is simple: biblical paraphrase brings to light the inherent rationality of the text, and thereby disarms all human resistance to the commands of God and enables the performance of them.

Clarke was consistent in his celebration of the clarity of the New Testament. It is tempting to accuse Clarke, however, of holding that the paraphrase of New Testament texts is required because, as human documents, they obscure the religion of nature. And Clarke does, in fact, suggest that the various parts of the New Testament are not equally clear. For Clarke, the clearest part of all is ”The Sermons of our Saviour himself in the Gospels,” which “are so plain and intelligible, that hardly any well-disposed person can misunderstand them.” And among the sermons Clarke finds the Sermon on the Mount is supreme because it contains a succinct summary of “the moral and eternal Law of God, explaining the Duty and Obedience we owe to God, and the Love and Charity we must perform to men.” And since, for Clarke, all that God requires of humans is to apply divine commands according to the doctrine of ”fitnesses,” it is tempting to ask why God bothered to give his people more than this sermon. Clarke wants to defend the

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80 Like Whiston and many of his contemporaries, Clarke believes he can extract the Apostolic order for Church life from the documents of the New Testament. Ferguson, An Eighteenth, 10.
81 Paraphrase is a curious genre, as it relies upon the contradictory assumptions that the Scriptural text is sufficiently perspicuous to enable paraphrase, and sufficiently obscure to require it.
82 Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 340; The Works, vol. 1, 322.
entire New Testament as the revelation of Christ, but in practice, he implies that only a tiny fraction of the New Testament should actually be regarded as such.

The reason Clarke celebrates the Sermon on the Mount as the distillation of the revelation of Christ is that he finds it easy to defend the idea that the words it contains are consistent with natural religion and mathematical reason. But as soon as Christ’s words are uttered they threaten to become implicated in human history and therefore struggle to meet this standard. Clarke is therefore able to affirm that Christian revelation is consistent with natural religion and natural law only by extracting it from history. In his own day Clarke was widely praised as having reconciled Christian revelation with natural religion. The price he paid, however, is that this reconciliation forced him to recast Christian Scripture as the pure spiritual doctrine of Christ. He is forced to minimize the importance of all biblical texts that bear the marks of history, and at the end of the day, this leaves him looking like a modern day Marcionite.

**Church History: The Devolution of Revealed Religion**

For Clarke, the human propensity to idolatry entails that whenever humans receive the pure spiritual doctrine of Christ, they inevitably complicate, obscure and corrupt it. And for Clarke, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most evident, the most entrenched, and the most troublesome corruption of the revelation of Christ. Clarke’s Antitrinitarianism is motivated by his devolutionary view of history. For Clarke, ecclesiastical history is the story of the gradual devolution of revealed religion, and the
primary form this devolution takes is the gradual corruption of the pristine understanding of the nature of the Godhead.\textsuperscript{84}

Although Boyle himself had initially established his lectureship to prove “the Christian Religion, against notorious infidels, viz. Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans,” Clarke, the most famous Boyle lecturer, in the most popular of the Boyle lectures, can only muster that of all the religions “only the Christian religion has any just pretense or tolerable appearance of Reason.”\textsuperscript{85} Clarke acknowledges that the Church of England, like all churches, is a historic body, subject to historical corruption. His defense of Christianity in general, and the Church of England in particular, is therefore highly qualified: the Church of England is heretical and corrupt, but it is still the clearest representation of the religion of nature on offer.

Clarke endorses an unmistakably Protestant vision of religion, which places human religious expression in opposition to pure spiritual worship.\textsuperscript{86} With Calvin religion is seen as a “human phenomenon, a human response to the reality of God, but since men are corrupt, religion, too, shares in this corruption.”\textsuperscript{87} Within the Puritan tradition this idea takes the form of “Belligerent, untiring opposition to ‘human

\textsuperscript{84} Like Herbert of Cherbury Clarke has to account for the inconsistency of historically generated religious particulars with the true principles of natural religion. Cherbury is forced to account for the fact that his five basic principles of human religiosity are demonstrably not universal by maintaining that they were consistently obscured by priestcraft and are therefore lost to history. Herbert believes there are five fundamental common notions that comprise the essence of true religion. Herbert of Cherbury, \textit{De Veritate}, trans. Meyrick H. Carré (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1937), 23. Locke insists that Cherbury’s five notions are not, in fact, universal. See Harrison, ‘Religion,’ 70. Harrison, for his part, insists that the problem with Cherbury’s thesis is that it isn’t falsifiable. When confronted with counterexamples Cherbury simply retorts that human corruption has obscured his principles. Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{85} Clarke, \textit{Discourse}, 13.

\textsuperscript{86} The Reformed polemic charged that the ceremonial elements of Roman Catholicism were human acccretions.

The goal of Puritanism was to “expurgate novelty from English Protestantism” over and against “a persistent Anglican advocacy of invention.” In the late seventeenth century the deists took up the Puritan cause against Anglican innovation. Their voices, however, were drowned out by the chorus of Anglican divines who successfully appealed to the entrenched association of Catholicism and idolatry, which the Puritans themselves helped to create. Leading Anglicans such as Clarke were able to draw attention away from the fact that Anglican worship was historically conditioned by decrying the “superstitions” of Rome.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 was one of the decisive events of the period in English civil life. Over 200,000 evicted Huguenot refugees made their way to England, bringing with them tales of oppression and violence at the hands of Catholic clerics and magistrates. In England, appeals for toleration and anti-catholic propaganda therefore do not merely exist side-by-side: they are mutually reinforcing principles. Since Catholicism had proved itself inimical to religious freedom, it was argued that toleration would inevitably lead to the suppression of the unparalleled freedoms enjoyed by the English. The manner in which Clarke celebrates religious

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89 Ibid., 76, 56.
91 Locke insists that those who impose their religion on others have no right to be tolerated. John Marshall, John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 681. Locke’s refusal to tolerate English Catholics has been one of the most troubling aspects of Locke’s thought for modern commentators. But for Locke and other defenders of the Protestant establishment, Catholic allegiance to a foreign temporal power made Catholics a threat to their religion, their liberty, and their state. Ibid., 687. Gilbert Burnet was the first to argue along these lines in his Six Papers. Ibid., 686.
92 In a sermon preached before the House of Commons on the day of thanksgiving for Marlborough’s victory near Mons (1691), Clarke expresses the hope that God will continue to grant the English victory...
freedom and yet zealously defends the traditional Protestant association of the Church of Rome with the beast of St. John’s apocalypse is characteristic within the establishment of his day.\(^93\)

Clarke condemns Roman Catholicism because he believes it is the antithesis of the religion of Christ, which consists “in the Worship and Love and imitation of God, and in universal Charity and Good-Will towards Men.”\(^94\) In other words, Catholic violence is repudiated for the same reason that Catholics are refused toleration.\(^95\) The Kingdom of Rome has,

By the Establishment of its New Doctrines and practices . . . formed a violent Schism . . . separating and dividing themselves totally from all Christians, who desire to hold fast That Form of sound words, that Doctrine which was once delivered unto the Saints by Christ and his Apostles, and which is now conveyed down to us in the Sacred Writings . . . In consequence of this Great Separation, by which the Church of Rome has thus hedged itself in, and formed itself into a Sect, exclusive of and destructive to all such as desire to obey God rather than Men; they have in all places, where-ever they have had Power, openly set themselves to destroy and extirpate, by all the Methods of Violence and Cruelty, all who would not fall down and worship this Image which they have set up.\(^96\)

\(^93\) Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 2, 99; The Works, vol. 2, 632. Clarke complains that the root of Rome’s ailment is that it makes “void the Commandments of God through [the] Traditions of men.” Ibid.
\(^94\) Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 100; The Works, vol. 2, 635.
\(^95\) Claydon observes that, “The Protestant share of Europe’s population shrank from nearly half to around a quarter between 1600 and 1700.” Clarke, like his contemporaries, had no problem citing examples of “territories surrendered, liberties withdrawn, and persecutions launched.” Tony Claydon, “Latitudinarianism and Apocalyptic History in the Worldview of Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1715,” The Historical Journal 51, no. 3 (2008): 587. “The fiercest and most violent Persecutors in the Church of Rome,” claims Clarke, “constantly profess, and it is probable Many of them really believe, that they are doing God good Service, when they are destroying his Servants with the most inhumane Cruelties.” Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 2, 309; The Works, vol. 2, 105. Although Clarke refuses to tolerate Catholics in England he does not endorse violence against them. He calls upon those who hold fast to the Reformed religion to continue to act charitably towards them and “convince them of their errors.” Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 99; The Works, vol. 2, 634.
\(^96\) Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 97-98; The Works, vol. 2, 632-33
For Clarke, Christians must ultimately choose between the spiritual religion of the Apostles and carnal idolatry, and this decision takes the concrete form of a decision to choose either the Reformed Church of England, or popery.\textsuperscript{97} Popery obscures revealed religion by encumbering it with all manner of human innovation. Popish rituals equally obscure the law of nature, for superficial rites provoke carnality rather than inward renewal.\textsuperscript{98} The Church of Rome also requires people to accept human tradition and human pronouncements as equal to Scripture.\textsuperscript{99} Reformed Christians, however, believe the Apostles’ Creed only because everything it contains is found in Scripture.\textsuperscript{100}

For Clarke, the problem with the Nicene definition of the Trinity, as expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and Athanasian Creeds and endorsed by the Church of England, is that it proceeds beyond the “naked original simplicity” of the gospel and into

\textsuperscript{97} In Clarke’s mind there are but two options for Christians: the love of God, and the love of the world. And for Clarke, popery is love of the world: “yet in all \textit{Popish times principally}, and in all Other \textit{corrupt Ages \ldots Dominion and Pomp and Power}, instead of \textit{Truth and Righteousness and Charity}, have been esteemed as Marks and Characters of Christ’s \textit{Holy Catholick Church}.” Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 390; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 370.

\textsuperscript{98} Samuel Clarke, \textit{The Great Duty of Universal Love and Charity. A Sermon Preached before the Queen} (London, 1708), 2, 4.

\textsuperscript{99} The belief that Rome is liturgically and doctrinally innovative helped to create the standard Anglican tripartite model for Church history, which identified a golden age of the primitive Church, an age of decline marked by innovation and superstition, and an age of renewal and reform, which began in the sixteenth century. The canons of 1571 direct the clergy to preach the doctrines of Scripture as explicated by the catholic fathers and ancient bishops, and the canons of 1603 and 1604 appeal to the judgement of the ancient fathers, and the practice of the primitive church. John English points out that Elizabethan divines generally considered the golden age to have lasted five or six centuries. English also observes, however, that from the mid-seventeenth century onward, most Anglicans saw the golden age as having lasted a mere three hundred years. John English, “The Duration of the Primitive Church: An Issue for Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Anglicans,” \textit{Anglican and Episcopal History} 73, no. 1 (2004): 35. English’s account of the gradual diminution of the epoch of the primitive Church confirms that scholars found it increasingly difficult to protect the Church from their belief that the form of history is one of decline. It also comes as no surprise that Antitrinitarianism took root in England in the middle of the seventeenth century given that the updated configuration implied that the fall of the Church took place around the time of the Council of Nicaea. For an introduction to English Antitrinitarianism see Philip Dixon, \textit{Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century} (London: T & T Clark, 2003). Dixon rightly interprets the Antitrinitarian theology of Whiston and Clarke as an attempt to revive primitive Christianity. Ibid., 180-89.

\textsuperscript{100} Clarke, \textit{The Scripture-Doctrine}, ix-xii; \textit{The Works}, vol. 4, ix-xii.
the realm of speculative, metaphysical reasoning. Like those living in the state of nature, the authors of the Nicene definition left the primitive simplicity of true religion and fell headlong into idolatry. Although Clarke appeals to Athanasius and Basil of

101 Clarke's rejection of the Nicene definition, and specifically, his rejection of the idea that God is three persons (hypostases) in one being (ousia) follows that of Newton. For an introduction to Newton's Antitrinitarianism see, Stephen Snobelen, “Isaac Newton, Heretic: The Strategies of a Nicodemite,” The British Journal for the History of Science 32, no. 4 (1999): 381-419; “To Discourse of God: Isaac Newton’s Heterodox Theology and his Natural Philosophy,” in Science and Dissent in England, 1688-1945, ed. Paul Wood (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 39-66. Clarke succinctly expresses his rejection of the Nicene definition in anti-metaphysical and subordinationist terms in Propositions XXV, XXVII, and XXXIV of his Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity. Proposition XXXIV reads as follows: “The Son whatever his metaphysical Essence or Substance be, and whatever divine Greatness and Dignity is ascribed to him in Scripture; yet in This he is evidently Subordinate to the Father, that He derives his Being and Attributes from the Father, the Father Nothing from Him.” Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, 304; The Works, vol. 4, 155. Pfizenmaier has gone to length to defend Clarke's orthodoxy. Pfizenmaier is justified in arguing that the application of the term “Arian” to Clarke is a misnomer, since he claimed to be a disciple of the ante-Nicenes rather than Arius and since he affirmed the eternal generation of the Son. Thomas Pfizenmaier, The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3-4, 119; Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, 279; The Works, vol. 4, 141; A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Wells (London, 1714), 28; The Works, vol. 4, 233. Pfizenmaier alternates between affirming the continuity of Clarke's position with that of the ante-Nicenes, on one hand, and Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousian party, on the other. Pfizenmaier, The Trinitarian, 136, 172. This is appropriate since the Homoiousians were, in many respects, the conservative party. Pfizenmaier refuses to acknowledge, however, that the theological positions of all of the parties in the Arian controversy, including the Homoiousians, were marked by doctrinal development for the simple reason that the debate required all those involved to articulate their views with greater precision than was previously required using language that was appropriate to the new controversial context. Moreover, Pfizenmaier believes that because Clarke avoids the extremes of the two other parties in the debate, the Hoomioin Arians and the Eunomians, he is as good as orthodox. But this completely disregards the decisive importance of the Council of Constantinople. After Constantinople, defiant Homoiousians were marginalized as unorthodox because of their unwillingness to conform to the Constantinopolitan-Nicene definition. After Constantinople the fact that they weren't Homoians or Eunomians became suddenly irrelevant. And the same applies to Clarke. Clarke hated the Constantinopolitan-Nicene definition and within his post-Constantinopolitan context this fact, and this fact alone renders him unorthodox. Pfizenmaier, sympathetic as he is to Clarke's “primitive” and “anti-metaphysical” articulation of Trinitarian doctrine, never comes to terms with the reality that orthodoxy is historically contingent. Clarke's Trinitarian doctrine might have passed as orthodox in the second century, but Clarke didn't live in the second century. It is appropriate to speak of Clarke as an Antitrinitarian because he rejected and fought vigorously against the prevailing Trinitarian orthodoxy, grounded, as it was, in the Nicene definition. Clarke's rejection of the language of substance (ousia) also has further implications that Pfizenmaier fails to address. First, Clarke is liable of being regarded as an Appolinarian since he insists that the Holy Spirit is, under no circumstances, to be called by the name “God.” Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, 303; The Works, vol. 4, 154. Second, Clarke's theology also moves in the direction of tritheism not only because of his emphasis on the distinction of persons but because he rejects the notion of perichoresis, the mutual indwelling of divine persons. Clarke, The Scripture- Doctrine, 304; The Works, vol. 4, 155. For a nuanced account of the developing theological positions of the different parties in the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century, see, R. P. C. Hanson, The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God, The Arian Controversy, 318-381 (London: T & T Clarke, 2005).

102 Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, 454; The Works, vol. 4, 208. Clarke's attempt to present an interpretation of Christian doctrine void of “metaphysical reasonings” is an important plank in his proto-
Caesarea to justify his own subordinationist doctrine, the fathers he appeals to are predominantly Ante-Nicenes, and his personal favorites are Justin, Novatian, Tertullian, and Origen. Clarke states that it is necessary to paraphrase the New Testament “to represent the doctrine of our Saviour in its Original Simplicity, without respect to any Controversies in Religion.”

Samuel Clarke, preface to A Paraphrase on the four Evangelists, 4th ed. (London, 1722); Benjamin Hoadly, ed., preface to The Works of Samuel Clarke, vol. 3. Clarke shows a clear awareness that Christian doctrinal controversies were the seeds of the New Pyrrhonism. The great irony, however, is that by forcefully advocating his own version of the Trinity, Clarke merely contributed to the doctrinal confusion that proved so detrimental to the fortunes of Christianity. See Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Boyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 64-79.

Clarke insists that the works of these four writers, in particular, confirm that in the primitive era the term God refers to God the Father alone. Clarke refers to Origen twenty-four times, Justin twenty-one times, Novatian nine times, and Tertullian six.

Clarke is right to identify that Ante-Nicene views of the Trinity are often tinged by subordinationism. See Pfizenmaier, The Trinitarian, 91.

See Ferguson, An Eighteenth, 67. On Cranmer’s appeal to the fathers, see Quantin, The Church, 24-27.

Clarke’s biblicism appears peculiar in light of the extremely rationalistic vision of Christianity he endorses in his Boyle lectures, but it is actually consistent with it. In order to uphold the conviction that the New Testament is the supreme doctrinal authority, he has had to recast it as a storehouse of self-evident philosophical propositions.
Wake (1657-1737), and the “excellent” William Chillingworth (1602-44).\textsuperscript{107} Clarke quotes Chillingworth at length, and is sure to include Chilligworth’s biblicist rationale:\textsuperscript{108}

I see plainly and with mine own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one age against a Consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age.\textsuperscript{109}

For Chillingworth the appeal to tradition is discredited by lack of unanimity. Clarke, for his part, emphasizes that this lack of unanimity is symptomatic of a deeper problem: it confirms that tradition is human rather than divine testimony.

In an early work entitled Some Reflections on that Part of a Book called Amyntor Clarke seeks to defend the credibility of the Apostolic Fathers.\textsuperscript{110} Clarke however, is restrained in his endorsement. He argues that Christians have good authority to believe the works to be genuine, and yet he also insists that they are inferior to the works of the New Testament. The authority they possess for Christians is proportional to this lesser status. “Though the Matter of these Writings be such, as that they do therefore deserve very great Veneration and Respect,” says Clarke, “yet is there plainly something humane, something of infirmity, something of fallibility in them, for which they are with all

\textsuperscript{107} In the eighteenth century Chillingworth had become famous for the mantra, which Clarke quotes with approval: “The Bible, I say, the BIBLE only, is the Religion of Protestants.” Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, x-xi; The Works, vol. 4, v.

\textsuperscript{108} Clarke was confident that his Protestant appropriation of the “rule of faith” and his Antitrinitarian doctrine were consistent with those of Chillingworth himself. Clarke’s private manuscripts contain a copy of a letter from Chillingworth to a friend collated with the original. The letter strongly suggests that Chillingworth, like Clarke, rejected the Nicene definition. William Chillingworth, A letter from Chillingworth to an unknown recipient, Add. MS 7113, no. 3, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, UK.

\textsuperscript{109} Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, xi-xii; The Works, vol. 4, v. In the original the entire passage is written in italics.

\textsuperscript{110} Clarke’s work is a refutation of John Toland’s, Amyntor: Or, a Defence of Milton’s Life (London, 1699).
Reason thought inferior to the Writings of the Apostles.” Clarke insists that the Church of England is right to affirm the canonicity of the books of the New Testament as those books written “by the Apostles themselves . . . or which . . . were dictated, reviewed, and approved by them.” Clarke insists that Apostolic authority is derived from the authority of God in Christ.

Whatever our Lord himself taught (Because his Miracles proved his divine Authority,) was infallibly True, and to Us (in matters of Religion) the Rule of Truth. Whatever his Apostles preached, (because they were inspired by the same Spirit, and proved their Commission by the like Testimony of Miracles,) was likewise a Part of the Rule of Truth. Whatever the Apostles writ, (because they writ under the Direction of the same Spirit by which they preached) was in like manner a part of the Rule of Truth. Now in the Books of Scripture is conveyed down to us the Sum of what our Saviour taught, and of what the Apostles preached and writ.

The Apostles were guided by the infallible Spirit of God, and were, themselves, mere dictators of the spiritual revelation of Christ. Clarke, however, struggles to reconcile his doctrine of Apostolic infallibility with the particulars he encounters in Apostolic texts. He is ultimately forced to concede, for example, that “In the Epistles of the Apostles, the plain and universally necessary Doctrines, are intermixed indeed with particular and more difficult determinations of certain points of Controversy” and he therefore concludes that the Primitive Church “used to select out of These, the universally necessary and Fundamental Doctrines, wherein to instruct All persons, who, by believing and being baptized, were desirous to secure to themselves the Promise in the

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111 Samuel Clarke, *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell* (London, 1718), 273; *The Works*, vol. 3, 923. Clarke follows Newton in the way he rejects human authority as subject to corruption. Clarke’s devoted disciple John Jackson confided in him that although he had suffered greatly on account of his defense of Clarke’s *Scripture-Doctrine*, he took solace in the fact that Clarke had always taught him “to distinguish between humane and divine authority.” John Jackson, A letter to Samuel Clarke, Add. MS 7113, no. 9, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, UK.


Text, that, by so doing, they should be saved.”\textsuperscript{114} In other words, although it is possible to extract the marrow of the pure religion of Christ from the Epistles, the elements in the text that are evidently subject to human history must first be discarded. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Clarke consistently focuses upon the gospels.\textsuperscript{115}

As a preacher Clarke wants to hold up the piety and righteousness of the Apostolic Church as a beacon of light for Christians who find themselves “in these later and corrupter Ages of the Church,” but after having appealed to the purity of the Apostolic religion in its “primitive and purest Times,” Clarke concedes that the fall of the Church must be located at its inception.\textsuperscript{116} Idolatry is the constant enemy of the truth, and it has not been decisively overcome in the New Testament dispensation. Thus, Clarke styles it “the great Enemy to Christianity at the first planting of the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{117} When he studies the seven epistles to the Churches in Asia Clarke therefore bemoans that they have

\textsuperscript{114} Samuel Clarke, \textit{An Exposition of the Church-catechism} (London, 1729), 24; \textit{The Works}, vol. 3, 645.

\textsuperscript{115} Hoadly points out that Clarke wanted to write paraphrases of all New Testament books. According to Clarke’s own principles, however, such an undertaking was unnecessary, since he had already paraphrased the gospels, and even more importantly, the crystallization of the Revelation of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount. Hoadly, “preface,” iii. Samuel Clarke, \textit{A Paraphrase upon our Saviour’s Sermon on the Mount} (London, 1732).

\textsuperscript{116} Clarke, \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 1, 415; \textit{The Works}, vol. 1, 394; \textit{One Hundred}, vol. 2, 455; \textit{The Works}, vol. 2, 246. In his work, \textit{History and the Enlightenment}, Hugh Trevor-Roper celebrates the English deists as the heralds of modernity. Hugh-Roper’s fourth chapter, “From Deism to History,” doubles as a panegyric to deist Conyers Middleton. Trevor-Roper recounts the story of Middleton’s trip to Rome, and he concludes that like other Protestants, Middleton observed that “the distinguishing marks of popery which strike the visitor to the Holy City—the incense, the holy water, the altar lamps, the votive pictures, the images, the processions, and the miracles allegedly wrought by them” had at first been “denounced as ‘profane, damnable and impious’, ‘superstitious, abominable and irreconcilable with Christianity’, by the early Christian Church.” The history of Christianity thus became for Middleton the story of how “Pagan temples then became Christian churches,” and “pagan heroes were quietly turned into Christian saints.” The novelty of Middleton’s position, according to Trevor-Roper, is that whereas good Anglicans maintained that the Church’s deviation into idolatry began in the Middle Ages, Middleton believed that “the deviation began at the moment of its establishment.” Middleton’s position, however, echoes that of both Newton and Clarke. Hugh Trevor-Roper, \textit{History and Enlightenment} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 79. As I point out in note 98, most English Christians regarded the corruption of Christianity has having taken place far earlier than Trevor-Roper suggests.

\textsuperscript{117} Samuel Clarke, \textit{An Exposition of the Church-catechism} (London, 1729), 24; \textit{The Works}, vol. 3, 645.
already fallen from their first love.\textsuperscript{118} For Clarke even the New Testament itself attests to the devolution of divine revelation in human hands.

Ironically, although Clarke’s devolutionary interpretation of ecclesiastical history challenges his ability to affirm the canonicity of much of the New Testament, it is actually central to his New Testament apologetic. It is because the Church is inherently fallen that it must cling to Scripture. Clarke goes so far as to define the Church’s fall as its refusal to do so, and he quotes Matthew Hales (1609-76) to this end: “the common Disease of Christians from the beginning” was to refuse to “content themselves with that measure of Faith, which God and the Scriptures have expressly afforded us.”\textsuperscript{119} Like many Churchmen of his day, Clarke sees even the Reformed Church of England as standing in desperate need of reformation.\textsuperscript{120} Clarke began his literary career with a call for baptismal and liturgical reform, and a revised liturgy that remained incomplete at the time of death was published posthumously.\textsuperscript{121} His evangelistic zeal for the bible and his Antitrinitarian polemics are aspects of a single enterprise—the task of restoring Christianity to its primitive standard. But because Clarke, like Newton, finds that the primitive Church was, at its inception, already subject to the devolutionary force of history, the primitive standard he appeals to is, like the state of nature, ultimately hypothetical. The Christianity Clarke demonstrates to be deductively true in his Boyle lectures is a Christianity that cannot be located within human history, for only

\textsuperscript{118} Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 415; The Works, vol. 1, 394.  
\textsuperscript{119} Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, 474; The Works, vol. 4, vi.  
\textsuperscript{120} In the dedicatory epistle to his paraphrase Clarke endorses his own work as remedial of the fact that “Religion and Virtue . . . seem to be in great Danger.” Clarke, A Paraphrase, “The Epistle Dedicatory;” The Works, vol. 3, “The Epistle Dedicatory.” The fear that the church was in great danger was evidently not restricted to High Churchmen.  
\textsuperscript{121} Samuel Clarke, The Whole Duty of a Christian, Plainly Represented in Three Practical Essays, on Baptism, Confirmation, and Repentance, 2nd ed. (London, 1704); The Book of Common Prayer Reformed According to the Plan of the Late Dr. Samuel Clarke (London, 1774).
uncorrupted Christianity accords with reason.\textsuperscript{122} As a reformer Clarke, like Tindal, hopes to be able to restore "the true primitive, and natural Religion, implanted in Mankind from the Creation."\textsuperscript{123} But Clarke’s hope is set against the reality that religion is intractably historical.\textsuperscript{124} But since even the Apostles failed to secure the revelation of Christ against historical corruption, Clarke can hardly have expected that he and his Antitrinitarian friends would succeed.

The Old Testament: The Devolution of Natural Religion

Clarke, as we have seen, defends the New Testament by emphasizing its spiritual quality, but he still struggles with the fact that much of the New Testament appears to be subject to historical devolution. This problem, however, is far more acute in the Old Testament than in the New. Clarke finds that the Old Testament can be used to illustrate pristine natural religious principles. He equally maintains, however, that, as a testament to idolatry of ancient Jewish religion, it bears troubling marks of human corruption. Rather than deny this corruption, however, Clarke chooses to emphasize it to bring into relief the spiritual quality of the revelation of Christ. It is appropriate to speak of Clarke’s Old Testament as a sacrificial lamb: it is given over to the vicissitudes of history for the sake of the greater good, Clarke’s New Testament apologetic.

\textsuperscript{122} Clarke, Discourse, 13-15.  
\textsuperscript{123} Tindal, Christianity, 379.  
\textsuperscript{124} Clarke and his disciples saw it as their divine mandate to purify the Reformed Church of England from Trinitarian abominations. On February 26 1715 Jackson wrote to Clarke the following words, “See yt ye Eyes of Ye Clergy begin to be opened.” John Jackson, A letter to Samuel Clarke, 26 February, 1715, Add. MS 7113. When Clarke despaired ever achieving his objective he fell back upon the remnant theology of the Reformed tradition: “The great Design of God in all institutions of religion from the beginning of the World, has been to separate to himself, out of the corrupt and degenerate Bulk of Mankind, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 2, 274; The Works, vol. 2, 73.
Clarke preached from the New Testament far more frequently than from the Old Testament. His extant sermons from the Old Testament maintain that echoes of natural religious principles can be found within Old Testament texts. The divine attributes Clarke gleans from the Old Testament in his sermons are those he has already proved in his Demonstrations. Thus, for example, Clarke’s sermon on Malachi 3:6 provides him the occasion to defend his thesis of divine immutability, his sermon on 1 Kings 8:27, his thesis of divine omnipresence, his two sermons on Psalm 147:5, his thesis of divine omnipotence, and his sermon on Job 37:16, his thesis of divine omniscience. Similarly, the moral maxims Clarke extracts from the Old Testament are principles that have been previously expounded in his Discourse.

Clarke’s use of the Old Testament is analogous to his use of the Church Fathers. He is free to appeal to the Old Testament, in an ad hoc manner, and he does so to the extent that its testimony is not flagrantly contradicted by reason—but his appeal is discretionary. While the New Testament, at the very least, adds Christian particularity to the monotheism of natural religion, the Old Testament contributes nothing of the sort. It contains merely the vestiges of natural religion. Newton upheld the Old Testament because he believed it contained pristine knowledge that was inaccessible by other

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125 A mere 28 of 173 sermons (16.2%) contained in his collected works are on Old Testament texts. See The Works of Samuel Clarke, vols. 1 and 2.
126 Stephen perceptibly captures the difficulty of Clarke’s approach. Stephen asks, “How was a religion, resting upon abstract demonstration, to be fused with a religion resting upon, or at least involving, a certain series of historical beliefs? The records of a particular tribe, or family of nations, may be an insufficient basis for a religion which is to sum up the experience of the whole human race.” Stephen, History, 123.
128 A good example of this approach is Clarke’s sermon on the fear of the Lord, based on Job 23:15. Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 147-51; The Works, vol. 1, 147-51.
means. Clarke summarily dismisses this possibility, and he therefore refers to the Old Testament, not as “revelation,” but as the “Jewish law” or the “Jewish dispensation.”

Manuel observes that when, in the eighteenth-century, ancient “Judaism was no longer necessary for a rational religion in Europe, the Jews lost their place in the order of things and soon stood as naked aliens in a secular society.”¹²⁹ Sutcliffe argues that when philosemitism waned antisemitism was the victor.¹³⁰ The progression from philosemitism to anti-Judaism is evident in Clarke’s work. For Clarke, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is “professedly about the casting off the Jews, and the coming in of the Gentiles:”¹³¹ Paul’s argument in Romans is that,

"The Jewish religion having proved insufficient to make Men truly holy, as natural Religion had before done, there was therefore a necessity of setting up another institution of Religion, which might be more available and effectual to that end. Now the setting up a new institution of Religion, necessarily implying the abolishing of the old, it follows that Christianity was not to be added to Judaism, but that Judaism was to be changed into Christianity, i.e. that the Jewish Religion was from thence forward to cease, and the Christian to succeed in its Room."¹³²

Clarke’s valuation of Jewish religion is pragmatic rather than principled. He rejects it because he finds that it was morally impotent.

For Clarke the corruption of the Old Testament cannot simply be attributed to its problematic transmission history: the Sermon on the Mount offers “Exhortations to a more exalted, spiritual, and perfect manner of performing those Duties, than was before

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insisted on even by the true intent of the Law.”133 The true intent of the law, for Clarke, is that it should promote the same virtues as natural religion and Christian revelation.134 Clarke, as we have seen, is willing to preach from the Old Testament inasmuch as he finds vestiges of natural religion contained therein. On the whole, however, Clarke finds that the role the Old Testament plays is not to illumine the truths of natural religion, but to obscure them. This leads Clarke to speak of the Jewish religion as the antithesis of the Christian revelation. While the old covenant calls for “positive and carnal Ordinances,” the new covenant makes plain the “great duties of the moral and eternal law of God, which are absolute and in their own nature most acceptable to God.”135 While the fundamental duty of Jewish religion is the “anxious observance of the burdensome ceremonies of the Mosaic law,” the Christian revelation calls for inward and moral obedience.136 For Clarke,

The Duties of the Christian Religion are almost wholly moral and Spiritual, respecting the inwardDisposition of the Heart and Mind; whereas on the contrary, the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law were for the most part external, and, as the Apostle to the Hebrew stiles them, carnal ordinances, respecting chiefly the outward purification of the Body; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion Spirit, and the Jewish Religion Flesh.137

For Clarke the fleshly character of the Jewish Law inhibited the Jews from producing the inward spiritual virtues required by both natural and revealed religion.

134 In this one can detect the classic Reformed distinction between the moral, judicial and ceremonial laws. Like Calvin and the Puritans Clarke believes that while the judicial and ceremonial laws have been superseded, the moral law remains. Clarke affirms that the Old Testament, inasmuch as it testifies to moral law, gives echoes of the mathematical principles of natural religion.
135 Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 464; The Works, vol. 1, 441.
137 Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 522-23; The Works, vol. 2., 312. See also, Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 558-59; The Works, vol. 1, 535.
Clarke follows Spencer and Newton by justifying the “carnal ordinances” of the Jewish Law as gracious divine acts of accommodation. Clarke therefore claims to tolerate the Jewish Law as “an institution of Religion adapted by God in great condescension to the weak apprehensions of that people.” Clarke therefore claims to tolerate the Jewish Law as “an institution of Religion adapted by God in great condescension to the weak apprehensions of that people.” But he also rails against false apostles “who in a contentious manner endeavored to oblige all Christians to observe the Ceremonies of the Law of Moses.” For Clarke, Judaizers are heretics not merely because the Jewish dispensation has come to an end, but because religions that promote “carnal ordinances” are intractably at war with true religion. And since the Law of Moses, like these Judaizers, promotes “carnal ordinances” which suppress the practice of inward virtue, Moses must equally be regarded as an idolater, and the God of the Jews, a promoter of idolatry. This leaves Clarke with little ability to affirm the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. At the end of the day all that remains is the feeble argument that the Old Testament—the Jewish revelation—plays a positive role for Christians by highlighting the excellency of both natural religion and Christian revelation, which he narrowly defines as “the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles.”

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138 Clarke’s low opinion of the Jewish dispensation is succinctly expressed in a sermon on Galatians 4:4-5. Clarke paraphrases Galatians 4:3 as follows: being under the law, “We of the Jewish dispensation, were in bondage to the elements of the world.” By this Paul means to say that “The Jewish Law was an Institution of Religion adapted by God in great condescension to the weak apprehensions of that people; but when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to institute a more perfect form of Religion, after the settlement of which in the World the former dispensation was to cease.” Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 2, 523; The Works, vol. 2, 313.
139 Ibid. “All ceremonial observances,” says Clarke, have no intrinsic Goodness in the nature of the things themselves; Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 2, 174.
140 Clarke, One Hundred, vol. 1, 307; The Works, vol. 1, 293.
The Trinity and the Old Testament

Clarke’s appraisal of the Old Testament is refracted through the lens of his negative appraisal of Catholicism, but it can equally be said that his supercessionism fuels his hatred of popery. In both cases Clarke appeals to natural religion to strengthen the spiritualist foundation of his religious vision. Natural religion functions as the mathematical standard against which all religious expressions can be adjudicated, and because the revelation of Christ accords perfectly with natural religion, it can equally be used in this way. Thus when Clarke turns to the Old Testament and to Church history, he finds that the role of Israelite religion is to corrupt natural religion, and the role of Catholicism is to corrupt revealed religion.

Clarke’s devaluation of the Old Testament did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. In 1712 Clarke published his most notorious work, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*. The first tract written against Clarke's *Scripture-Doctrine* was an anonymous work entitled *An Essay towards an impartial account of the Trinity, and the deity of our Saviour, as contained in the Old Testament* (1712). The premise of the work is that while Clarke claims to have presented a comprehensive discussion of all the

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142 Natural religion remains always the same, “Under the several Dispensations of God’s true Religion in all Ages and in all Nations from the beginning of the World, either in Obedience to the Light of Nature, with Enoch and Noah and Job and the Patriarchs; or under the Law, with Moses and the Prophets; or under the Gospel, after the Example of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, have in Piety and Devotion, in Righteousness, Equity and Charity, in Holiness and Purity of Life, served God and kept his Commandments, either from the beginning of their Lives or from the time of their Forsaking their Sins by Repentance.” Clarke, *One Hundred*, vol. 1, 341; *The Works*, vol. 1, 323.

143 For Clarke, the Old Testament stands alongside other pagan histories as a testimony to the corruption of natural religion by human hands. When Clarke reads the Old Testament he finds exactly what he finds when he reads the classics. We might even say that for Clarke the Old Testament has become secular history: like other secular histories of antiquity it contains vestiges of natural religion, but like other secular histories its primary function is to prove the principle of religious devolution. Like the classics, the primary positive role it plays, therefore, is to attest to the need for the pure spiritual revelation of Christ.
relevant Scriptural texts, all 1251 texts he discusses are from the New Testament. The work therefore argues that once the Old Testament is brought into consideration, Clarke’s subordinationist *Scripture-Doctrine* falters. Clarke, not surprisingly, was uninspired by the argument, and he did not bother to reply either to it, or to the other early pamphlets that attacked his work.\textsuperscript{144}

When the illustrious Dr. Edward Wells (1667-1727), Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, entered the fray however, Clarke was forced to take note. Like Clarke’s first opponent, Wells begins his pamphlet by taking Clarke to task for failing to consider the testimony of the Old Testament. Most of Wells’ work, however, is a criticism of Clarke’s refusal to accept the testimony of the Church Fathers.\textsuperscript{145} Wells may well have detected at lack of respect for historical testimony underlying Clarke’s aversion for both the Old Testament and the Fathers, but he fails to expressly articulate this view. Clarke responded by saying that he was greatly surprised that such an able scholar as Wells was unable to muster a more substantial argument against him: “Is this,” asks Clarke, the Arguing of a Man accustomed to Mathematical Studies?”\textsuperscript{146} Clarke tersely rebuts Wells’ criticism concerning the Old Testament by acknowledging that while the Old Testament contains predictions concerning the coming of the Christian Messiah, it does not contain the doctrine of the Trinity, and he boasts that neither Wells nor anyone else

\textsuperscript{144} In his letter to Wells Clarke says that he remained silent for a year and a half because the only responses his work had elicited were completely unintelligible. Clarke, *A Letter to the Reverend, 3; The Works*, vol. 4, 225.


\textsuperscript{146} Clarke, *A Letter to the Reverend, 50; The Works*, vol. 4, 242.
can produce a single Old Testament text that does.\textsuperscript{147} Indeed, Clarke isn’t even sure why Wells would want to try. Such a testimony is unnecessary for “the New Testament itself is clear enough to give us the sense of the words.”\textsuperscript{148} In the preface to The Scripture-Doctrine he had boasted that he had “examined thoroughly” the nature of the Trinity “by a serious study of the Whole Scripture,” and on this basis that he insists there is no need to consult either the Church Fathers or the Prophets.\textsuperscript{149} Clarke’s rhetoric betrays him: for Clarke the terms Scripture and New Testament are synonymous.

Wells responded quickly to Clarke’s defiant letter. Wells remained undeterred, insisting that, “the Doctrin of the Trinity is in several Texts of the O.T. reveal’d in a manner Suitable to the Then Dispensation.”\textsuperscript{150} James Knight developed Wells’ argument in his The True Scripture Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Knight insists

The Gospel was contained and published to the Jews, under the Vail of the Law: And the Bulk of that People saw not through the Vail, but rested in the Letter and Ceremonies of the Law; yet, notwithstanding this Blindness, the Gospel was there, and consequently the Fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel Dispensation, the Trinity in Unity.\textsuperscript{151}

Clarke replied that while Knight could only muster forty Old Testament texts in favour of his feeble definition, he had over three hundred New Testament texts in favour of

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\textsuperscript{147} Clarke, A Letter to the Reverend, 7; The Works, vol. 4, 226. Clarke sees no need to try to understand individual passages by considering them in light of the “whole Scope and general Tenour of Scripture,” as Wells maintains, for understanding the “whole Scope and general Tenour of Scripture” is simply a matter of understanding the particular meanings of all the particular passages in Scripture. Thus for Clarke, there is no need to first attend to the Old Testament in order to understand the New. Clarke, A Letter to the Reverend, 67; The Works, vol. 4, 245. Clarke fails to address the fact that the Old Testament was the primary source that the Ante-Nicenes used in the construction of Trinitarian theology. This reliance upon the Old Testament is most starkly observed, however, in the Nicene controversies themselves, which were dominated by discussions concerning the meaning of Proverbs 8:22-23. \textsuperscript{148} Ferguson, An Eighteenth, 67. \\
\textsuperscript{149} Clarke, The Scripture-Doctrine, “Preface,” The Works, vol. 4, “Preface.” \\
\textsuperscript{150} Edward Wells, A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Clarke (Oxford, 1713), 3-4. \\
\textsuperscript{151} James Knight, The True Scripture Doctrine of the most Holy and Undivided Trinity (London, 1715), 20.
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his.\textsuperscript{152} The pamphlet exchange between Wells, Clarke and Knight confirms that although the controversy began as an argument concerning the authority and integrity of the Nicene definition, the Old Testament itself was on trial. In the early eighteenth-century context the Christian doctrine of the Trinity had come to be seen as the most important distinguishing feature of the Christian religion—and perhaps the only feature, which set it apart from natural religion. To concede to Clarke that the Old Testament had nothing to add to the construction of Trinitarian theology was therefore to concede that it was something less than Christian Scripture.

What Clarke’s opponents failed to see, however, was that it was mathematically impossible for Clarke to alter his position. Clarke’s exegesis was bound to an underlying presupposition about the mathematical nature of truth. Clarke’s theory of linguistic signification can be described as a theory of singular referentiality. For Clarke, each word in any given language must be assigned but one referent. It is thus impossible for a single word, namely, the word God, to refer to three persons at the same time.\textsuperscript{153} Clarke is convinced that his Antitrinitarian position is buttressed by mathematical logic: \[1 = 1 / 1 \neq 3.\] On this account his exegetical method places New Testament words under the microscope and then assigns them either to the Father, to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit. When Clarke studies the term God in the New Testament he finds that it almost

\textsuperscript{152} Ferguson, \textit{An Eighteenth}, 74. This suggests that Clarke holds, not only that the process of constructive theology is simply a matter of finding proof texts, but also that the true theological definition is the definition that lines up with the most proof texts. Clarke is driven to this peculiar conclusion because his epistemology and his hermeneutic make him unable to deal constructively with the diverse voices found within Scripture.

\textsuperscript{153} Clarke, \textit{The Scripture-Doctrine}, 304; \textit{The Works}, vol. 4, 155. Clarke’s logic is the direct antithesis of the logic underlying the Nicene definition, which Lonergan describes as follows: “Whatever propositions are true of the Father are also true of the Son, except that the Father is Father and not Son and that the Son is Son and not Father.” Bernard Lonergan, \textit{A Second Collection} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 251. According to the Nicene definition all three divine persons are simultaneously at work in every divine action. From this it follows that every divine person is being referred to, at least in a derivative way, when any one divine person is mentioned in Scripture.
invariably refers to God the Father—and on those few occasions when it actually does refer to Jesus Christ, it refers to him differently, in a derivative and inferior sense.

Whereas Newton believes he must engage the latest text-critical scholarship to uncover the marrow of true doctrine from the New Testament, Clarke beams with confidence that the New Testament, as it now stands, expresses the doctrine of the early Church in mathematical form.

When Clarke applies his standard of mathematical reason to the Old Testament, Clarke finds little worth salvaging. But the point isn’t so much that the Old Testament has been tried and found wanting. The point is that is has become unnecessary even to try: Clarke doesn’t need to look at the Old Testament for Trinitarian proof texts because he already knows he will find only confused and degraded Jewish ramblings that will afford little assistance in his quest for doctrinal perspicuity. In other words, Clarke’s dispensational scheme gives him the justification he needs to ignore the Old Testament. Clarke’s opponents couldn’t possibly expect him to use the Old Testament in his constructive theology, since for Clarke, the Old Testament is a figure of historical devolution, the ancient equivalent of the innovative Trinitarian theology he seeks to overcome. Clarke’s opponents might just as well have expected Clarke to attend a Roman Mass to uncover the true Eucharistic doctrine instituted by Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed.

**Conclusion**

In his *Historical Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Clarke* Whiston challenged the notion that Clarke was a fundamentally creative thinker. His philosophy was, Whiston
maintains, “generally no other than Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophy; tho’ frequently applied by Dr. Clarke, with great Sagacity, and to excellent purposes, upon many Occasions.” Clarke appropriates Newton’s conviction that providence is most clearly seen in the mathematical regularities of natural law, and like Newton he therefore aspires to defend the Christian religion by demonstrating the consistency of Scripture and mathematics. With Newton as well as with Clarke mathematics is a tool that can be used to sift through the wreckage of history to identify vestiges of natural religion. But whereas Newton interprets mathematics and vernaculars as distinct languages, Clarke blur this distinction. Newton attempts to uphold the Old Testament by digging beneath the surface of linguistic signifiers to uncover mathematical data, and thereby salvage texts that have been corrupted by the devolutionary force of history. This is not possible for Clarke. Because he believes vernaculars can have the property of being mathematical he has no recourse but to devalue propositions and texts that fail this standard, and in this, his work represents a further step towards positivism.

Clarke’s willingness to grant that unquantifiable elements of human discourse can be considered mathematical enables him to bind linguistic statements to mathematical certainties and therefore powerfully defend the elements of revealed religion as consistent with natural religion. Clarke’s concept of mathematical reasoning, therefore, is an important development within Newtonian philosophy that enables it to be skillfully employed for apologetic ends. Clarke’s application of mathematical

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Whiston, *Historical*, 122. Whiston regards Clarke as Newton’s closest friend. Ibid., 96. Given Clarke’s fidelity to his master, it comes as a surprise that Clarke ignores Newton’s mathematization of the Old Testament. Clarke’s own engagement with the Old Testament was inevitably shaped by the demands imposed upon him by parish ministry. The Church of England lectionary continually reminded him that his task, as a priest in the Church of England, was to preach from the Old Testament as well as the New. In all likelihood Clarke found Newton’s approach to the Old Testament useless in this regard.
reasoning to the Christian religion, however, comes at an enormous cost. In order to affirm the consistency of Christian and mathematical reasoning Clarke is forced to deny that the Christian religion is a “historically positive” religion. For Clarke the Christian religion is the spiritual revelation of Jesus Christ, a religion without history or progeny: the Jewish religion that precedes it and the Christian tradition that follows it are not expressions of true religion, but corruptions of it.

Clarke gave his parishioners and his readers little reason to uphold the Old Testament. On occasion Clarke found Old Testament texts that bear only the superficial marks of devolution and could therefore be used to reflect upon the principles of natural religion. On the whole, however, the “carnal ordinances” of the Jewish law suppress the formation of Christian virtue. Furthermore, Clarke categorically rejected the idea that the Old Testament has a constructive role to play in Christian theology. Given this meager valuation it comes as no surprise that Wells and his allies believed they needed to defend the Old Testament. Although their controversy with Clarke concerned the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the question of the status of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture quickly became central to the debate. Clarke’s opponents failed to perceive that Clarke’s rejection of the Nicene definition and his devaluation of the Old Testament were both rooted in his devolutionary philosophy of history. They were not, however, the only ones to worry that Clarke’s work threatened both Christian orthodoxy and the Christian Scripture. Nor were they alone in their failure to identify the root of the ailment. John Hutchinson, the noisiest opponent of Newtonianism, was soon to follow suit on both accounts.
JOHN HUTCHINSON

In 1724 John Hutchinson published *Moses' Principia*, the first of twelve volumes of physico-theology intended to reassert the authority of the Old Testament over the lives of his countrymen. Robert Spearman (1703-1761) claimed these works made “no inconsiderable noise in the learned world,”¹ and a century later Edward Churton (1800-74) was still able to say that Hutchinson was “a man of some note among the philosophers of the eighteenth century.”² If we are to believe Hutchinson, none other than Samuel Clarke read his second volume and sent a gentleman to him “with high Compliments of the Performance, and Discoveries made in that book.”³ Like Clarke himself, however, Hutchinson’s place in the history of eighteenth-century thought has been largely forgotten. If Hutchinson is remembered at all, he is either grudgingly acknowledged as the fountainhead of the movement that bears his name, or he finds his

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² Edward Churton, ed., *Memoir of Joshua Watson*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1861), 39. Churton summarizes Hutchinson’s contribution as follows: “he became the founder of in school of theology and philosophy which held that the Divine Author of the universe revealed to mankind at the beginning a system of physical truth, which Moses republished in writing. His writings were voluminous, and dealt much in types and emblems, to which, however, it is impossible to deny the praise of great ingenuity.” Ibid., 40.
³ John Hutchinson, *A Treatise of Power Essential and Mechanical* (London, 1732), 309. Spearman claims that Hutchinson’s natural philosophical defense of the Trinity struck “Dr. Samuel Clarke so forcibly, that he sent a gentleman to Mr. Hutchinson, with compliments upon the performance, but that there was one proposition which he hoped was not true, and desired a conference with him about it.” Spearman, *A Supplement*, ix. Hutchinson claims that he refused to meet with Clarke, since he “had been too forward in Writing about Subjects he knew nothing of.” And if we are to believe Hutchinson, Clarke “lived about a year after, and never rested himself, nor never let me rest about it, till as I am informed, he began about three Months before his Death, to study Hebrew, which did not agree with his Constitution; so he had not Time to relent, nor even to know what he had been doing.” Hutchinson, *A Treatise*, 310. Hutchinson also says that he was informed that like Clarke, Newton saw the second part of *Moses’s Principia* before he died and “expressed himself much concerned at the attempt, but did not relent.” Ibid., 309. Kuhn relates that it “amused the Hutchinsonians to no end that Clarke, supposedly just before he died, began to study Hebrew.” Albert Kuhn, “Glory or Gravity: Hutchinson vs. Newton,” *Journal of the History of ideas* 22, no. 3 (1961): 311.
place in the footnotes of Newtonian scholarship as Newton’s noisiest and most peculiar adversary.⁴

Despite this opposition to Newton and Clarke, Hutchinson wholeheartedly agrees with them that divine providence is supremely evident in the mechanical operations of nature because they are not subject to devolutionary history.

Hutchinson’s Old Testament apologetic therefore attempts to demonstrate that the Book of Scripture accords with the Book of Nature. To this end Hutchinson interprets Hebrew words as emblems that reveal the providential order of nature. Because he believes that the historical realm is subject to devolution, however, he finds he must remove Hebrew words from their Old Testament contexts and recast them as primordial hieroglyphs. This causes problems for his apologetic. First, the extent to which Hutchinson is able to successfully isolate the Old Testament from the historical realm is also the extent to which he makes it irrelevant for Christian life and conduct. Second, because Hutchinson must remove Hebrew words from Scripture and recast them in a different idiom in order to salvage them, he may well be guilty of following the Newtonians in leaving the Old Testament behind.

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Hutchinson’s Natural Philosophy

Hutchinson spent most of his adult life in the service of Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset (1662-1748). Churton relates that Hutchinson “passed many of his early years as the steward of some northern colieries, and seems to have been led to his first attempts in natural science by observations of things found in the bowels of the earth.” In 1700 Hutchinson travelled to London in this capacity to engage a lawsuit “of considerable consequence.” He undertook several experimental pursuits during his first years in London. Like Clarke and other young Newtonians, Hutchinson was captivated by the possibility of being able to render human knowledge mathematical. To this end he created a contraption “for the more exact Measuring of Time, both in Motion and at Rest,” and boasted that he had successfully “mathematized” the science of timekeeping. And when the guild of London clockmakers refused to grant him a patent, Hutchinson insisted that it was on account of their ignorance of the mathematical sciences. The lawsuit that ensued, however, was decided in favour of the clockmakers, and Hutchinson was forced to direct his experimental ambitions elsewhere.

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5 Churton, Memoir, 20.
6 Spearman, A Supplement, ii.
7 Some of Hutchinson’s notes on his early experiments can be found in the Catcott Collection. John Hutchinson, Early natural philosophical experiments, Add. MS B 2, 6063, Bristol Central Library, Bristol, UK. Hutchinson boasts that “as soon as I was engaged in this town, several of our philosophers sought my acquaintance . . . introduced me into the Royal Society, and there asked me infinite numbers of questions.” John Hutchinson, A Treatise, 242. Hutchinson also confesses that throughout the course of his many conversations with the members of the Society it became evident that they did not see eye to eye. This, at least, is the story that Hutchinson tells to account for the fact that he was never elected to the Society. Hutchinson, A Treatise, 239-40. Levine and English both think that Hutchinson knew Newton personally. Joseph Levine, Dr. Woodward’s Shield: History, Science, and Satire in Augustan England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 42-43; John English, “John Hutchinson’s Critique of Newtonian Heterodoxy,” in Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture 58, no. 3 (1999): 582.
8 John Hutchinson, Reasons for the Bill, Entituled, a Bill for Securing to Mr. John Hutchinson the Property of a Movement Invented by him . . . (London, 1712?).
9 Spearman gives a fascinating account of Hutchinson’s struggle to have his time-keeping device acknowledged by the establishment. According to Spearman, it was intended to solve one of the great problems of eighteenth-century experimental science, the longitudinal problem. Spearman claims that in
Hutchinson met John Woodward (1665-1728) shortly after his arrival in London and was employed by Somerset and Woodward simultaneously for a number of years. Woodward had been appointed Professor of Physick at Gresham College in 1692. He was elected to the Royal Society on Robert Hooke’s recommendation in 1693, and quickly became one of its most powerful figures. Widely recognized as one of the nation’s leading antiquarians and geologists, his claim to fame was *An Essay Towards a Natural History of the Earth* (1695), which employed Newtonian universal gravitation to defend the historicity of the Mosaic account of the deluge. As Levine points out, some regarded it as giving “full evidence of the certainty of every single natural

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1712 Newton and “other persons qualified” approved of Hutchinson’s contraption, and that Hutchinson “even obtained testimonials under their hands, of the perfection and usefulness of his machine.” Nevertheless, when the application was made to parliament, Hutchinson was wrongly “dropped by those who had promised to support his pretensions.” Spearman, *A Supplement*, x. A similar account of Whiston’s difficulties having his proposed solution to the longitude problem recognized by Newton and parliament can be found in James E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian* (New York: Oxford University Press), 22. Interestingly, even John Harrison, the country clockmaker that ultimately solved the problem with his invention of the chronometer struggled to have his invention acknowledged. See Jonathan Siegel, “Law and Longitude,” *Tulane Law Review* 84 (2009): 1-66.

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10 After he settled in London, Hutchinson continued to travel widely to manage the Duke’s estates. He also found employment collecting “fossils” (geological specimens) and gathering geological data for Woodward’s geological research. Woodward sent Hutchinson to the Welsh highlands in search of confirmation for his theory of the deluge. Hutchinson managed to collect several boxes of materials, including “shells and other curiosities” and sent them back to Woodward. The contents may well have been the specimens they later quarreled over. Hutchinson sent a number of letters to Woodward that document the course of his travels. John Hutchinson, Letters from Hutchinson to Woodward, MSS Gough Wales 8, Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK. Hutchinson relates that while he was abroad he was “continually making, and successively made new Observations and Collections, and sent the Collections generally by Sea to him, and at my return picked out those Specimens which were most proper for Evidence, digesting them into Classes, (for he did not know one Species from another) numbering them and describing them in my Catalogue.” Hutchinson, *A Treatise*, 241-42. Hutchinson’s travels led to the publication of a pamphlet entitled, *Observations made by J. H. Mostly in the year 1706* (London, 1710?).

11 Woodward, Newton, and Clarke would have known each other well, not merely because all were prominent members of the Royal Society, but because they worshipped together in the same Anglican parish. Mr. Allen, A Letter from Mr. Allen to John Woodward, 15 December 1725, Add. 7647, 24, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, UK. Newton and Woodward had a stormy relationship, but Hutchinson claims that they were reconciled in 1713-14. Hutchinson, *A Treatise*, 243.

12 Woodward had claimed that the record of geological strata confirmed both the veracity of the Mosaic account of the deluge and the Newtonian theory of gravitation because sediment and fossils could be found in layers that could be classified according to the relative weight of the deposits contained therein, with the lightest objects found in the upper layers of strata. John Woodward, *An Essay towards a Natural History of the Earth*, 3rd ed. (London, 1723), Preface.
proposition that Moses has laid down.”\textsuperscript{13} Woodward intended to publish a sequel that would divulge “the Structure and Use of the Parts of Animals” and “employ gravity to make those parts move.”\textsuperscript{14} He promised to show the completed work to Hutchinson, but Hutchinson began to doubt whether Woodward really intended to finish the work. When Woodward left the room in haste one day Hutchinson opened Woodward’s book and “His worst suspicions were confirmed; he found . . . only a few heads of chapters and many blank pages” and concluded the Woodward was a great pretender.\textsuperscript{15} Hutchinson immediately lost all confidence not only in Woodward, but also in the Newtonianism Woodward claimed could solve the riddles of nature.\textsuperscript{16} Hutchinson’s subsequent falling out with Woodward marks the beginning of Hutchinsonianism.\textsuperscript{17} Hutchinson took it upon himself to write the natural philosophical treatise Woodward was unable to deliver: \textit{Moses’s Principia} is both the sequel to Woodward’s \textit{Essay}, and its refutation.

Hutchinson’s experiences with the clockmaker guild and with Woodward were episodes in his abortive attempt to earn the acceptance of a natural philosophical establishment broadly characterized as “Newtonian.” Hutchinson’s hostility to

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\item\textsuperscript{13} Levine, \textit{Dr. Woodward’s}, 34.
\item\textsuperscript{14} Hutchinson, \textit{Moses’s}, 95. Hutchinson was later to follow Woodward’s approach by attempting to use his corpuscularian ethereal theory to account for all the movements of the human body. John Hutchinson, \textit{An Attempt to Explain the Oeconomy of the Human Frame upon the Principles of the New Philosophy}, vol. 5 of \textit{The Philosophical and Theological Works of the Late Truly Learned John Hutchinson}, ed. Robert Spearman and Julius Bate (London, 1749).
\item\textsuperscript{15} Levine, \textit{Dr. Woodward’s}, 97. For Hutchinson’s tumultuous relationship with Woodward see Hutchinson, \textit{Moses’s}, 78-97.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Spearman claims that it was a work Woodward “engaged to draw up, but seems never to have had any real intention of doing, only designing to make this a pretence to engage Mr. Hutchinson more earnestly in collecting mineral materials.” Spearman, \textit{A Supplement}, iv.
\item\textsuperscript{17} When Hutchinson and Woodward fell out the dispute quickly shifted from an argument about the contents of Woodward’s folio to a legal dispute about the ownership of the fossils and documented geological observations. Hutchinson ultimately sent a solicitor to Woodward, but the matter was closed upon Woodward’s death. Hutchinson, \textit{A Treatise}, 243-44.
\end{enumerate}
Newtonianism follows in the wake of this rejection. Woodward played a leading role in provoking this hostility, and it comes as no surprise, therefore, that Hutchinson claims in his Principia that his primary target is Woodward rather than Newton, who was guilty by association. Hutchinson’s object is not merely to “set aside [Woodward’s] pretended discoveries,” and ridicule “Gravity and all his Performance,” but to show the world that Woodward “stole and distributed my observations, and intended to rob me of my collection.” Hutchinson’s natural philosophical project is the fruit of his personal dispute with Woodward. Confident that he had vanquished Woodward (“our Undertaker”) with Moses’s Principia, however, Hutchinson set his sights on even more illustrious targets: Clarke (“the Reviver”) and Newton himself (“our Author”).

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18 Hutchinson was a country boy that came to the city with limited education, was rejected by the intellectual establishment, and fought back by proposing a radical new paradigm that sought nothing less than the overturning of that establishment. Hutchinson was not merely a conservative. He was an iconoclast.

19 Hutchinson rejected Newtonian natural philosophy as he encountered it in Woodward’s work. There are no references to Newton’s work in Moses’s Principia. It is only in later works that Hutchinson shows any evidence of having read Newton. In his twelve volumes I have found seven references to Newton’s Opticks (Hutchinson, A Treatise, 200, 234, 236, 246, 252, 265; Glory or Gravity, Essential or Mechanical [London, 1733], 93) and four references to his Principia (Hutchinson, A Treatise, 234, 245, 258, 306).

20 Hutchinson, A Treatise, 243. Hutchinson was embittered by the fact that Woodward always “set [him] down in print as his footman” rather than his partner. Hutchinson, Moses’s, 96.

21 Hutchinson claims that Woodward confessed in private that “we know nothing of the Manner of the Formation of the Antediluvian Earth by Revelation” but the slightest of things. This confirmed for Hutchinson that, despite appearances, Woodward wasn’t actually interested in allowing the words of Moses to govern his natural philosophy. Ibid., 96. Hutchinson’s disciples affectionately called him the “Mosaic philosopher.” William Jones, The Memoirs of the Life, Studies, and Writings of the Right Reverend George Horne (London, 1795), 22.

22 Hutchinson refers to Woodward simply as “our Undertaker” throughout Moses’s Principia. Hutchinson, Moses’s, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 88, 90, 95, 96, 98. Aston mistakenly assumes the term refers to Newton. Nigel Aston, “From Personality to Party: the creation and transmission of Hutchinsonianism, c. 1725-1750,” Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science 35 (2004): 628. Hutchinson is more cautious in his treatment of Newton, whose reputation as England’s greatest philosopher was beyond question. Hutchinson calls Newton “our Author,” “our mathematical Author,” or “our philosophical Author.” Hutchinson, A Treatise, 174, 181, 205, 211, 227, 240, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 251, 252, 253, 256, 259, 265, 270, 272, 279, 282, 283, 297, 302, 309. In later volumes Hutchinson refers to Newton by name. John Hutchinson, Moses’s—Sine Principio (London, 1729), 81; The Covenant in the Cherubim: So the Hebrew Writings Perfect (London, 1734), 269, 272; Glory or Gravity, 62; The Religion of Satan, or Antichrist,
Although it was Woodward that instigated Hutchinson’s rejection of the natural philosophical culture he inhabited, Newton and Clarke became Hutchinson’s primary targets. Hutchison complains that Newtonian natural philosophy is too empirical and not empirical enough, that it is too mechanistic and not mechanistic enough, that it is both pantheistic and materialistic, and above all that it is rationalistic rather than

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Delineated (London, 1736), 115; The Use of Reason Recovered (London, 1736), 158; A Treatise, 181, 282. Hutchinson’s editors evidently added Newton’s name to the second edition of A Treatise of Power as it is not found in the first edition of the work. Hutchinson calls Clarke “the Reviver” or the “Reviver of Jupiter” because he claims that Clarke’s God is none other than the ancient pagan Jupiter. John Hutchinson, A New Account of the Confusion of Tongues (London, 1731), 105; A Treatise, 251, 253, 258, 261, 272, 275, 282, 296, 303, 309, 311. Hutchinson refers to Clarke by name in: Glory or Gravity, the Mechanical or Second Part (London, 1733), 62, 90, 91; The Religion, 115; The Use, 25. See also, Robert Spearman and Julius Bate, eds., Abstract from the Works of John Hutchinson (London, 1753), 165. Hutchinson refers to Woodward more cordially as “my Partner” in A Treatise of Power. In this work Hutchinson suggests that Woodward’s suspect orthodoxy is confirmed by his association with the notorious deist John Toland. Hutchinson, A Treatise, 19, 243, 245, 251, 278.

Hutchinson’s A Treatise of Power, for example, explicitly sets out to refute both Newton’s natural philosophy and Clarke’s Trinitarian theology. Hutchinson may have been convinced that no further controversy with Woodward was necessary since he had decisively refuted him in his first work. Woodward’s credibility as a scholar was widely questioned in the last years of his life. Like Whiston, he became a favorite object of Scribblerian invective, mostly on account of his defense of the authenticity of his beloved “Roman” shield. See Joseph Levine, Dr. Woodward’s, 2-4, 114-32, 255-58.

Hutchinson complains that the preference Newton and other “moderns” have for empirical data leads them to ignore the Scriptures, and that they have a naïve confidence in their ability to interpret sensory data. Hutchinson, Glory, 3-4. Ironically, Hutchinson’s confidence in his own interpretation of sensory data led the editor of his collected works to boast that Hutchinson’s “method of judging from appearances, in such a course of experiments, must be acknowledged to be far superior to any of those upon which Sir Isaac Newton built his Gravitational System.” Spearman, A Supplement, ix.

Hutchinson worries that Newton is too mechanistic because he believes that God only exists where matter is present. Hutchinson, A Treatise, 9; Moses’s Principia, Part II (London, 1727), 10-11. On the other hand, Hutchinson rejects Newtonian natural philosophy as a failure because it is unable to provide a “real material Cause” to “carry on any Motion or Action in any article.” Ibid., iii. Hutchinson’s complaint that Newton makes matter co-equal with God echoes George Berkeley’s argument in De Motu (1721). In 1751 Berkeley told a friend, “As for Mr. Hutchinson’s writings, I am not acquainted with them. I live in a remote corner, where many modern things escape me. Only this I can say, that I have observed that author to be mentioned as an enthusiast, which gave me no prepossession in his favour.” George Berkeley, A Letter from Berkeley to Johnson, 25 July 1751, Letter 377 in The Correspondence of George Berkeley, ed. Marc Hight (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). It is likely, nevertheless, that Berkeley did acquire some knowledge of Hutchinson before he died, since he spent his last years in Oxford attending to the education of his son during the heyday of Oxonian Hutchinsonian, and since his son, George Berkeley Jr., was an intimate friend of George Horne and William Jones, and was to become, if not a Hutchinsonian, than certainly a great Hutchinsonian ally.

Hutchinson believed that Newton’s God constitutes infinite space. Hutchinson, A Treatise, 148. Hutchison was not the first to interpret Newtonianism in pantheistic terms. See John Toland, Letters to Serena (London, 1704), 234. Leibniz also found Newtonianism to be pantheistic, and Clarke and Leibniz argued endlessly about the meaning and implications of Newton’s obscure statement that space constitutes God’s “sensorium.” Samuel Clarke and Gottlieb Leibniz, Correspondence, ed. Roger Ariew...
Scriptural. In order to establish his peculiar brand of Scripture-philosophy Hutchinson finds it necessary to refute the prevailing natural philosophical opinions of his day. He focuses his attacks upon Newton both because of Newton’s overwhelming influence, and because he worries that Newton’s unquestioned authority threatens the authority of the bible. For Hutchinson, Newton and Clarke stand at the head of a vast army of apostate natural philosophers that threaten to destroy biblical authority, and indeed, civilization itself.

Hutchinson’s Trinitarian natural philosophy is directed against both Newton and Clarke. Contra Clarke Hutchinson insists that the doctrine of the Trinity is imprinted on the Old Testament text, and contra Newton he insists that creation bears a Trinitarian rather than monotheistic divine signature. Hutchinson’s violent rejection of Newton’s theory of universal gravitation is theologically motivated. He worries that Newton’s

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27 Hutchinson’s greatest fear is that Newtonian natural philosophy puts confidence in human reason rather than biblical authority. Hutchinson complains that, “as long as gravity stands, Moses cannot be explain’d.” Hutchinson, Moses’s, 98. Hutchinson’s criticisms of Newton, even those that appear contradictory, should be taken seriously. Hutchinson was not the only one to oppose Newton on either natural philosophical or theological grounds. See Scott Mandelbrote, “Eighteenth-Century Reactions to Newton’s Anti-Trinitarianism,” in Newton and Newtonianism: New Studies, ed. James E. Force and Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2004), 93-112. Many of Hutchinson’s criticisms echo those of Berkeley, the forcefulness of which only came to be acknowledged in the nineteenth century. See W. G. L. Randles, The Unmaking of the Medieval Christian Cosmos, 1500-1760: From Solid Heavens to Boundless Aether (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999), 132; Michael Buckley, The Origins of Modern Atheism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 118.

theory is the foundation of Newtonian Antitrinitarianism. Hutchinson attributes to
Newton the view that God’s dominion over creation is only exercised where he is
physically present. Hutchinson is convinced, therefore, that by making gravity
ubiquitous, Newton’s intent is to make God ubiquitous. And since Newton and Clarke
reserve the name God for God the Father alone, this means there is literally no place left
for the Son or the Holy Spirit to dwell, and they are accordingly consigned to creaturely
status. Hutchinson affirms the position he ascribes to Newton inasmuch as he holds
that, “tis necessary, that the mental Powers, and Powers of Action in a ruling Substance,
should be extended as far as that Substance has Occasion to rule.” But whereas
Newton endorses a monotheistic omnipresence, Hutchinson insists that God makes
himself present in creation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by taking the form of the fire,
the light, and wind. For Hutchinson, fire, light and wind are merely different

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29 Hutchinson, A Treatise, 154-61. For a discussion of the extent to which Newton's heterodox leanings
were known to the public see Larry Stewart, “Seeing Through the Scholium: Religion and Reading
Newton in the Eighteenth Century,” History of Science 34, no. 2 (1996): 123-65; Scott Mandelbrote,
“Eighteenth-Century Reactions to Newton’s Anti-Trinitarianism,” in Newton and Newtonianism: New
30 In Grant’s words, Newton “made God’s literal omnipresence the foundation of his physics, the basis for
the maintenance of its mathematical laws and therefore of lawful cosmic operation.” Edward Grant, Much
Ado About Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution
31 Hutchinson argues that, Newton “could not avoid the Trinity, without making one person infinitely
extended, so that there could be Room for no more Persons but one” and that “our Author has made
[God] no right Hand nor no left Hand; for by making his Substance infinitely extended, he has left no
Room for him, to place Matter, Creatures, Hell or Devils out of his Substance.” Hutchinson, A Treatise, 179.
181.
32 Ibid., 158; Hutchinson insists that the essence of God must constitute infinite space. Ibid., 163. See also,
33 Dobb’s groundbreaking work The Janus Faces of Genius offers a fascinating account of the various
causal interpretations of gravity that Newton wrestled with throughout his life. Dobb’s concludes that
Newton was unhappy with his life’s work because he had not found the vegetative principle or the cause
of gravity, but she relates that in his later years he came to believe that there was a link between light and
electricity, that the electrical ether was a source of particulate activity, and that Christ’s mediation
insures the uniform gravitational motions of the heavenly bodies. B. J. T. Dobbs, The Janus Faces of Genius:
The Role of Alchemy in Newton’s thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 247-48. The
many points of contact between Newton and Hutchinson’s ethereal theories are grounded in their
common and unquestioned belief in “the existence of an all-pervasive material medium, which serves as
conditions of an ubiquitous cosmic ether called "the Names," or "the Elohim," that is responsible for all of the motion in the cosmos. This ether is both mechanical and spiritual. It is made of small corpuscles that are able to penetrate the pores of particles of gross, inert matter, and it carries the presence of the Triune God. As such, it is the agent through which the Triune God governs his creation.

Hutchinson’s ethereal theory is intended to replace Newton’s theory of universal gravitation. Hutchinson believes his theory is superior to that of Newton because it offers a thoroughly mechanistic account of the movement of all bodies, whether cosmic or terrestrial, and therefore proves that the cosmos is a finely tuned perpetual motion

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34 Hutchinson, Glory, 22-23. Hutchinson’s most comprehensive defense of the Trinity is found in A Treatise on Power. In this work Hutchinson makes use of natural philosophy to defend the Trinity in the same manner he employs it throughout his work to defend the Old Testament. His ethereal theory confirms the veracity of the Nicene definition because it is a single substance found throughout the cosmos that exist in three aspects. Hutchinson, A Treatise, 315. One eighteenth-century thinker that was heavily influenced by Hutchinson’s ethereal theory was William Blake. See, Ted Holt, “Blake’s ‘Elohim’ and the Hutchinsonian Fire: Anti-Newtonianism and Christian Hebraism in the Work of William Blake,” Romanticism: The Journal of Romantic Culture and Criticism 9 (2003): 20-36.

35 Wilde summarizes Hutchinson’s ethereal theory as follows: “Fire at the Sun, by its great agitation, puts the surrounding ether into the action of light which radiates outward, gradually losing its motion until it ‘congeals’ into spirit or air at the circumference of this system.” C. B. Wilde, “Hutchinsonianism, Natural Philosophy and Religious Controversy in Eighteenth Century Britain," History of Science 18 (1980): 4. A contemporary summary of Hutchinson’s ethereal theory can be found in Spearman, A Supplement, vii-ix. Hutchinson wants to distinguish his Trinitarian ether from God’s very presence, but he insists that the ether is God’s chosen means of dispersing his presence and exercising his governance throughout his creation. Hutchinson associates each person of the Trinity with a different form of corpuscularian ether because he believes the biblical witness compels him to do so: the bible describes the Holy Spirit as “breath” or “air,” the Son as “light,” and the Father as the “Sun.” For Hutchinson, the progression of the Trinitarian ether from Sun to light to air is an emblem of the eternal generation of the Son and the Spirit by the Father. This theory however, struggles to avoid modalism, since the corpuscles of the Sun, light, and air do not inhere one another.
On his ethereal theory appears to leave no room for God's active governance of his creation. Hutchinson, however, convinced his followers that his theory proved the existence of a generally provident God. Hutchinson's disciples believed he had extended the reach of general providence to the far reaches of the universe by demonstrating that all motion must be attributed to God alone, since the Trinitarian ether through which God actively directs His creation is, in itself, passive.37

Perhaps even more remarkable than Hutchinson's ability to present himself as the great defender of general providence, however, is his ability to present himself as the world's most able defender of Christian Scripture. Like his opponents, Hutchinson's belief that epistemological certainty can only be derived from nature leaves little room for competing authorities. And yet, Hutchinson's greatest legacy was not his natural philosophy but his Old Testament apologetic. Hutchinson claims to achieve what Clarke thought impossible: the use of the Old Testament to render mathematically certain knowledge. Hutchinson's opponent Thomas Sharp (1693-1758) complains, for instance, that, "no mere man, but himself, ever pretended to absolute certainty in all his explanations of Moses."38 Like Newton, Hutchinson believes that the only sure way to defend the Old Testament is to bind it to natural philosophy, because it allows the

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36 Hutchinson, Moses's, 20. The desire to describe the laws of nature in mechanistic terms had been gaining momentum since the beginning of the Renaissance. Collingwood therefore calls the mechanistic view of nature "the Renaissance view" despite the fact that its apogee was the eighteenth century. Collingwood distinguishes this Renaissance view from the ancient vitalist and modern evolutionary perspectives. See R. J. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945).
37 Many thinkers in Hutchinson's day believed it was necessary to prove that matter was passive in order to leave room for God's governance of his creation, including George Berkeley. In the seventeenth century van Helmont had argued that it is impossible for physical objects to have a direct effect on one another. Van Helmont's notion that the activity of material bodies can be attributed to non-material forces bears close resemblance to Hutchinson's notion that all motion can be attributed to a cosmic ether. Allison Coudert, The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698) (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 9.
38 Thomas Sharp, Mr. Hutchinson's Exposition of Cherubim (London, 1755), 3. Thomas, Prebend of Durham Cathedral, was the father of famous evangelical abolitionist Granville Sharp.
mathematical certainty derived from the Book of Nature to be transferred to the Book
of Scripture. The primary mechanism Hutchinson employs to this end, however, is not
numerical data. He looks instead to the emblem.

The Covenant in the Cherubim

In 1522 Andrea Alciato wrote to a friend to announce the creation of a new genre
of literary composition, and in 1531 he published his first and most popular book of
emblems, known as Emblemata. Alciato’s composition spawned a new discipline
known as Emblematicism, which quickly became one of the dominant literary traditions
of the Renaissance. The book was an instant success and went through hundreds of
editions. It inspired thousands of imitations across all major European languages. One
of the features of Alciato’s work that authors found most attractive was his threefold
composition of picture, motto (or lemma), and epigram (explanatory text). Underlying
this structure is the notion that the motto is necessary for the proper interpretation of
the picture in question, and this proper interpretation is articulated in the epigram.

39 “Rarely,” writes Manning of the Emblematicism, “can the birth date of a genre be established so
precisely, and its ‘father’ so clearly identified, than in the case of the emblem.” John Manning, The Emblem
40 Manning insists that, “One cannot underestimate the variety as well as the pervasiveness of emblematic
modes of thought and expression during this period. Without exaggeration, from Catholic Spain to the
Protestant Netherlands and from England to Russia the emblem impinged on every aspect of European
Renaissance and Baroque life—and death. Over 2,000 titles of printed books in who knows how many
editions, manuscripts and various printed ephemera are only part of the surviving legacy of a
phenomenon that decorated every aspect of domestic and civil life, however noble, however menial.”
Ibid., 16.
41 The popularity of the threefold structure was such that modern commentators, including Praz, Large,
and Freeman maintain that only works that conform to this threefold structure should be regarded as
Emblem books. Peter Daly and Mary Silcox, The English Emblem: Bibliography of Secondary Literature
Emblematicism, therefore, is built upon the conviction that the right interpretation of the world requires textual mediation. Hutchison’s interpreters have largely failed to identify the central importance of Emblematicism in his work, perhaps in part because they have taken Moses’ *Principia* to be at the centre of the Hutchinsonian corpus. In actual fact Hutchinson reserves this place for his 1734 work *The Covenant in the Cherubim: so the Hebrew Writings Perfect*. Hutchinson begins the work by boasting “I have shewed many great things apart; I must now shew their Concurrence or Connection, their Dependence upon each other.” In Hutchinson’s eyes, his own philosophical system is encapsulated by the motto: *The Covenant is in the Cherubim so the Hebrew Writings Perfect*. This single idea is developed in the five-hundred-page epigram that comprises the rest of the work. It is also encapsulated in a single picture, which Hutchinson includes in the work.

*The Covenant in the Cherubim: so the Hebrew Writings Perfect* conforms to the traditional threefold emblematic structure of picture, motto, and epigram. It is impossible to see the picture as anything but emblematic. It depicts an Aaronic priest offering a sacrifice beneath two sculpted Cherubim that protrude from the lid of the Ark. The long, detailed, lines that form the contours of their robed bodies draw the

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42 Peter Harrison masterfully captures this conviction in his introduction to *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Harrison begins by reflecting upon *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby* (1678) by Royal Society naturalist John Ray. Ray boasts that he has stripped away the antiquated ornithological tradition of Isidore’s *Etymologies* which sought after "*Homonymous* and *Synonumous* words, or the divers names of Birds, *Hieroglyphics, Emblems, Morals, Fables, Presages* or ought else appertaining to *Divinity, Ethics, Grammar,* or any sort of *Humane Learning*" instead of focusing upon the physical specimens themselves. John Ray and Francis Willughby, *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby* (London, 1678), "Preface." Harrison maintains that Ray’s work signals a turn away from Renaissance Emblematicism to empirical study, and that this corresponds to a turn away from the allegorical to the literal study of the bible. Harrison, *The Bible, 2.*

43 Hutchinson, *The Covenant, 2.*

44The picture, which is the only image in Hutchinson’s corpus, appears four times throughout his published works. It was first included after page 120 of Hutchinson’s 1733 work, *Glory or Gravity*. The
eye to the focal point of the picture, an ethereal figure of Christ whose dominion over
the Cherubim, the ark, and the priest is represented by his elevated status. The
emblematic motto is the title of the work. It serves as a descriptive summary of the
picture and as a germinal truth, which is expanded by means of an epigram—the
expansive explanatory text that follows.

Hutchinson begins this epigram with an *a priori* argument. He argues that, “God
is invisible, in another System, and comes not under Sense.” If we had been present at
creation, we would have seen God at work, and therefore would have sufficient reason
for believing in him. But since we weren’t present, it seems that it is impossible for us to
know God, since “we have no Idea of any thing, but what comes in by our Senses, or
what is borrowed from them, to give Ideas of revealed Things *mutatis mutandis*.”
What we need, therefore, is an account about the beginning, from the beginning, that is
passed down to us physically “by Tradition or Writing.” From this it follows, not
merely that we need revelation, but that we need *Hebrew* revelation, since Hebrew is
the *prima lingua*. The Hebrew writings are shown to be perfect by the fact that they
contain hidden mysteries concerning “the Essence-Existing, of the Personality, of the
Covenant, and of what has been before us, and what will come after our Time, recorded
by the infinite Wisdom of God.”

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45 See Figure 3.1.
47 Ibid., 5.
48 Ibid., 5-6.
49 Ibid., 6.
The more than five hundred pages of explanatory text that follow present an *a posteriori* defense of this basic idea. Hutchinson demonstrates by means of his “reasonable” exposition of Scripture that these aforementioned mysteries are hidden in the Old Testament in emblematic and hieroglyphic form. The emblem Hutchinson focuses on is the angelic creature known as the Cherubim. Hutchinson holds that the sacred status of the Ark comes from the mystery of the divine covenant hidden within these sculpted forms. The Cherubim, says Hutchinson, were “an Exhibition of the Throne in Heaven, of the Persons upon it, and exhibited what was transacted, and to be transacted there, of the making and executing of the Covenant.”

Hutchinson proceeds to elaborate three features of the covenant here expressed. First, the covenant “which was made before the World” takes the form of a decree “to create this System and Man” in such a way as to leave the divine signature upon creation in the form of an ethereal Trinitarian imprint. Second, the course of salvation history was established by means of the decision to give the second person distinct rule “oeconomically.” The decision was made that “a Man was to be the Son of Jehovah, and to be joined to the second Person, and taken into the Essence.”

Third, this establishment of the Son’s authority before the creation of the world became the basis of the angelic worship of the Godhead. For Hutchinson, the primary function of the Cherubim, therefore, is to represent the three persons of the Trinity and to testify to their pre-eminence over all things.

It is appropriate to attribute to Hutchinson the view that a refusal to interpret the Cherubim as divine emblems is an acknowledgement that they are useless.

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50 Ibid., 431.
51 Ibid., 240.
52 Ibid., 415-16.
antiquarian curiosities. Hutchinson is convinced that they must be interpreted as emblems if they are to fulfill their divinely mandated apologetic role, the role of testifying to God’s dominion over creation and to the divine authorship of Scripture. The thesis of Hutchinson’s work is that since the central truths of the Christian religion and natural philosophy are hidden within the figures of the Cherubim, and since the Cherubim are found in Hebrew Scripture, Hebrew Scripture is proved to be a divine original.

**Emblems and Hieroglyphs**

One of John Manning’s most important contributions in his seminal work, *The Emblem*, is his challenge to the traditional definition of the emblem, which insists upon conformity to Alciato’s threefold structure. To begin, says Manning, the threefold structure of picture, motto, and epigram was hardly the exclusive property of emblem books. Furthermore, emblem books were not tied to the number three, and were subject to various layouts, sometimes containing 2, 4, 6, 8 or more parts.\(^{53}\) And what is more, the picture is sometimes lacking.\(^ {54}\) Manning’s constructive analysis diverts attention away from the structure of emblem books to the broader emblematic tradition, which he describes as the outworking of “emblematic contemplation.” He defines emblematic contemplation as the consideration of “even the most mundane or trivial aspect of everyday life,” in order to interpret it as useful or moral.\(^ {55}\) This broad articulation allows Manning to capture the full extent of Emblematicism within the

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\(^{54}\) Ibid.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., 30. As Manning puts it, “Many aspects of daily experience were self-consciously presented as part of an emblematic theatre, in which no event could be presented without an accompanying gloss.” Ibid., 29.
Renaissance context. Each emblem was, in Manning’s words, “not so much ‘made up’ as found.” In other words, since the process of emblem creation was merely the selection of pre-established symbolic relationships, it confirmed not merely the divine meaning of particulars, but also that of the entire world. It is thus that Hutchinson’s demonstration that the covenant is in the Cherubim confirms the perfection of Hebrew Scripture. Once the Cherubim have been established as divine emblems, the way is opened for countless other Scriptural emblems to be discovered and interpreted. And this is precisely what Hutchinson does in his various volumes: he consistently seeks to uncover the providential significance of natural philosophical objects found in Scripture by interpreting them as divine emblems. On this account his works that do not explicitly conform to Alciato’s threefold structure must nevertheless still be located within the Emblematic tradition.

Like other Emblematicists, Hutchinson believes he has the license to select objects from the natural world and contemplate them emblematically. In Hutchinson’s

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56 Ibid., 48. In the Emblematic tradition choice was exercised in two ways. First, Emblematicists were voyeurs. They scanned the created order and selected an object or image from among myriad potentially emblematic forms. The justification of his choice (the content of the epigram) is itself the second choice that had to be made. Emblematicists recognized that epigram construction was the process of choosing a specific meaning from among many possible meanings. The epigram itself therefore “exerts a gentle pressure on the reader towards the choice” of the author. Ibid., 86, 87. The Emblematic tradition was fueled by a network of interrelationships between authors, publishers, and patrons, which led to extensive reworking of existing materials. Different images could be placed in front of different editions of the same epigram, and images were not tied to a single meaning. Ibid., 86. The generation of new emblem books depended upon images and texts being brought together in unexpected and creative ways. Ibid., 107. In Protestant countries, this newfound freedom was fueled by the doctrines of universal priesthood and sola scriptura. Protestants “found encouragement to look to emblems in nature, in scripture, and in emblem books to enhance his knowledge of spiritual matters, and to assist his meditations.” Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 187.

57 According to Sharp, Hutchinson’s disciples defend the emblem of the Cherubim as “one of the uncontested explanations given by the Author.” Sharp, Mr. Hutchinson’s, 5.

58 The fact that interpreters of Hutchinson have failed to locate him within the Emblematic tradition is a glaring deficiency in Hutchinsonian scholarship. In his Moses’s Sine Principio, for example, Hutchinson explicitly refers to an object he interprets as an Emblem no less than forty-five times.
hands, the emblematic interpretation of physical objects is buttressed by a Lockean sensualist epistemology. This should come as no surprise given that Locke’s Essay was written as an epistemological manual for the Royal Society, the immediate context of Hutchinson’s own intellectual formation. Like Locke, Hutchinson premises his epistemology on the rejection of innate ideas; he believes all knowledge begins with sensory experience. Hutchinson thus insists that “The Method directed perhaps to Man at first . . . was to meditate upon the works of God,” and that “this was the Work for which their Sabbath was set apart.” God never intended to give humans unmediated knowledge of his substance, dimension, or figure. He has, however, ordained that humans are to learn about Him by means of created things by making “similitudes.” We are to compare matter with God, while recognizing that all comparisons are partial and imperfect. As we observe number, extension, duration, mechanism, and impulse motion we interpret them as the effects of Divine wisdom, power, and goodness and are therefore able to draw connections between the physical and spiritual realms. To form ideas of the unobservable we need observable, sensory experience. While we

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60 Hans Aarsleff, From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 58.
62 Hutchinson, Moses’s Principia, Part II, xxxvi.
63 Hutchinson, A Treatise, 28.
64 Hutchinson, Moses’s Principia, Part II, 30, 31. Wilde puts it this way: “just as God had so framed the Hebrew language that man might understand the physical world, so he had formed the physical world in such a way that through it man could acquire, by analogy, some knowledge of spiritual things.” Wilde, “Hutchinsonianism,” 3-4.
cannot see the face of God and live, by contemplating the physical world we can, like Moses, at least get a glimpse of his back.66

For Hutchinson, as for other Emblematicists physical objects need human words to give voice to their praise.67 Specifically, human words are necessary to articulate the providential meaning of natural philosophical objects. Kuhn’s suggestion that Hutchinson’s defense of revelation is fueled by the conviction that “convincing analogies between the visible system of nature and the invisible system of Providence” can be drawn fails to capture the essence of his approach.68 He is not a nominalist. He does not believe his task is to draw analogies between distinct objects. He believes objects, as emblems, contain “the Presence of what [is] represented in them.”69 The authentic interpretation of physical objects is found, rather than created, because the objects he studies are already located within a vast web of meaning created by the Divine Artificer himself. Hutchinson insists that natural philosophical objects are far more than what they are apparently. Fine particles of fire, light, and air appear to be nothing more than corpuscles in motion, but from the bible we learn that they are also emblems of the three persons of the Trinity. Similarly, Hebrew words may appear to be nothing more than conventional linguistic signifiers, but they are actually ancient hieroglyphs that conceal the mysteries of the cosmos.

66 Exodus 33:20-23.
67 Psalm 19:1. For a discussion of the Hutchinsonian interpretation of Psalm 19 see Chapter Three.
68 Kuhn, “Glory,” 304.
69 Hutchinson, The Covenant, 415. Newton hated Platonism, for he found that, like Jewish Kabbalah, it had contaminated the pristine theology of the early Church with metaphysical speculations. Matt Goldish, Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 112. This being said, commentators have observed that Newtonian metaphysics bear strong Platonic influences. See, for example, Edward Slowik, “Newton's Neo-Platonic Ontology of Space,” Foundations of Science 3 (2013): 419-48. See also, Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton, Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008).
Hutchinson’s use of biblical words to draw out the divine meaning of physical objects locates him within the emblematic tradition. But this observation fails to capture the extent to which Emblematicism marks Hutchinson’s exegesis. Although Hutchinson, in *The Covenant in the Cherubim*, takes it upon himself to draw up a picture, which becomes the basis of a threefold Emblematicism, his favoured approach is to explore the emblematic meaning of biblical objects by interpreting biblical words as hieroglyphs. In Hutchinson’s biblical commentaries, these hieroglyphs function as pictures, the bible verses from which they are extracted function as mottos, and the commentaries themselves serve as epigrams. Hutchinson is only able to apply his emblematic method to biblical words however, because he believes that Hebrew words are divinely instituted pictographic representations of the objects they refer to.

The Renaissance tradition of Hieroglyphics can appropriately be called Emblematicism’s twin. Both disciplines took part in the Renaissance *ad fontes* project and both used historical facts, archaeological records and classical literary evidence to uncover *prisca sapientia*. Alciato himself studied hieroglyphs in Bologna,70 and his friend Aldus Manutius (1449-1515) was at the cutting edge of Hieroglyphics, being the first to put *Horapollo* into print.71 The inherence of Emblematicism and Hieroglyphics is evident from the outset: the emblems Alciato explores are often drawn from the classics, and sometimes the pictures he contemplates are Egyptian hieroglyphs.72

70 Manning, *The Emblem*, 58.
72 Alciato’s work has much in common with Piero Valeriano’s influential work, *Hieroglyphica* (Basil, 1556). Manning, *The Emblem*, 54. Alciato’s extensive use of hieroglyphs contributed to the popular notion that the emblem and the hieroglyph were cognate forms. Ibid., 59.
The earliest extant English emblem book, which was also the most popular, Francis Quarles’ (1592-1644) 1635 *Emblemes and Hieroglyphikes*, ensured the continued inheritance of Emblematicism and Hieroglyphics in England. Like Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), and the many intellectuals influenced by their work, Quarles held that, as mystic ideographs, hieroglyphs capture the essence of physical and spiritual things. This ability is achieved by means of their hybridity: as linguistic signs they denote particular things, and as pictures they contain within themselves the very things they denote. This hybridity does not, however, distinguish hieroglyphs from emblems but rather draws them together within a single symbolic frame. Indeed, in Quarles’ work it is not easy to determine which entries are hieroglyphs and which are emblems. Hutchinson’s conviction that “emblems and hieroglyphicks” fulfill the same methodological role is therefore further confirmation that his work must be located within the European and English Emblem traditions.

**Hutchinson’s Hieroglyphic Method**

Much has been made about the importance of personal contact between Christians and Jews encouraged by the rise of Christian Hebraism in early modern Europe, but—however important this was for select individuals—Hebrew was not a

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73 Some early Renaissance theorists distinguished between hieroglyphs and emblems, but Valeriano’s use of the term hieroglyph as a synonym for symbol meant that the distinction between emblems and hieroglyphs was often unclear. Lewalski, *Protestant*, 180-81. Quarles follows Valeriano in treating the terms hieroglyph and symbol as synonyms. Quarles’ work went through more than fifty editions from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It was immediately welcomed to England as a “striking new type of devotional emblem book that could capture the senses and the mind, and stir the imagination and affections.” Karl Höltgen, “Francis Quarles’s Emblemes and Hieroglyphickes: Historical and Critical Perspectives,” in *The Telling Image: Explorations in the Emblem*, ed. Ayers Bagley, Edward Griffin, and Austin McLean (New York: AMS, 1996), 3.

living language.\textsuperscript{75} It was, even for Jews, an ancient and archaic tongue. As such it was often regarded as free from the complexities of linguistic utterance and semantic shift.\textsuperscript{76} This objectification of Hebrew led many scholars, including Hutchinson, to literally “objectify” Hebrew words: it was hardly a stretch for them come to regard them as ancient relics and to interpret them as word-pictures—hieroglyphs.

Seventeenth-century Hebraists had at their disposal a large number of grammatical and lexical works. Hutchinson utilizes Hebrew lexicons far more than he consults grammars.\textsuperscript{77} Hutchinson’s emphasis falls almost entirely on the meaning of individual words, and his exegesis therefore proceeds almost entirely by means of morphology and term definition. The sense of a Hebrew word is the sense in which it was originally used, and this sense is confirmed by consulting lexicons.\textsuperscript{78} Influential American cleric and educator Samuel Johnson (1696-1772) remarked that, “no man in these latter ages, has ever appeared to have studied so laboriously, and to have understood so thoroughly the Hebrew language and antiquities, as Mr. Hutchinson.”\textsuperscript{79} But because he focuses almost entirely upon morphology and term definition the extent


\textsuperscript{76} Given his conviction concerning the incomparability of the Hebrew tongue, Hutchinson might well have embarked on a program of educational reform that involved not merely the dissemination of Hebrew learning, but also the vernacularization of it. Nevertheless, Hutchinson’s failure to endorse vernacularization is not merely attributable to the fact that the idea had not yet come of age. Hutchinson’s system is incompatible with it. Spoken tongues are intractibly historical, but the \textit{prima lingua} must be free from the vissitudes of history.

\textsuperscript{77} Nevertheless, Hutchinson occasionally defends his reading of the text on the basis of Hebrew grammatical constructions. Thus, for example, he argues that John Partridge has wrongly understood the usage of קָרָא in Jeremiah 7:11 because he failed to consult “a Grammar” and thus failed to recognize the form of the present participle. It is unclear however, whether “Grammar” includes syntax for Hutchinson. Hutchinson, \textit{The Covenant}, 284.

\textsuperscript{78} Hutchinson, \textit{A New Account}, 61. Hutchinson consults at least twelve different Hebrew lexicons throughout the course of his works, but it is unclear whether he has a consistent rationale to help him navigate conflicting definitions.

\textsuperscript{79} Thomas Bradbury Chandler, \textit{The Life of Samuel Johnson, D.D.} (New York, 1824), 76.
of his proficiency remains unclear. Hutchinson, of course, would have zealously defended his expertise. The skeptic who questioned his competency could hope to make little headway, not merely because of Hutchinson’s prickly personality, but because his underlying assumption is that Hebrew is not like other languages. And because Hebrew is not like other languages it is not to be read like other languages. Hebrew, the *prima lingua*, was created by God, and it is therefore radically unique. Conventional associations govern other languages, but Hebrew is a language of symbolic correspondences: as divine pictograms Hebrew words capture the essences of the things they represent. God’s intent, therefore, in giving the Mosaic revelation was to furnish them with the “proper names” for created things, and the Hebrew language was divinely instituted for the accomplishment of this task.

As an exegete Hutchinson endeavours “to open the Nature of the Sacred writings.” By this he means that his goal is to match created objects with corresponding Hebrew referents. John English helpfully identifies three of the dominant techniques Hutchinson employs towards this end. The first is to uncover the roots of

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Hebrew words. According to Hutchinson the root of the word firmament (rka) means to “expand, extend, distend, stretch” or “to make thin” or “to press” and he therefore argues that firmament should be translated “expansion.” He then draws upon different biblical and classical uses of the word expansion to argue that, as “a thin fluid that is widely distributed or extended, and the action of this substance, moving or pressing material objects toward the extremities of the universe” the term expansion refers to the cosmic ether. Hutchinson’s second technique is to derive the meaning of Hebrew words from grammatical observations. This technique is clearly seen in Hutchinson’s insistence that elohim, or aleim, is to be translated not merely as “God” but as a reference to the Trinity because of its plural ending. Hutchinson’s third technique is to bring together words with similar consonantal patterns. For example, the Hebrew words sam (which means placed, put or disposed), shem (which means name), and shamaim (which means the heavens), can be used to interpret one another. Thus, when sam is properly understood as a noun, “place,” it establishes the fact that “place” and “name” are identical. This allows Hutchinson to argue, once again, for the existence of an ubiquitous ether that is called by the divine name and extends throughout the heavens.

83 English, “Hutchinson’s,” 589. English’s analysis is helpful because it treats Hutchinson’s exegetical techniques as subservient to his larger project to de-historicize the Hebrew tongue. Ibid., 589-93. Interpreters of Hutchinson run the risk of making too much of individual exegetical techniques. Tarbuck, for example, sees the elimination of vowel points as the central tenet of early Hutchinsonianism. While this may be true for certain early Hutchinsonians, it is certainly not true of Hutchinson himself. Derya Gürses Tarbuck, “The Hutchinsonian defence of an Old testament Trinitarian Christianity: the controversy over Elahim, 1735-1773,” History of European Ideas 29 (2003): 393-409.

84 English, “Hutchinson’s,” 588-89.

85 Ibid., 589.

86 Ibid. Hutchinson’s treatment of Hebrew words as specimens that can be dissected and broken down into component parts would have appeared entirely appropriate to many of his contemporaries. Pre-eminent language theorist John Wilkins had earlier proposed that since “the Hebrew Tongue” consisted of
For Hutchinson, the Hebrew Bible is a storehouse of ancient hieroglyphs, and he takes pride in demonstrating that words, which appear mundane are pregnant with divine meaning. It is here that Hutchinson, the emblematicist comes most clearly into view. For Hutchinson, natural philosophical objects present him with the occasion to ponder theological and metaphysical truths. The objects he is most intrigued by, however, are hieroglyphs. He thus begins his commentary on verse fourteen of the first chapter of Genesis as follows: “As every Word, nay every Letter here, is of the utmost Importance, nothing deficient nor nothing superfluous, we shall consider the meaning of these Words, which have not been settled, Word by Word.”

The function of Hebrew hieroglyphs in Hutchinson’s method is to facilitate the emblematic interpretation of created things, without which the divine order of the cosmos would remain hidden from view. Thus, Hutchinson’s justification for his emblematic interpretation of the Cherubim is the fact that the word Cherubim appears in Scripture. When people use the Hebrew tongue they name objects as God intended it to be named, and when they do so, the objects reveal the glory of God. Like universal

the “fewest Radicals,” it could serve as the basis of a philosophical language. John Wilkins, the “Epistle to the Reader” of An Essay Toward A Real Character, and a Philosophical Language (London, 1668).

87 Hutchinson, Moses’s Principia, Part II, 354.

88 Hutchinson’s justification in exploiting the spiritual significance of sacred objects is exactly the same as his justification for his emblematic interpretations of the objects of the natural world. For example, he takes the common onion to be a microcosm of the universe. Hutchinson, A New Account, 24. He suggests that the planetary orbs exist “within one another” because this conforms to the pattern both of the Copernican system (the macrocosm), and of the Onion (the microcosm). For Hutchinson, emblem interpretation is simply the process of identifying preexisting patterns of correspondence imprinted on creation by the divine artificer. Hutchinson, A New Account, 228. Hutchinson chooses to consider the onion as emblem because it corresponds to a Hebrew hieroglyph found in Numbers 6:5. Although his discussion of the original meaning of the hieroglyph is brief (he admits that we cannot be sure whether the Israelites were eating onions or garlic in Egypt) its location in Hebrew Scripture is what justifies Hutchinson’s choice to interpret it as an emblem. Hutchinson, “The Names and Attributes,” 23-24. Sloane notes that the correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm “was one of the ubiquitous metaphors of the Renaissance.” Mary Cole Sloane, The Visual in Metaphysical Poetry (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1981), 61. See also, Don Parry Norford, “Microcosm and Macrocosm in Seventeenth-Century Literature,” Journal of the History of Ideas 38 (1977): 409-28.
language progenitors, Hutchinson is driven by the taxonomic quest to locate proper names. Like Newton, he has, however, become convinced that no vernacular will be able to achieve this goal. As fallen languages, vernaculars are unable to uncover the essences of things because they are unable to reveal the intrinsic relation between created things and the Creator.

Hutchinson thus begins *Moses's Principia* by insisting upon the definitive importance of Hebrew Scripture on this basis: "The Revelation of Moses of the Creation and Formation of Matter . . . was not intended to relate any Thing or Circumstance to us, but what we could not perceive without it; and yet has not omitted any Thing we could not otherwise know." Although humans may well be able to learn a myriad of things about creation without his help, they are entirely dependent upon Moses to teach them the spiritual and providential import of created things. They are, of course, equally dependent on the one who can uncover Moses' esoteric knowledge. “As I am the first,” says Hutchinson, “who has dared to shew the Excellences and Beauties of the Hebrew Tongue, and the Imperfections of the rest, my present Readers ought to make me some Allowance.” Once the proper referent for each Hebrew hieroglyph has been identified, the “Excellences and Beauties of the Hebrew Tongue” are made known, and what was once a merely mundane object becomes a window to the divine.

**Idolatry, Linguistic Devolution, and Scripture**

Hutchinson is at pains to argue that the Mosaic writings are the direct transcription of God’s revelation to Moses, and he therefore vigorously denounces the

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idea that Moses was the inheritor of *prisca theologia* that can be traced back to Adam.\(^{91}\)

Hutchinson believes direct revelation is necessary to ensure the purity of the Mosaic account because, like Newton and Clarke, he endorses a devolutionary philosophy of history.\(^{92}\) If Moses were found to have inherited his knowledge from Adam, Hutchinson would have to concede that his knowledge was subject to corruption. It is equally essential for Hutchinson that God did not merely speak to Moses, but that he also provided a protective covering for His revelation to enable it to be transmitted in its pure form to posterity. In other words, it is Hutchinson’s devolutionary philosophy of history that compels him to interpret Hebrew characters as hieroglyphs. All other human languages show the effects of historical devolution; only Hebrew hieroglyphs are able to protect divine knowledge from the corrosive waves of time.

Following Newton and Clarke, Hutchinson’s devolutionary philosophy of history is expressed as a history of idolatry. Hutchinson believes idolatry began in the Garden of Eden, and is inherent in humankind’s necessary reliance on sensory experience. Hutchinson confesses that had Adam “not been informed, and endowed with unblemished Faculties, he might have guess’d, as the latest *Heathens* did, and their Scholars do” that “the Light, Orbs, Waters, Creatures . . . had Powers to move one

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\(^{92}\) Although his apologetic forces him to treat revelation as a-historical, Hutchinson doesn’t explicitly reject the historicity of revelation. He even says that, “God was pleased to reveal many Things to *Adam* before his Fall, and some afterwards, and to several of his Descendants.” Ibid., 3. The descendent Hutchinson is most interested in, of course is Moses, since his primary object is to defend the Mosaic writings.
another or move of themselves.” Hutchinson’s primary interest, however, is not Adam and Eve’s idolatry, but that of the Israelites. This emphasis is, as Katz suggests, undoubtedly enflamed by Anti-Judaic sensibilities. The primary reason, however, that Hutchinson must deemphasize pre-mosaic idolatry is that his object is to protect Moses from chronological degradation. For Hutchinson, it isn’t enough merely to demonstrate that Moses received direct revelation from God. For Moses and his message to be free from corruption

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93 Hutchinson, A Treatise, 43. Hutchinson’s interpretation of Light as the active principle that sparked the various processes of spontaneous creation recorded in Genesis locates him firmly within the alchemical tradition. As Dobbs observes, “Tract after tract on the alchemical process used illumination to explain God’s actions with respect to matter at the beginning of time.” Dobbs, The Janus, 40. Hutchinson’s interest in light as an active principle also echoes that of Newton: “Newton was concerned from the first in his alchemical work to find evidence for the existence of a vegetative principle operating in the natural world, a principle that he understood to be the secret, universal, animating spirit of which the alchemists spoke. He saw analogies between the vegetable principle and light, and between the alchemical process and the work of the Deity at the time of creation. It was by the use of this active vegetative principle that God constantly molded the universe to his providential design.” Dobbs, The Janus, 5. See also note 111.
94 Ibid., 47. “The Names” is the term Hutchinson uses to designate the cosmic Trinitarian ether. “The Names” is a Rabbinic term, and Hutchinson’s use of it points to Kabbalistic influences. Katz, Philosemitism, 72. Although Hutchinson consistently denigrates Judaism in general and Rabbinic Judaism in particular, he was clearly familiar with Kabalistic literature, and sometimes quotes it authoritatively. See, for example, Hutchinson, The Covenant, 242.
95 Spearman, An Abstract, 79; Wilde, “Hutchinsonianism,” 10. For Hutchinson, to believe in gravitation is to disbelieve that the world is emblematically ordered. To interpret physical things as emblems is to interpret them as icons that testify to the divine activity in the world, and to the inactivity of lifeless matter. “That it was a great part of the first Man’s Duty, to contemplate the Models, or Emblems, the Garden afforded, the Emblems in, and the Operations of the Machine, the Names, and through them the Power of those who created and formed them.” Hutchinson, The Religion, 4.
96 The only time Hutchinson speaks about pre-Mosaic idolatry is his observation that the first account of images in the bible is that of Laban’s idols. Hutchinson, An Essay, 82.
Moses must stand outside of the devolutionary sequence of history. The only surefire way to protect Moses from his detractors, therefore, is to present him as the font of *prisca theologia* that stands at the dawn of time. Hutchinson is at pains to emphasize that Moses was the first person in history to learn to write. He stands at the dawn of recorded history, and his writings are therefore the most direct access humans have to the primordial divine counsel. Hutchinson’s hatred for John Spencer, whom he calls one of the wickedest men to have ever professed Christianity, results from the fact that Spencer’s historical inversion removes the Mosaic writings from the protective covering of pre-history. It is thus that Hutchinson holds that the story of how the prelapsarian worship of the *Elohim* became gradually obscured is the story of how divine revelation was gradually given over to corruption after Moses. Yet Hutchinson also wants to emphasize that the Mosaic account is the great antidote to human idolatry. Hutchinson therefore argues that in the generations after Moses many Israelites were able to hold fast to their belief in the *Elohim*, thanks to their knowledge of the Mosaic writings. For Hutchinson, the decisive step towards idolatry was the exile, for it is at this time that the Jews lost their knowledge of Hebrew and it “was never after spoken in

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97 If Hutchinson emphasized the progress of pre-Mosaic corruption, he would be placing Moses after Adam and Eve on a chronological axis, and this would entail that Moses is subject to history and therefore subject to devolution.
98 Hutchinson holds that after Moses had been on the mount of the Lord he “was instructed how to write.” Hutchinson, *An Essay*, 9. According to Hutchinson, “There were no letters before Moses. I need say nothing of his natural Faculties, or of his personal Virtues; of his Affection to his Brethren, of his Courage, of his Meekness, of his Faith; his private Actions . . . nor of those Faculties being supernaturally supported till his Death . . . my Business is to speak of him as a Prophet.” Hutchinson, *The Covenant*, 6.
99 Ibid., 93.
100 Hutchinson also holds that the heathens knew the Mosaic writings. There are many instances, says Hutchinson, “where Strangers, some from the utmost of the then inhabited Parts of the Earth . . . conferr’d freely with the *Israelites*, and no Difficulty appear’d.” Hutchinson, *A New Account*, 73.
any Place.” By the time Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem everyone had forgotten the Hebrew tongue. Once they had lost the Hebrew names and found other ones they quickly became hopelessly engulfed in idolatrous notions, for only Hebrew hieroglyphs describe created objects as entirely passive, dependent upon the divine mover. Thus, when Hutchinson takes up arms against Clarke, he concedes Clarke’s basic point that in English the Word God never signifies more persons than one. Rather than demonstrating against the consubstantiality of the divine persons however, this point merely confirms that English is a bastardization of the prima lingua. Had Clarke turned to the Old Testament and done his Hebrew exegesis properly instead of “quibbling about the English Word God”, he would have identified that the word Elohim “always signifies three Persons.”

Within Hutchinson’s devolutionary scheme Greek and Latin are regarded as superior to English, since, as ancient languages, they are closer to the primordial source. Hutchinson thus observes, for example, that unlike the English word God, the Greek word θεος retains the Hebraic idea of consubstantiality. Even Greek sits awkwardly

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101 Ibid., 80. Thus, concludes Hutchinson, “all the best authors do earnestly contend to have Hebrew escape a confusion at Babel, but suffer it to be led captive in the Babylonian captivity.” Ibid., 27. According to Hutchinson, the first mention of inhabitants from different nations using different tongues, and indeed failing to understand one another is the account in 2nd Kings 18:26 and Isaiah 36:11 in which the servants of Hezekiah requested that the Servants of the King of Assyria speak to them in Syrian rather than in Hebrew, which the People understood. Ibid., 74. This story makes it clear, even at this point however, that “The Heathens had not left the Hebrew so far” since they retained the ability to converse in it. Ibid., 75.
102 Ibid., 77. This catastrophic loss meant that the Jews were no longer able to decipher their own hieroglyphs. Ibid., 8.
103 Ibid., 115. Servetus expressed this sentiment in the following terms: “The Hebrew tongue, when translated into any other tongue, is defective and the spirit is almost lost.” Michael Servetus, Biblia Sacra ex Santis Pagnini Talatione (Lyons, 1542), Introduction. Quoted in Friedman, “The Myth,” 39.
104 Hutchinson, Glory, 228. Hutchinson also complains that Clarke takes his definition of God (the being that is “every where as well as always”) from Philo rather than from Scripture. Hutchinson, Glory, 90. According to Hutchinson “modern Fools” and “apostate Jews” agree that the word God refers to the absolute power vested in one person. Hutchinson, The Covenant, 102-103.
105 Hutchinson, Glory, 228.
within Hutchinson's devolutionary scheme, however, as a corruption of the *prima lingua*. "We have nothing to do with Translations or Paraphrases of the Apostle Jews," says Hutchinson,

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Nor with Words, Terms, or Definitions, writ by Heathens since the Confusion of Tongues, when the Writers knew nothing of the Subjects before us. We are only to explain the Meaning of the Words, Terms, or Definitions, writ by the Prophets, and even the Greek by the Hebrew.  
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The truth that the Greek language, which Hutchinson calls the language of the pagans, manages to retain is already present in the Old Testament. In the Hebrew, however, this truth is expressed in pristine hieroglyphic form. "The New Testament," claims Hutchinson, "says nothing but what Moses and the Prophets said; as the Prophets say nothing but what Moses saith, so Moses by Hieroglyphicks, or Words, says all things." Hutchinson accordingly feels no need to apologize for meddling "as little as possible with the Greek language."

Hutchinson intends nothing less than to "settle the chief Points in Religion, so that it shall not be in the Power of Man to disturb them." He believes this requires not only that he "shew the Perfection of the Writings and Language I am construing, but the Imperfection of all other Languages, and of all human Writings," and thus, in Calvinist

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107 Hutchinon, *The Covenant*, 11. Since Moses says "all things" it appears that God's revelation to Moses brings to an end the necessity of further revelation. Hutchinson seems not to acknowledge this implication as he continues to affirm the Scriptural status of the New Testament and the necessity of interpreting it: "I pretend not yet to be sufficiently prepar'd to explain the New Testament." Hutchinson, *Glory*, 232. This admission confirms that for Hutchinson, Old Testament interpretation has very little to do with New Testament interpretation. The testaments are different species altogether and require different exegetical and apologetic methods. I will argue that later Hutchinsonians rejected this position and held that the Old Testament could only be adequately defended as Scripture on the same terms as the New Testament. See Chapter Six.
fashion, “to exalt the Works of God, and depress those of Men.”\textsuperscript{109} For Hutchinson, “the books in the Hebrew Tongue were writ by inspired Men . . . and so are infallible.” In order to emphasize this infallibility, Hutchinson believes he must downgrade the authority of other writings. Hutchinson insists that “the Knowledge containd in [the Hebrew books] is not to be acquir’d from any other Writing, nor by any other Means”\textsuperscript{110} For Clarke the degradation of the Old Testament is a necessary consequence of his elevation of the message of the New Testament to the status of spiritual revelation. For Hutchinson, the exact opposite is true. By elevating the Mosaic writings to the status of primordial divine counsel, Hutchinson threatens the canonical status of the New Testament. If Clarke is guilty of regarding only the New Testament as Scripture, Hutchinson, by the same account, regards only the Old Testament as such.

Emblematic Decontextualization

In the Emblematic tradition any human language and any written text can theoretically be utilized to draw out the divine meaning of created things. Hutchinson, on the other hand, insists that Hebrew alone is endowed with emblematic potency. This, however, is only the beginning of Hutchinson’s truncation of the Emblematic tradition. Hutchinson does not treat every Hebrew character as equally emblematic. In fact, Hutchinson is only interested in the emblematic potential of a select group of Hebrew words: words that refer to natural philosophical objects. On this account Hutchinson’s

\textsuperscript{109} Hutchinson, \textit{A New Account}, 8.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 8-9.
Scriptural reflections are largely confined to the first chapters of the book of Genesis.\textsuperscript{111} Furthermore, Hutchinson is not interested in all of the Hebrew words contained in these first few chapters: he only offers emblematic interpretations of a small number of words.

Because Renaissance Hebraism tended to view Hebrew words as ancient artifacts, it promoted the decontextualization of Hebrew words. Hutchinson, like so many Renaissance Hebraists, is focused upon the excavation of \textit{prisca sapientia} from these ancient artifacts. He inevitably finds that he can only be successful in this pursuit when he extracts his Hebrew specimens from their \textit{sitz im leben} and from their literary contexts and places them under the microscope. His experimental method removes Hebrew words from their Scriptural contexts. And because Hutchinson, having pursued his method, fails to re-contextualize Hebrew words within Scripture, I argue that it is appropriate to speak of him as undertaking a process of complete decontextualization.

Hutchinson’s presentation of his material in his first two works, \textit{Moses’s Principia} and \textit{Moses’s Principia II}, is unremarkable. Like most other biblical commentators of the day, Hutchinson begins each section of his commentary by presenting the bible verse he plans to interpret. Hutchinson gives each verse visual prominence by presenting it in large italicized font at the head of his explanatory text. The reader of \textit{Moses’ Principia}, a commentary that covers only the first thirteen verses of Genesis chapter 1, is forced to follow Hutchinson’s circuitous reflections upon the Hebrew text without being given

\textsuperscript{111} One nineteenth-century thinker that took Hutchinson’s interpretation of Genesis very seriously was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge confesses, “his interpretation of the first nine verses of Genesis xi seems not only rational in itself, and consistent with after accounts of the sacred historian, but proved to be the literal sense of the Hebrew text.” Coleridge also adds: “His explanation of the cherubim is pleasing and plausible: I dare not say more.” W. G. T. Shedd, ed., \textit{The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge} (New York, 1871), 2.454
the Hebrew words that form the backbone of his exegesis. Hebrew characters appear for the first time in *Moses’ Principia II* (which now extends to verse seventeen), scattered throughout both the biblical texts Hutchinson interprets and his compendious commentary on them. This refusal to translate his select Hebrew hieroglyphs into English is a pronounced step towards decontextualization. Hutchinson, no doubt, wants to remind his readers that the words he has chosen to emphasize are hieroglyphs. Whether the vast majority of Hebrew words, those that remain in the vernacular, are also to be regarded as hieroglyphs is unclear. They are not elevated to hieroglyphic status and are accordingly given little comment. Nor do they play a prominent role in the interpretation of the select hieroglyphs. Their sole purpose, it appears, is to function as a backdrop that brings into relief the imagistic quality of the hieroglyphs that radiate divine light.

In *Moses’ Sine Principio*, which is a commentary on Genesis 2:8-3:22, Hebrew words continue to be interspersed throughout both text and commentary. The commentary continues to be given in the vernacular, but the Scripture verses at the head of the text are now presented in Latin. This format is curious, given that

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112 Hutchinson’s musings on the Genesis creation narrative bear the imprint of Kabbalistic philosophy. In particular, Hutchinson follows Isaac Luria in making divine light the agent of creation. Hutchinson also follows Luria in calling this light by the divine name. Furthermore, Hutchinson’s opinion that light is the emblem of the second person in the Trinity bears Kabbalistic (as well as Neoplatonic) influences. Luria often describes the light as having emanated from God, and Hutchinson picks up this language in his discussions of the way in which light emanates from the Sun (God the Father). Hutchinson, *Moses’s, 16-20; A Treatise*, 12-13. See Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 16-33; see also James David Dunn, *Window of the Soul: The Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria* (San Francisco: Red Wheel, 2008).

113 A stark visual contrast is seen when samples from the three works are placed consecutively: (1) “And Darkness was upon the Face of the Deep” (Hutchinson, *Moses’s, 4); (2) And זאך זאך Darkness was upon the Face (Faces) of אֹהֶל the Deep (Hutchinson, *Moses’s Principia, Part II, 118); (3) Et serpens erat calidior omni Bestia agri quam secerat Jehovah Elohim” (Hutchinson, *Moses’s—Sine Principio, civ*).
Hutchinson has little confidence in the linguistic proficiency of his readers.\textsuperscript{114} And as Hutchinson writes in a context in which Latin has been eclipsed by the vernacular as the language of scholarship, his decision to Latinize the biblical text drives it into obscurity. Furthermore, Hutchinson offers his readers little guidance in interpreting the Latin texts. The message he implicitly communicates to his readers is that they only need to concern themselves with the hieroglyphs he has selected for them.

The presentation of the biblical text in Latin, however, is not the final step in Hutchinson’s decontextualization. Hutchinson’s exegesis of the second and third chapters of Genesis is restricted to the introduction of \textit{Sine Principio}. In the main body of the work Hutchinson no longer finds it necessary to present the texts he plans to interpret. The biblical texts that had stood at the head of his commentary are replaced with the Hebrew hieroglyphs he has selected in the introduction of his work. This shift in the presentation of Hutchinson’s material completes the process of decontextualization. The hieroglyphs Hutchinson brings under the microscope no longer have a literary context. They are simply free-floating word-pictures. From the first page of \textit{Moses’s Principia} Hutchinson’s exegetical commentary was dominated by lexical considerations. There can be no doubt, however, that in his \textit{Sine Principio}, Hutchinson completes the transition from biblical commentary to lexicography.

Strictly speaking, Hutchinson’s decontextualization of Hebrew words is not a movement away from Emblematicism because Hutchinson retains Emblematicism’s foundational conviction that words are necessary for the providential interpretation of things. After all, most of the emblems Hutchinson interprets are hieroglyphs—word-
pictures. And Hutchinson, of course, explores the meaning of these word-pictures using other words. Because the terms he seeks to define are word-pictures his definitions bear little resemblance to those found in lexicons, but rather are extended, circuitous reflections upon biblical, classical, and contemporary authors that frantically seek to uncover the wisdom that lies hidden beneath the hieroglyphic veneer of the words.\footnote{The breadth of Hutchinson’s engagement with Renaissance scholarship is impressive by any standard. Given his modest means he must have gone to great lengths to find copies of the numerous works he regularly quotes.} Hutchinson regularly treats a single term for more than twenty pages because he believes "The Perfection of the Descriptions" found in Hebrew hieroglyphs “are never to be exhausted; they treat of Subjects which will be the Objects of Contemplation for Eternity."\footnote{Hutchinson, The Covenant, 189. In this, Hutchinson’s approach is the direct antithesis of Clarke’s. For Clarke the definition of a term, and indeed, the exegetical process, is exhausted when it’s true referent is identified.}

Sometimes Hutchinson includes a string of quotations in these long, circuitous reflections. And sometimes the string of quotations comprises biblical references. Most of the time, however, Hutchinson proceeds by quoting the work of a prominent scholar, and then reflecting extensively upon it. The world Hutchinson creates is a world in which the vestiges of \textit{prisca theologia} are ubiquitous. They can be found in the words of any and every author, whether classical or contemporary, pagan or Christian. The bible plays an important role in this world, but it is not clear that the role it plays is distinct from that of other sources. At the very least, the bible provides the foundation for Hutchinson’s natural philosophical reflection in his three commentaries on Genesis. The nine volumes of physico-theology published subsequently however, are not commentaries but topical reflections upon various natural philosophical subjects. And
in these works the role and authority of biblical and classical authors appears synonymous. Although Hutchinson’s emblematicism is Scriptural because the emblems he interprets largely originate in Scripture, Scripture itself does not play a privileged role in the interpretation of these emblems. I argue that this separates Hutchinson’s exegesis from that of the Church Fathers.

The fear that Patristic figural exegesis decontextualizes biblical words fuels the contemporary criticism that it frequently violates the literal sense of Scripture. When a particular Scriptural word or image is interpreted as a figure, it is argued, it is removed from its original context and a meaning from a foreign context is imposed upon it.117 Whether or not a particular reading is guilty of decontextualization, however, is a complex question, given that the context of any given Scriptural word is multivalent, and functions on several levels.118 Otherwise put, whether or not an interpretation is guilty of decontextualization depends upon the context in question. Thus, the figural interpreter that sets out to interpret a word in Scriptural context does not decontextualize the word so long as her interpretation interprets that word

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118 The Scriptural context of any given word includes the phrase in which the word is found, the sentence in which the phrase is found, the pericope in which the sentence is found, the paragraph in which the pericope is found, the book in which the paragraph is found, the collection of books in which the book is found, the testament in which the collection of books is found, and the canon of Scripture itself. Strictly speaking, the only way to protect against decontextualization is to atomize Scriptural words, for the decision to re-contextualize a word within any given textual level always follows a decision to decontextualize it, whether the interpretation is considered either literal or figural. Nor is it simply the case that the decontextualization of Scriptural words that accompanies literal translations is necessarily inferior in extent to the decontextualization that accompanies figural translations. No human word is self-interpreting. Human words always depend upon other words and usages to grant them meaning. Thus, the text critical scholar is sometimes forced to decontextualize a particular word by drawing its meaning from its usage in another biblical book. And the figural interpreter is sometimes only required to look elsewhere in the same pericope to define the term in question.
canonically. The figural interpretation of the Fathers often avoids decontextualization along these lines.

Origen, for example, in his homilies on Genesis, reins in his reflections on the meaning of particular words by interpreting them in canonical context. Given Origen’s notorious predilection for allegorical speculation, we would expect him to seize upon words that are pregnant with metaphysical potential, such as “light” or “firmament” and launch into Neoplatonic speculation. But this is precisely what he refuses to do. When he ponders the significance of the lights of heaven in Genesis 1:14-15, he observes that they have been established

‘For signs and seasons and days and years,’ that they might give light from the firmament of heaven for those who are on the earth, so also Christ, illuminating his Church, gives signs by his precepts, that one might know how, when the sign has been received, to escape ‘the wrath to come,’ lest ‘that day overtake him like a thief,’ but that rather he can reach ‘the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Christ, therefore, is ‘the true light which enlightens every man coming into this world.’

Origen interprets the term “light” in canonical context to render a tropological interpretation of it. He proceeds from the lights of heaven to the light of Christ, and this allows him to make the lights of heaven a guide for holy living.

Hutchinson’s interpretation of the term light in the first chapter of Genesis echoes that of Origen inasmuch as Hutchinson interprets light figurally as a reference to Christ. Nevertheless, the location of Hutchinson’s Christ is not that of Origen’s Christ. In

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119 It is evident that tropological or moral readings struggle to avoid decontextualization since they apply Scriptural words to non-Scriptural referents. Nevertheless, tropological readings can have the effect of drawing non-Scriptural referents into the Scriptural world. I discuss this ability to “absorb the world” in Chapter Six.

the first place, Origen’s Christ is found in the first chapter of John’s gospel. Hutchinson’s Christ, however, rides on the waves of a cosmic ether, and He inhabits John’s gospel only to the extent that Hutchinson’s readers bring echoes of John’s gospel to his text. Hutchinson’s Christ ultimately remains trapped within this cosmic ether, for the same reason that Hutchinson’s Old Testament must be descriptive of it. He refuses to place Christ in the New Testament because if he did so, he would be returning Christ to the Scriptural context. And Scripture, Hutchinson knows, is unable to uphold the authority of either Scripture or doctrine. Hutchinson requires a more certain authority to serve as the basis of his Scriptural and doctrinal apologetics, and he finds it in cosmological theory.

Within Hutchinson’s Newtonian context, his decontextualization of Hebrew hieroglyphs in order to recast them as natural philosophical emblems can be seen as an affirmation that the authority of the Old Testament consists in its ability to describe the world as providentially ordered. This being said, Hutchinson’s method also calls into question the Scriptural authority he seeks to defend. Hutchinson decontextualizes Hebrew words by transforming them into natural philosophical hieroglyphs because he believes he must remove them from Scripture in order to save them from Scripture, because Scripture is subject to devolutionary history.

**John Hutchinson, Newtonian**

Goldish observes that Hutchinson’s Hebraic method follows Louis Cappel and a long line of Hebraists that sought to recapture the pristine simplicity of the Hebrew
Goldish also observes that although Newton scholars have failed to consider the importance of Hebrew etymologies in establishing Newton’s universal history, “His method has a great deal of similarity to the method of Hutchinson.”

Along similar lines Leighton maintains that the facile characterization of Hutchinson as “anti-Newton” may “seriously mislead” because it fails to place Hutchinson’s biblical apologetic at the centre of his thought. Hutchinson’s rejection of Newton is his rejection of Newton’s aetherial theory and its attendant theological implications. The forceful rhetoric that accompanies this rejection obscures the fact that Hutchinson upholds several of Newton’s most important suppositions. Among these is Newton’s underlying devolutionary philosophy of history, which Hutchinson continues to express in Newtonian terms.

Newton and Hutchinson believe that contact with human history invariably corrupts divine knowledge. This belief is the complement to their conviction that God’s providence is his governance of nature by means of mechanical laws. For Newton and Hutchinson, providential discernment must be guided by Scripture, and it must be natural philosophical in orientation. The Old Testament apologetics of both Newton and Hutchinson therefore attempt to corroborate the biblical witness with the pre-existing natural order. Newton and Hutchinson all insist that the truths of revealed

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121 Goldish, *Judaism*, 54.

122 Ibid., 55. Newton often wrote words in Hebrew to highlight the importance of the individual characters, and Yahuda MS 16 shows that he understood that Hebrew consonants could sometimes be flexible. Goldish therefore concludes that, “His method has a great deal of similarity to the method of Hutchinson.” Ibid., 55. Isaac Newton, Rough draft portions of and notes for *Theologæ Gentilis Origines Philosophicæ* and *The Original of Monarchies*, Yahuda MS 16, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel. Goldish, however, rejects any idea of a genetic link between Newtonian and Hutchinsonian Hebraism, however: “Newton permitted almost no one to see his theological manuscripts, so the Hutchinsonians could hardly have been aware of his derivations.” Ibid. I am less prepared than Goldish to insist that no such link exists. See note 7, above.


religion can only be true if they conform to nature. In this light, it can be argued that they all make nature, rather than revelation, the touchstone of their Scriptural apologetics.

The confidence that Newton and Hutchinson place in nature as the ground of all truth is expressed in their preference for things rather than words. Hutchinson’s insistence that Hebrew characters are word-pictures appears to problematize this distinction, but in actual fact, it presupposes it. It is because Hutchinson doubts that biblical words, historicized as they are, can function as vehicles of divine truth that he interprets Hebrew characters as hieroglyphs. Newton, for his part, seeks to extract numbers from the biblical witness because he similarly doubts that words have the capacity to transmit divine truth. They share the common belief that they must dig beneath the lifeless husks of linguistic signifiers to uncover the life-giving kernels of divine truth contained in non-linguistic forms.

Like most of their contemporaries, Newton and Hutchinson reject universal language progination as misguided, but whereas other noteworthy philosophers such as Locke and Clarke are satisfied that vernaculars can be sufficiently mathematized, Newton and Hutchinson believe a more radical solution is in order. To this end they interpret Hebrew characters in ways that allow them to overcome the constraints and corruptions of human language. Both explore the possibility that Hebrew words can be reconceived as hieroglyphic monuments of natural philosophical and religious truth.\(^{125}\)

Although Newton ultimately comes to focus his attention on the potential of

\(^{125}\) As universal historians, that Hutchinson and Newton share a surprising number of specific doctrines. As we have seen, for example, they both emphasize that early natural philosophical inquiry and Sun worship were properly directed towards the divine but came to be idolatrous through the attribution of motion to nature.
mathematical objects to serve as a language of nature, his attempt to save the Old Testament through numbers is not a rejection of Hutchinson's conviction that human language is hopelessly subject to the vissicitudes of history. Newton's numeritization of the Old Testament and Hutchinson's hieroglyphic method are both attempts to dehistoricize the Old Testament to protect it against corruption, and against deistic detractors.

Hutchinson's dehistoricization of the Old Testament shares two additional features with that of Newton. First, it is accompanied by a truncated view of providence. Like Newton, Hutchinson never repudiates the idea that God is at work in and through human history, and yet, like Newton, his work forcefully promotes the view that providence is supremely evident in the consistent workings of nature. Although Hutchinson evidently brings this view with him to the study of the Old Testament, it is also a view that he believes the Old Testament text compels him to affirm. Hutchinson has no doubt that the Old Testament is to be regarded as authoritative on account of the natural philosophical wisdom that lies hidden beneath the Hebrew text.

The second feature that accompanies both Hutchinson and Newton's dehistoricization of the Old Testament is an inability to interpret the text tropologically. Given that Hutchinson has worked so hard to remove the biblical text from the realm of human history, this inability to speak authoritatively regarding human conduct is entirely predictable. Hutchinson, like Newton, transforms the Old Testament into a fountain of demonstrable truth, but in the process he makes it into a
moral wasteland. Hutchinson’s Scriptural apologetic is severely compromised by the fact that he gives his Christian readers little reason to regard Scripture as necessary for the sustenance of Christian life and virtue.

Conclusion

Hutchinson’s inability to offer tropological readings of the Old Testament is surprising given that Emblematicism plays a central role in his thought. The emblematic vision promotes the idea that words and things can be used to interpret one another to cultivate the good life. It celebrates human words as able to articulate the divine and moral significance of things, but it also insists that things are indispensible for the full articulation of these truths, truths that words struggles to capture on their own. Hutchinson’s Scriptural apologetic is grounded in the conviction that the providential interpretation of things requires textual mediation. In the course of his work, however, this conviction is constrained and contorted. To begin, the only things Hutchinson is willing to interpret emblematically are natural philosophical objects. Furthermore, he maintains that the only words capable of divulging the divine meaning of things are Hebrew words. Then again, even Hebrew words, it seems, are unequal to the task—as long as they are interpreted as mere words, that is. Hutchinson therefore interprets Hebrew words as ancient artifacts, a clear indication that like Newton, he ultimately doubts that words are able to divulge the providential meaning of the things he interprets.

Hutchinson’s attempt to highlight the uniqueness of the Hebrew Old Testament and to his elevation of select Hebrew words to the status of primordial hieroglyphs are
apologetic moves necessitated by his devolutionary philosophy of history. In order to
defend the divine origination of the Old Testament Hutchinson believes he must
decontextualize Old Testament words by removing them from the historical and
therefore the linguistic realm. This decontextualization, however, comes at a high cost.
While select Hebrew hieroglyphs are elevated to the status of divine emblems, the
status of the remaining Old Testament words is unclear. The greatest irony, however, is
not that Hutchinson’s method appears to undercut his own Scriptural apologetic, but
that it calls into question the value of his own writings.

When, in 1749, Hutchinson’s devoted editors Robert Spearman and Julius Bate
(1710-1771) compiled the twelfth and final volume of Hutchinson’s collected works,
they appended a Hebrew lexicon based entirely on Hutchinson’s voluminous writings.
With the lexicon in hand, aspiring Hebrew scholars could hope to plumb the depths of
Hutchinson’s writings, Scripture, and nature itself. But according to Hutchinson’s own
principles, this appended lexicon is *all* that they needed.\footnote{It comes as no surprise that Hutchinson’s followers were devoted lexicographers. The most celebrated Hutchinsonian lexicographer was John Parkhurst, whose *An Hebrew and English Lexicon without Points* (London, 1762) and *A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament* (London, 1769) went through several editions.} Devoted followers could
enhance their knowledge of the terms in the lexicon by tracing Hutchinson’s circuitous
discussions found throughout his writings, but such labour is discretionary. Spearman
and Bate’s lexicon grants Hutchinson’s readers all they need to uncover the great
natural philosophical and religious truths of the cosmos, and this indispensability
makes every other document including the bible and Hutchinson’s own writings, if not
redundant, than at least secondary in importance.
Despite the fact that Hutchinson's method inevitably makes all human words except for his prized hieroglyphs unnecessary for the interpretation of things, Hutchinson's followers eventually managed to construct a Scriptural apologetic that reestablished the necessity of the textual mediation of Scriptural words for providential discernment. Hutchinson's followers came to hold that all Scriptural words, not just select Hebrew hieroglyphs, are necessary to illumine the divine order of creation. And since they could not deny that a great deal of these Scriptural words refer not to the order of nature, but the order of human culture, Scripture became, for them, the foundation of a providential interpretation of human history and society.
“Hutchinson’s persuasiveness,” remarks Aston, “was not assisted by his inaccessibility as an author.”¹ In this Hutchinson was very much like Newton, and like Newton the dissemination of his ideas therefore depended upon popularizers. By the end of his life Hutchinson had gathered a small group of zealous disciples including Alexander Catcott Sr. (1692-1749), James Holloway (1690/1-1759), Robert Spearman (1703-61), and Julius Bate (1710-71).² Hutchinson’s name would surely have vanished into obscurity were it not for their tireless efforts to promote his work. The wide array of polemical materials these early Hutchinsonians produced—pamphlets, commentaries, natural philosophical works, lexicons, and sermons—focused the discussion concerning the merits of Hutchinson’s philosophy on the identity of the Hebrew language. The zeal with which Hutchinson’s disciples defended Hebrew as the prima lingua confirms that they continued to uphold Hutchinson’s emblematic vision.

Following Hutchinson, they interpreted Hebrew characters emblemsymbolically as primordial hieroglyphs that sheltered the knowledge of the natural world and the character of God from the devolutionary force of history.


² Of the early Hutchinsonian apologists Aston gives Bate pride of place: “there is a strong case for arguing that Bate fashioned ‘Hutchinsonianism’ as a distinct ideology as a result of co-editing Hutchinson’s collected works and writing numerous pamphlets in defence of his master’s mystical theology and his distinctive interpretation of the Hebrew text of the bible. He thereby brought Hutchinson to the notice of far more people than had been the case in Hutchinson’s lifetime.” Nigel Aston, ‘Bate, Julius (1710-1771)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/1664, accessed 9 March 2015.
The most important shift in the history of Hutchinsonianism took place in Oxford in the 1750’s. Following the lead of University College fellow George Watson, the Oxonians left behind Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method, choosing to focus instead on the final form of the biblical text. I argue that this shift was accompanied by a rejection of the devolutionary philosophy of history that made Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method necessary. The two pillars of early Hutchinsonian philosophy were Scriptural emblematicism and devolutionary history. For Watson and the Oxonian Hutchinsonians, the two pillars were Scriptural emblematicism and figural history. Watson and the Oxonians extended Hutchinson’s emblematic method to all Scriptural words, and this encouraged them to interpret historical entities as Scriptural figures. The figural interpretation of Scripture led Watson and the Oxonians to uphold the Church of England, the English commonwealth, and countless other elements of human society as providentially ordered. I therefore argue that Watson’s Scriptural emblematicism was the basis of the establishmentarian Hutchinsonianism, which rose to prominence in the second half of the eighteenth century.

**The Construction of Hutchinsonianism**

The early Hutchinsonians were zealous defenders both of Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method and his larger Scriptural apologetic, which sought to defend the Old Testament by binding it to natural philosophical truths. Probably the best account of early Hutchinsonianism comes from the preface of little-known Hutchinsonian James Moody’s *The Evidence for Christianity contained in the Hebrew Words Aleim and Berit* (1752). According to Moody the genesis of Hutchinsonianism, as a movement, was
Catcott Sr.’s sermon “The Supreme and Inferior Elahim,” preached before the corporation of Bristol and the Lord Chief-Judge Hardwick on August 16, 1735. As Moody describes it, Catcott’s sermon on the text “I said ye are gods” (Psalm 87:6) “took occasion to shew that the English word God singular, was no way expressive of the Hebrew אלהים Aleim, which is plural, and which is a name or noun derived from ALE, which as a verb signifies to confirm by oath.”

According to Catcott,

The Persons in Jehovah had, before the world was made, performed an action which had denominated them ALEIM or Covenanters: That the substance of this Covenant was to redeem mankind, which was to be effected by the sufferings and death of the second person; for, and in the stead of man, in case man fell.

Catcott’s sermon generated what Tarbuck calls “the Elahim controversy,” which erupted when Arthur Bedford (1668-1745), Catcott’s predecessor as vicar of Temple Church, responded with a pamphlet entitled Observations on a Sermon (1736). Bedford was puzzled by Catcott’s peculiar etymology and defended the received scholarly opinion that Elohim was “derived from the Arabick verb Alaha, which signifies to worship religiously, and . . . signifies that Being, who alone is religiously to be worshipped.” Bedford’s reply was the opportunity for publicity Hutchinson and his followers were hoping to provoke: they quickly responded with a number of aggressive

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4 Moody, The Evidence, x.
5 Derya Gürses Tarbuck, “The Hutchinsonian defence of an Old testament Trinitarian Christianity: the controversy over Elahim, 1735-1773,” History of European Ideas 29 (2003): 396. Although there were Hutchinsonians who were not engaged in the controversy, Tarbuck is right to identify it as central to the formation of early Hutchinsonian identity.
refutations. These refutations confirm that Catcott and his allies were seeking to faithfully reproduce and popularize Hutchinson’s exegetical method.

For Tarbuck, the central issue of the Elahim controversy is Hebrew pointilization. Although Hutchinson and his disciples passionately defended the un-pointed text as Tarbuck maintains, their rejection of vowel points was but one component of their etymological method. Once vowel points are eliminated the hard

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7 Hutchinson’s final work was a vindictive anonymous reply to Bedford’s Observations. John Hutchinson, Remarks upon the Observations on a Sermon Preach’d before the Corporation of Bristol, and the Lord-Chief-Justice Hardwick (London, 1737). Catcott defended his diseased master with an Answer to the Observations (London, 1737), Bedford replied with The Examination of the Remarks upon, and Mr. Catcot’s Answer to the Observations upon his Sermon (London, 1737), and Catcott replied again with, An Answer to the Observations on a Sermon Preach’d before the Corporation of Bristolr... (London, 1737) and, The State of the Case between Mr. Bedford and Mr. Catcott, in Answer to Mr. Bedford’s Examination (London, 1738). Julius Bate and Daniel Gittins then entered the fray in defense of Catcott. Julius Bate, The Examiner Examined (London, 1739); Daniel Gittins, An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled, An Examination of Mr. Hutchinson’s Remarks, and Mr. Catcott’s Answer... (London, 1739) and Observations on some Sermons Preach’d at the lady Moyer’s Lectures (London, 1741). Bedford’s final defense of his position is contained in Arthur Bedford, A Defence of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, from the Testimony of the most Ancient Jews. In Eight Sermons, preached at the Lady Moyer’s Lecture (London, 1741). Moody claims that Mr. Langford and Mr. Lookup wrote in defense of Bedford but I have been unable to locate their works.

8 Moody reminds his readers that Catcott ended his sermon by endorsing Hutchinson’s work and giving a “generous and open confession of his obligation to Mr. H. as an author, which shewed at once, the gentleman, the scholar, and the christian.” For both Moody and Catcott, Hutchinson was “the first who, since inspiration ceased, began to recover the true sense of the Hebrew S. S.” Moody, The Evidence, xii-xiii.

9 Tarbuck concludes that the ability of Hutchinsonian opponents to utilize comparative linguistics to establish the original text “triumphed over the Hutchinsonian, spiritual method of interpreting what was to them a fixed and certain unpointed text.” Tarbuck, “The Hutchinsonian,” 408. Tarbuck emphasizes Benjamin Kennicott’s role in bringing about the demise of Hutchinsonianism. Nevertheless, Kennicott’s prodigious effort to create an updated edition of the Hebrew text was looked upon with.askance by many of his contemporaries. “The great expectations that were formed respecting this edition of the Hebrew Bible were somewhat disappointed on its appearance. Perhaps however they had been unreasonably high. Amid the immense mass of various readings which he had collected with so great labour, few were found to be of any value in the emendation of the text. The majority were at once seen to be the mere lapsus of transcribers.” Samuel Davidson, Lectures of Biblical Criticism, Exhibiting a Systematic View of that Science (Edinburgh, 1839), 224. Ironically, Kennicott’s own perspective on transmission history is remarkably like that of his Hutchinsonian opponents. Like the Hutchinsonians, Kennicott believes the Masoretes had corrupted the Hebrew Old Testament, and like the Hutchinsonians, his primary object is to convince scholars that he possesses the means to overcome this corruption. See William McKane, “Benjamin Kennicott: An Eighteenth-Century Researcher,” Journal of Theological Studies 28 (1977): 460.

10 The debate between the Hutchinsonians and their opponents was not the first of its kind. In the sixteenth century Elias Levita had already raised a significant controversy when he challenged the antiquity of Hebrew vocalizations, and by the seventeenth century the antiquity of vocalizations had become one of the primary issues that Hebrew scholars were forced to confront. In one of the great scholarly debates of the century Louis Cappel challenged Johann Buxtorf Sr.’s defense of the originality of
work of hieroglyphic decipherment remains. First, the consonantal accretions must be removed to identify the primeval roots of the Hebrew words, and then, these roots must have their correspondences within the Hutchinsonian natural philosophical scheme identified.

The *Elahim* controversy fizzled out in the early 1740’s, but the fortunes of Hutchinsonianism were revived by the publication of Hutchinson’s collected works.11 In 1746, 1747, and 1748 Spearman and Bate published *Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, the Philosophical and Theological Works of the Late Truly Learned Mr. Hutchinson*, and, remarkably, managed to acquire the subscriptions necessary to publish all twelve volumes of Hutchinson’s physico-theology by the end of 1749.12 The publication of Hutchinson’s collected works served as a second birth for Hutchinsonianism.13 In the years following the publication of Hutchinson’s collected

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11 In 1750 Warburton remarked in a letter to Bishop Hurd that the controversy was still well known in intellectual circles. William Warburton, *Letters form a Late Eminent Prelate (W.W.) to one of his Friends* (London, 1809), 58-59.

12 A list of the subscribers can be found in Bate and Spearman, *Proposals for printing by subscription* . . . (London, 1748), 30.

13 Tarbuck points to Thomas Sharp’s *Two Dissertations Concerning the Etymology and Scripture-meaning of the Hebrew Words Elohim and Birth* (London: 1751) as the instigator of the second stage in the *Elahim* controversy, as it provoked fierce rejoinders from Hutchinsonians including Aboab, Bate, Holloway, and Moody. David Aboab, *Remarks on Dr. Sharp’s Two Dissertations* (London, 1751); Julius Bate, *The Scripture Meaning of Aleim and Berith* (London, 1751); Benjamin Holloway, *Remarks on Dr. Sharp’s Pieces on the Words Elohim and Berith* (Oxford, 1751). Tarbuck remarks that the only support given to Sharp in the debate was from the German immigrant George Kalmar, who was mercilessly ridiculed by the Hutchinsonians because of his lack of proficiency in the English language. George Kalmar, *Mr. Bate’s Answer to Sharp’s Two Dissertations Answered* (London, 1751); A Short Reply to Mr. Holloway’s Remarks on Dr. Sharp’s Two Dissertations (London, 1751); Censorus Censured: Or a Defence of Dr. Sharp’s Two Dissertations &c. Being a Reply to Mr. Aboab’s Remarks (London, 1751). The second stage of the controversy was, like the first, but one aspect of a larger debate concerning the merits of Hutchinson’s collected works that precedes the publication of Sharp’s *Dissertations*. Catholic vicar Simon Berington and Bate exchanged pamphlets in 1750-51, and a number of other Hutchinsonian works were published in these years. Simon Berington, *Dissertations on the Mosaical Creation* . . . (London, 1750); Bate, *A Defence of
works Hutchinsonians produced a number of related natural philosophical works.\(^\text{14}\) Benjamin Holloway's (1690/91-1759) *Originals Physical and Theological* (1751) illustrates that the Hutchinsonians continued to approach natural philosophy through Hutchinson’s emblematic lens. The subtitle of the work is "An Essay towards a Discovery of the first descriptive Ideas in Things, by the Discovery of the simple or primary ROOTS IN WORDS." Holloway's work confirms that the Hutchinsonian interest in the Hebrew language must not be confined to the theological realm. Holloway picks up exactly where Hutchinson left off—in more ways than one. First, he employs the emblematic method Hutchinson undertook in his final work on Genesis, *Moses’ Sine Principio*. Each section begins with an image—a Hebrew hieroglyph—that is followed by an epigram, which illumines the manner in which the hieroglyph reveals the hidden structure of the universe. Second, Holloway begins his commentary on Genesis exactly where Hutchinson left off, Genesis 3:17, and he continues commenting on the Hebrew text through to Exodus chapter 12. Holloway’s employment of Hutchinson’s method illustrates that the early Hutchinsonians were interested in more than simply defending Hebrew as the *prima lingua*. Their object is to defend the divine authority of the Old Testament by means of Hutchinson’s Scriptural emblematicism. Like Hutchinson they believe the only way to save the Hebrew language, and the bible, is to defend the

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Pentateuch as a pre-historical linguistic monument, thereby binding it to the immovable truths of nature and protecting it from the corrupting force of history.

**Hutchinson and Oxonian Hutchinsonianism**

Early Hutchinsonians such as Holloway and Walter Hodges (d. 1757), Provost of Oriel College, circulated Hutchinsonian pamphlets in Oxford as early as 1734. In the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, however, Bristol was the center of Hutchinsonianism. After the publication of Hutchinson’s collected works in 1748-49 the centre shifted to Oxford. In September 1753 Horace Walpole (1717-1797) wrote to a friend that,

> Methodism is quite decayed in Oxford, its cradle. In its stead, there prevails a delightful fantastic system, called the sect of the Hutchinsonians, of whom one seldom hears anything in town. After much inquiry, all I can discover is, that their religion consists in driving Hebrew to its fountainhead, till they find some word or other in every text of the Old Testament, which may seem figurative of something in the New. As their doctrine is novel, and requires much study, or at least much invention, one should think that they could not have settled half the canon of what they are to believe—and yet they go on zealously, trying to make and succeeding in making converts.

The shift from Bristol to Oxford is the backdrop of perhaps the most important problem that Hutchinsonian studies must face: the relationship between the early Hutchinsonianism that flourished in Bristol and late Hutchinsonianism that had its rise at Oxford. Admittedly, there were personal connections between the Bristol and Oxford societies, and some Oxonians, including Holloway and Hodges, followed the lead of the

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16 Bristol Grammar School (Catcott was the headmaster) produced several zealous young Hutchinsonians. Aston, “From personality,” 631.
Bristolians by vigorously promoting Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method. As
Hutchinsonianism took root in Oxford, however, the character of Hutchinsonianism was
altered by its new surroundings. In particular, Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method is not
employed in the sermons and writings of most Oxonians, including Thomas Patten
(1714-90), Denny Martin (a. k. a. Dr. Fairfax; 1725-1800), Alexander Catcott Jr. (1725-
79), Nathan Wetherell (1726-1808), George Horne, William Jones of Nayland and
Watson. Some scholars have therefore called into question the relationship between the
Oxford Hutchinsonians (Horne and Jones in particular) and Hutchinson. I argue,
however, that although the Oxonians distance themselves from Hutchinson’s
hieroglyphic method, they continue to affirm Hutchinson’s interest in natural
philosophy and the Hebrew language, and that, most importantly, they continue to
employ his Scriptural emblematicism.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Overton maintained that Horne and
Jones were only “partially Hutchinsonian,” arguing that they must be seen,
fundamentally, as High Church ecclesiastics.18 Overton also insisted that Horne and
Jones were much more attracted to Hutchinson’s spiritual interpretation of Scripture
than his cosmology.19 As Carroll points out however, “il est indéniable qu’ils adoptèrent
avec enthousiasme et développèrent les principes de sa cosmologie.”20 Carroll’s work,
which to date represents the most comprehensive study of the theological vision of
Horne and Jones, defines Hutchinsonianism as a theophanic vision of creation which

18 J. H. Overton, A History of the English Church: The English Church from the Accession of George I to the
19 Overton, The English Church, 204; See also X. William Carroll, “Hutchinsonisme: Une vue de la nature
come Théophanie au cours du dis-huitième siècle” (PhD diss., University of Strasbourg, 1968), 22.
20 Carroll finds this enthusiasm for Hutchinsonian cosmology rather unfortunate, as it tainted the
seeks to defend a providential ordering of creation through analogies that are drawn between physical and spiritual realities. Carroll believes that Horne and Jones only endorse Hutchinsonian natural philosophy to the extent that it promotes this vision. Thus although Carroll disagrees with Overton’s analysis in several particulars, Carroll consistently endorses his conclusion that Horne and Jones enlisted Hutchinsonianism in the service of the *ancien régime* as an affirmation of the goodness of the established order. Hutchinsonian doctrine and natural philosophy are accordingly interpreted as subservient to Hutchinsonian High churchmanship: “Pour ces chrétiens de la “Haute Eglise”, l’hutchinsonisme était quelque chose… surajouté.”

With his 2001 article “Knowledge of Divine Things: A Study of Hutchinsonianism,” C. D. A. Leighton brought Carroll’s analysis of Hutchinsonianism as theophanic vision to a twenty-first century English readership. First, Leighton complains that while writers have tended to treat Hutchinsonianism as a set of doctrines about the physical sciences with religious significance, “as a practice, Hutchinsonianism had all appearances of scholarly religion, rather than science.” Next, he argues that the religious character of Hutchinsonianism moves it “from a peripheral position in the history of Enlightenment/Counter-Enlightenment debate” concerning the foundations of human knowledge. For Leighton, this debate was dominated by the question of the “security to be had from one or other form of revelation.” The defining feature of Hutchinsonianism, thus, for Leighton, is its

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21 Ibid., 288-92.
22 Ibid., 300.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 162.
adoption of "pre-eminently acceptable epistemology of the day, that of Locke," which "it developed and adapted ... to construct what appeared to be an effective defence of revelation against rationalist assault."26

As Leighton points out, however, the use of a sensualist epistemology in the defense of revelation was hardly unique to the Hutchinsonians. It was also employed to this end by a group Berman calls Irish "right-wing Lockeans," which included Henry Dodwell (1641-1711), William King (1650-1729), and Edward Synge (1659-1741).27 Leighton maintains, however that "perhaps the most important figure among them" was Peter Browne (d. 1735), who "took Locke's epistemology beyond Locke's own position, rejecting even reflection as a supplement to sensation," and then extended this position theologically in service of "a doctrine of analogy."28 Leighton traces Browne's reception in England through the work of Dodwell, Charles Leslie (1650-1722), and Henry Felton (1679-1740), but concludes that it was "among the Hutchinsonians . . . that the Irish Counter-Enlightenment churchmen exerted their widest influence."29 Leighton maintains that while Hutchinson's "view of the Hebrew language had sensationalist roots," Hutchinson's own writings were probably not the major channel through which

26 Ibid. Other scholars, including Kuhn (1964), Carroll (1968) and Wilde (1980), have also identified the importance of Lockean sensualism for Hutchinsonianism. Albert Kuhn, "Glory or Gravity: Hutchinson vs. Newton," Journal of the History of Ideas 22 (1961): 318; Carroll, "Hutchinsonisme," 245-46; C. B. Wilde, "Hutchinsonianism, Natural Philosophy and Religious Controversy in Eighteenth Century Britain," History of Science 18 (1980): 3. Conservative Lockeanism and theophanic vision are but different articulations of the notion that sensory input can be enlisted in the service of revealed religion by means of the principle of analogy. And because Leighton, like Carroll, identifies this conviction as the central tenet of Hutchinsonianism, he follows Carroll in subsuming Hutchinsonianism within the High church "counter-enlightenment."

27 Ibid. This leads Leighton to employ Berman's phrase "conservative Lockeans," which Berman applies to both Berkeley and Burke.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 164. Given that these thinkers were extremely radical in their appropriation of the sensualist ideal, it is curious that Leighton calls them "counter-Enlightenment" figures.
the Hutchinsonians received the teachings of the Irish Counter-Enlightenment.  

“In truth,” says Leighton, “Hutchinsonians seem to have had as little recourse to Hutchinson’s own writings as possible.”

For Leighton, the central tenet of Hutchinsonianism is the rejection of natural religion, and as its central influence, the “Irish school.”

Leighton is thus justified in his appraisal of Horne and Jones as sensualists and in his observation that they engaged Hutchinson critically and cautiously. Nevertheless, as Leighton works through the implications of these findings he forges a highly problematic account of a “Hutchinsonianism sans Hutchinson.”

Horne and Jones’ relationship to Hutchinson is evidently very different from that of the early Hutchinsonians. Whereas the early Hutchinsonians zealously defend their master as the most brilliant philosopher the world had ever seen, Horne and Jones are...
methodical in their appropriation of Hutchinson’s ideas. Jones admits that Hutchinson was “a character sui generis, such as the common forms of education could never have produced.”34 Jones cleverly uses this inconvenient truth to full advantage: his full knowledge of Hutchinson’s mean character led Jones to painstakingly analyze his ideas and endorse Hutchinson’s ideas only as much as necessary.35

There is no doubt that Oxonian Hutchinsonians enthusiastically endorsed a sensualist epistemology. Jones deems Descartes’ attempt to deduce certain knowledge of physical causes a priori “very exceptionable,” and concedes that there are no a priori arguments for the existence of God.36 Jones conceives of knowledge acquisition as a two-step process: when the mind receives impressions it is passive, but when it forms ideas it is active.37 The process of idea-formation depends upon the imagination to give pictures of truth. These pictures are the means through which God “communicates to the mind of man the knowledge of spiritual things, by means of a certain resemblance, which the Creator hath wisely ordained between the objects of sense and the objects of faith.”38 Horne likewise affirms that

The visible works of God are formed to leads us, under the direction of his Word, to a knowledge of those which are invisible; they give us ideas, by analogy, of a new creation rising gradually, like the old one, out of darkness and deformity, until at length it arrives at the perfection of glory and beauty.39

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35 Jones argues that, “Had this man been a splendid character, and a great favourite with the world, we might have received his doctrines with our mouths open, and our eyes shut: but our dangers are quite of another kind. From him nothing is to be taken upon trust: every thing must be sifted and examined to the uttermost. And so let it: for thus it will be better understood.” Ibid., xxx-xxxii.
37 William Jones, The Nature, Uses, Dangers, Sufferings, and Preservatives, of the Human Imagination, London, 1796), 4. Jones’ insistence that sensation must be reflected upon in order to generate ideas suggests that Browne and the “Irish school,” were not his primary influences.
The sensualism of the Oxonians, however, need not be attributed either to Locke or to the “Irish School.”

40 Unlike either Locke, or members of the “Irish School,” the Oxonians made sensualism the basis of an emblematic method, which they inherited directly from Hutchinson.

41 Tarbuck’s 2005 article, “Academic Hutchinsonians and their quest for relevance, 1734-1790,” is an important challenge to Leighton’s vision of an Oxonian Hutchinsonianism sans Hutchinson. To date it represents the only published effort to engage the intellectual foment of 1750s Oxonian Hutchinsonianism. This engagement places Tarbuck’s analysis of Horne and Jones on solid ground. 1750s Oxford is the hinge of the movement—the link between early Hutchinsonianism and the establishmentarian Hutchinsonianism that flourished into the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and it is therefore impossible to understand Hutchinsonianism without properly attending to it. As Tarbuck puts it, there is a gap in our knowledge of the relationship between “early and late Hutchinsonian attitudes” because few have attempted to provide “insight into the transition that the movement went through.”

40 I am of the opinion that one of the reasons scholars often regard Locke as a fundamentally creative thinker is that he consistently fails to acknowledge his sources because he believes that authentic knowledge must be self-generated rather than received from tradition. Locke did not spawn the idea that sensory data is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge. Nor were the members of the “Irish School” the first to apply a sensualist epistemology to divine things. The notion that concrete particulars are necessary for the generation of divine knowledge is fundamental both to pre-critical biblical exegesis and to Christian mysticism. Meister Eckhart, for instance, observed that the world would not have been created if the soul were able to come to know God without it. Raymond Blakney, ed. and trans., Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), 161.

41 The notion that the Hutchinsonians are Lockeans is curious given that Jones claims that although Locke may well have been an upright individual, his philosophical principles have been incredibly destructive of religion. William Jones, “A Letter to the Church of England,” in The Theological, Philosophical, and Miscellaneous Works of Rev. William Jones, vol. 12, ed. William Stevens (London, 1801), 327-28.

Tarbuck agrees with Leighton that the young Oxonians endorsed Hutchinsonian attitudes selectively within a “wider, not exclusively Hutchinsonian, set of ideas,” and that they welcomed “other intellectuals to join their speculation and to incorporate a sanitized Hutchinsonian thinking with contemporary thought.”

Contra Leighton, however, Tarbuck insists that the concerted effort of the Oxonians to supplement Hutchinson’s perspective does not imply a rejection of it. To the contrary, the Oxonians made use of other writers to make Hutchinson’s ideals palatable to contemporary scholars. Interpretations of Hutchinsonianism tend to emphasize either natural philosophy or Hebraic scholarship. Tarbuck’s interpretation rightly affirms the importance of both. She argues that the two key elements of 1750s Oxonian Hutchinsonianism are Hebraic scholarship and natural philosophy, and that these elements point, not to the “Irish school” but to Hutchinson himself. The Oxonians wholeheartedly embraced Hutchinson’s natural philosophical system. A Fair, Candid, and Impartial State of the Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Hutchinson (1753) is Horne’s diplomatic attempt to moderate the significant controversy the Oxonians instigated through their vocal endorsement of Hutchinson’s anti-Newtonian natural philosophy.

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43 Ibid., 410, 422. Although Tarbuck acknowledges that the Oxonians were influenced by the “Irish school,” she opposes Leighton’s notion of a Hutchinsonianism sans Hutchinson: “for the later group of followers Hutchinson’s system of thought lost little of its importance.” Ibid., 423.

44 Tarbuck also acknowledges, however that, “The realization among this Oxford group that a full-blooded Hutchinsonian system was on the margins of orthodox thinking led them to develop a more integrated approach which arguably contributed to the gradual breakdown of Hutchinsonianism as a coherent body of thought.” Ibid., 408. Tarbuck’s conclusion that the effort to integrate Hutchinsonianism into mainstream Anglicanism ultimately compromised “the distinctiveness and unity of the movement” is incontrovertible. Ibid., 427.


46 The most influential Hutchinsonian natural philosophical treatise ever written was by an Oxonian—Alexander Catcott Jr.’s A Treatise on the Deluge (London, 1761). Like Hutchinson himself Catcott Jr.
Although natural philosophical study was central to Oxonian Hutchinsonianism, Hebraic study was arguably even more prominent.\(^{47}\) Zeal for the *prima lingua* took several colleges by storm during the 1740’s and 1750’s, and the Hutchinsonians were leading the charge. There were, Jones relates, “many good and learned men of both Universities, but chiefly in and of the University of Oxford,” that had “become zealous advocates in favour of the new scheme of Mr. Hutchinson.”\(^{48}\) Jones sat down with Horne, Wetherell and Martin “for one whole winter, to examine and settle as far as they were able, all the Themata of the Hebrew language; writing down their remarks daily.”\(^{49}\)

The central importance of natural philosophy and Hebrew scholarship for the Oxonian Hutchinsonians importantly highlights the continuity of their enterprise with that of Hutchinson and early Hutchinsonianism. The point that must be made, however, is not just that the Oxonians continued to engage Hutchinson’s two great interests, as Tarbuck maintains. Their indebtedness to Hutchinson runs deeper still. Hutchinson’s unique theological vision is not to be found in his peculiar natural philosophical speculations or hieroglyphic method, but in the way in which he uses emblems to integrate biblical interpretation and natural philosophical speculation. Following travelled widely gathering geological specimens, and his work echoes Hutchinson’s reflections found in *Moses’ Principia: Part II* (London, 1727).


\(^ {49}\) Ibid., 46. As Hebrew scholars Jones, Horne, Wetherell and Martin took for granted many of Hutchinson’s basic tenets concerning the Hebrew language, including its priority, divine origin, and imagistic quality. Despite these similarities, the students were all hesitant to utilize Hutchinson’s etymological method. This hesitancy is discussed further in Chapter Four. The sources they used in their study were the standard Hebrew lexicons of the day including Marius, Buxtorf, Pagninus and others. Ibid.
Hutchinson, Watson, Horne, and Jones all interpret biblical particulars as emblems that unveil the providential order of the natural world.\textsuperscript{50}

The biblical hermeneutic of the Oxonians must be described as emblematic rather than merely analogical. I maintain that the failure to properly account for Hutchinson’s influence upon the Oxonians corresponds to a failure to recognize the mediatorial role that Scripture plays in their work in creating and sustaining comparisons between physical and spiritual things, and that once recognized, Hutchinson’s pervasive influence becomes apparent in their work. The Oxonians are convinced that it is only through Scriptural words that analogies between material and spiritual things are made known to human consciousness. They are properly to be regarded as Hutchinsonians not merely because they appropriate Hutchinson’s interest in natural philosophy and his fascination with the Hebrew language but because the foundation of their work is Hutchinson’s own Scriptural emblematicism. Scriptural emblematicism is the \textit{sine qua non} of Hutchinsonianism.

\textbf{Watson and Oxonian Hutchinsonianism}

Watson matriculated as a member of University College in 1740, received his Bachelor of Arts in 1743, and his Master of Arts in 1746. He was elected to a scholarship from the Bennet foundation in 1744 and chosen for a fellowship at University College in

\textsuperscript{50} The fact that individual Hutchinsonians shared a common hermeneutic did not go unnoticed by early commentators. Thus Teale remarks: “It has been already remarked that one of the peculiarities of the Hutchinsonians was to adopt a figurative rather than literal interpretation of Scripture, especially of those passages which refer to the nature world. This mode of interpretation runs through most of Jones’s writings, while several of them were composed for the express purpose of elucidating it.” William Henry Teale, “The Life of William Jones, M. A., Perpetual Curate of Nayland,” in \textit{Biography of English Divines: The Life of Launcelot Andrewes, D. D., Bishop of Winchester} (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), 361.
1747. Watson served University College as a fellow and tutor until 1758, and in these capacities he exerted a decisive influence on Horne and Jones. Much of what we know concerning Watson’s life and work comes from Jones’ *Memoirs of the Life, Studies, and Writings of the Right Reverend George Horne*. In this work Jones begins his account of the happy days he spent at Oxford with Horne by mentioning his friendship with Catcott Jr. Catcott Jr., Jones tells us, “possessed a very curious collection of fossils, some of which he had digged and scratched out of the earth with his own hands at the hazard of his life.” Jones confesses that when he saw them he was “without any particular knowledge of the subject,” but that Catcott taught him Hutchinson’s philosophy to help him understand the significance of his geological specimens.\(^5^3\)

Catcott Jr.’s influence led Jones to call into question the prevailing Newtonian natural philosophy he had been taught as an undergraduate, and Jones became convinced that he could not hope to order his thoughts concerning the natural world without fluency in the *prima lingua*. Jones set off in search of a Hebrew tutor. His quest led him to Watson, whom Jones introduces in the following terms:

In the same College with us, there lived a very extraordinary person. He was a classical scholar of the first rate, from a public school, remarkable for an unusual degree of taste and judgment in Poetry and Oratory; his person was elegant and striking, and his countenance expressed at once both the gentleness of his temper and the quickness of his understanding. His manners and address were those of a perfect gentleman: his common talk, though easy and fluent, had the correctness of studied composition: his benevolence was so great, that all the beggars in Oxford knew the way to his chamber-door: upon the whole, his character was so spotless, and his conduct so exemplary, that, mild and gentle as he was in his carriage toward them, no young man dared to be rude in his

\(^5^3\) Ibid., 24.
company. By many of the first people in the University he was known and admired: and it being my fortune to live in the same staircase with him, he was very kind and attentive to me, though I was much his junior: he often allowed me the pleasure of his conversation, and sometimes gave me the benefit of his advice, of which I knew the meaning to be so good, that I always heard it with respect, and followed it as well as I could. This gentleman, with all his other qualifications, was a Hebrew scholar, and a favourer of Mr. Hutchinson’s Philosophy; but had kept it to himself, in the spirit of Nicodemus.\textsuperscript{54}

When Jones asked Watson to teach him the elements of Hutchinson’s philosophy Watson desisted because he perceived that “these things are in no repute.”\textsuperscript{55} Jones boasts, however, that he managed to convince Watson to become his tutor nonetheless. Jones relates that in this capacity Watson “acquitted himself with so much skill and kind attention, writing out for me with his own hand such grammatical rules and directions as he judged necessary, that in a very short time I could go on without my guide.”\textsuperscript{56}

Although Jones was already inclined to favour Hutchinson’s philosophy when he began to study with Watson, Watson provided him with the underlying Scriptural framework of Hutchinsonianism. Jones quickly took it upon himself to win over his best friend, Horne, to Hutchinson’s principles, but found Horne “very little inclined to consider them.”\textsuperscript{57} Horne eventually became a passionate defender of Hutchinson, but Jones confesses that he had “no title to the merit of forming him into what he afterwards proved to be.”\textsuperscript{58} That distinction rests, once again, with Watson. Jones introduced Horne to Watson after Jones had matriculated with an MA in the spring of 1749 and was set to leave Oxford to pursue an ecclesiastical career in the Diocese of

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 25-26.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 26. Watson told Jones that he was worried that teaching him the principles of Hutchinsonianism would compromise Jones’ friendships and prospects at upward mobility.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 26-27. Jones admits “I had nearly worked myself to death, by determining, like Duns Scotus in the Picture-Gallery, to go through a whole chapter in the Hebrew before night.” Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 25.
Peterborough. Horne became so enthusiastic about the prospect of studying Hebrew
with Watson that he “stayed for the advantage of following his studies at Oxford, under
the direction of his new teacher” rather than “going home to his friends in the
vacation.” 59 When Horne wrote to his father in the fall to apologize for failing to return
over the summer he praised Watson in terms reminiscent of Jones:

I am obliged for the happiness I have enjoyed of late to a gentleman of this
society, and shall always bless God that his providence ever brought me
acquainted with him. He is a Fellow of our house and though but six-and-twenty,
as complete a scholar in the whole circle of learning, as great a divine, as good a
man, and as polite a gentleman, as the present age can boast of.60

As we might expect, Watson imparted to Horne far more than simply linguistic
competence. Horne confesses

to have been persuaded, that the System of Divinity in the Holy Scripture is
explained and attested by the scriptural account of created nature; and that this
account, including the Mosaic Cosmogony, is true so far as it goes: and that the
Bible in virtue of its originality is fitter to explain all the books in the world than
they are to explain it.61

59 Ibid., 27. One of the primary difficulties for the young students was that the Hebrew concordances and
lexicons their studies required were often well beyond their means. Jones relates that when Horne began
to study Hebrew he “set his heart” upon the concordance of Marius de Calasio which had recently been
republished by the sometime Hutchinsonian William Romaine. The problem for the young Horne,
however, was that it was an extremely expensive work—“so high as ten guineas at that time.” Jones
relates that as Horne “knew not how to purchase it out of his allowance, or to ask his father in plain terms
to make him a present of it,” he told him the following story: “In the last age, when bishop Walton’s
Polyglott was first published, there was at Cambridge a Mr. Edwards, passionately fond of oriental
learning; who afterwards went by the name of Rabbi Edwards: a good man, and a good scholar: but being
then rather young in the University, and not very rich, Walton’s great work was far above his pocket.
Nevertheless, not being able to sleep well without it, he sold his bed, and some of his furniture, and made
the purchase. In consequence of witch, he was obliged to sleep in a large chest, originally made to hold his
clothes. But getting into his chest one night rather incautiously, the lid of it, which had a bold with a
spring, fell down upon him and locked him in past recovery; and there he lay well nigh smothered to
death. In the morning, Edwards, who was always an exact man, not appearing, it was wondered what was
become of him: till at last his bed-maker . . . being alarmed, went to his chambers time enough to release
him: and the accident, getting air, came to the ears of his friends, who soon redeemed his bed for him.
This story Mr. Horne told his father; and it had the desired effect. His father immediately sent him the
money; for which he returns him abundant thanks, promising to repay him in the only possible way, viz.
that of using the books to the best advantage.” Ibid., 35-36.
60 Ibid., 27-28
61 Ibid., 30
Although Jones’ interest in Hutchinsonian natural philosophy led him to study Hebrew with Watson, it was Horne’s desire to study Hebrew with Watson that led him to embrace Hutchinsonian natural philosophy. This interesting contrast highlights the interplay of natural philosophy and biblical study characteristic of Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism. What we see in the work of Horne and Jones, as in the work of the early Hutchinsonians, is a fluid movement back and forth between textual and empirical study, and the creative integration of empirical and humanistic impulses.

Horne and Jones, like the early Hutchinsonians, are convinced that textual study is empirical study given that texts are physical objects, and that empirical study is textual study given that all natural objects depend upon texts to give voice to the praise they render unto God. As Hutchinsonians they consider Hebraic studies to be consistent with their empirical approach because they consider it a “language of ideas.” This, Jones says, is one of the central ideas Watson imparted to his students. Watson taught them that

The Hebrew language, and the Hebrew antiquities, lead to a superior way of understanding the mythology and writings of the Heathen classical authors: and that the Hebrew is a language of ideas; whose terms for invisible and spiritual things are taken with great advantage from the objects of nature; and that there can be no other way of conceiving such things, because all of our ideas enter by the senses: whereas in all other languages, there are arbitrary sounds without ideas.62

This ideographic interpretation of the Hebrew tongue endorsed by Hutchinson compelled the young Oxonians to pay utmost attention to the meaning of the individual

62 Ibid., 31.
words of the Hebrew text. Watson managed, nevertheless, to pass to his students Hutchinson’s reverence for Hebrew words without endorsing his etymological method. Watson’s published Scriptural reflections, and those of his students, are governed by a non-etymological Scriptural emblematicism.

**Watson’s Scriptural Emblematicism**

Watson published only five works in his lifetime—three sermons and two essays. His first published work, a sermon entitled, “Christ the Light of the World,” was preached before the University of Oxford at St. Peter’s on Saturday, October 28, 1749. Like Hutchinson, Watson begins his first published work by declaring that his object is to defend the authority of Scripture, and like Hutchinson, he does so through the emblematic interpretation of the Old Testament. The text for Watson’s sermon is Psalm 19:4-5: “In them hath he set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber.” Following Hutchinson, his reflections are dominated by the quest to uncover the meaning of particular Hebrew words. Watson zeros in on the term “Sun.” He argues that, “The Sun here spoke of, in the full and Prophetic Sense of the Expression, is . . . Christ,” and the Psalm from which the Text is taken a glorious and

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64 Watson may well have spoken with Horne and Jones in secret about Hutchinsonian etymologies, but all three were hesitant to broadcast such ideas in their published work.
65 George Watson, _Christ the Light of the World. A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford at St. Peter’s_ (Oxford, 1750); _A Seasonable Admonition to the Church of England. A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford at St. Mary’s_ (Oxford, 1755); _Aaron’s Intercession, and Korah’s Rebellion Considered. A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford_ (Oxford, 1756); _The Doctrine of the Ever-blessed Trinity Proved in a Discourse on the Eighteenth Chapter of Genesis_ (London, 1756); _A Letter from the Author of a Late Discourse on the XVIIIth Chapter of Genesis, to the Monthly Reviewers_ (London, 1758).
animated Description of his Rising and the blessed Effects of it.” Watson’s sermon can be interpreted according to Alciato’s traditional threefold emblematic structure: the Sun is the image, Psalm 19:4-5 is the motto, and the sermon itself is the epigram.

Watson’s method, however, does not merely duplicate that of Hutchinson. For Hutchinson the metaphysical import of Scriptural terms is only faintly impressed upon the final form of the text given that it is subject to corruption. His favorite term eloheim, for example, must be stripped of historical accretions to be rendered elahim, and then broken down into radical form to be rendered ela (ale). Hutchinson and his followers, however, have an additional problem. It is far from obvious how ela can be redeployed as a natural philosophical concept. Hutchinson’s natural philosophical system is therefore called upon to bridge the gap between the term ela and the natural world. One might equally say that his system manipulates the natural world in order to render the term ela descriptive of it: Hutchinson’s insistence that ela refers to a primordial covenant between Trinitarian persons must be supplemented by his ethereal speculations concerning air, light, and fire, to render ela emblematic. Hutchinson’s Scriptural emblematicism therefore depends upon a twofold manipulation, which is necessitated by the fact that history has obscured the accordance of Scripture and nature.

For Watson, however, no such manipulation is necessary. The Scriptural term “Sun” is allowed to stand as it is found in the final form of the text. Watson therefore finds it unnecessary to subject the physical object “Sun” to metaphysical speculation. In this Watson’s approach can be seen as less scholarly than that of Hutchinson.

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66 Watson, Christ, 7.
Hutchinson’s emblematicism makes his readers dependent on his surprising natural philosophical insights to order their ideas concerning the natural world in Scriptural terms. Watson’s approach, however, liberates the reader from such dependence. Watson has clearly done the hard work of scholarly engagement with the Hebrew text, but the fruit of his labor is rarely explicitly mentioned in his work. His observations concerning the natural world are neither scholarly nor esoteric; his reflections upon the physical properties and effects of the Sun, we shall see, are observations a child could be expected to make.

Watson takes for granted that sensible objects are necessary for the generation of authentic knowledge, whether natural objects, or the words of Scripture. He says that Christ is, in Psalm 19, “as in other Places of holy Writ, represented to our Senses under the Image of the material Sun, doing in the spiritual or moral World what That does in the natural.” Only because the Sun is a sensible object can it elevate our thoughts to divine things. For Watson, there is only one road to spiritual contemplation, and that road passes through the natural world. “We must therefore,” says Watson, “briefly enquire what the Light does there, and apply it spiritually as we go along.” For Watson, Scripture mandates empirical study because it calls Christ “the light of the world.” Indeed, a refusal to consider what light is and does in the natural world is to

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67 Watson’s lexical and grammatical reflections are selectively included in his footnotes—available only as supplemental insights for keen readers. The one exception to this approach that I have found is the term Hebrew term Geber, which Watson discusses on page fifteen of his sermon. Ibid. 15.
68 Ibid., 7. Watson’s willingness to interpret both the Sun and the light that emanates from the Sun as Christological emblems stands in contrast to Hutchinson’s clear demarcation between the Sun as that which represents the Father, and light as that which represents the Son.
69 Ibid., 17.
70 This should come as no surprise, since Hutchinson’s hermeneutic called interpreters to assign Scriptural words to natural philosophical objects. Hutchinson maintained that the Hebrew words for air, fire and light have biblical and therefore spiritual referents. But he also treated the biblical words as
close the door on God’s appointed means of instruction concerning his Son. Watson ponders the role of light in the natural world as that which God has “appointed to be the Author and Supporter of animal and vegetable Life” in order to understand how Christ can be said to be the one upon whom “our Spiritual Life, our Growth in Grace, our Fruitfulness in good Works, our final Attainment of Perfection wholly depend.”

Does the natural Light in Spring-time call forth dead and rotten Seeds to the Birth, cause naked Roots and Branches to sprout out afresh, and enliven and renew the Face of the Earth? So shall it also be in the Morning of the Resurrection.71

This reflection leads Watson to consider Paul’s discussion of resurrection bodies in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul considers the mystery of plant germination, and he observes that, a kernel of wheat “is not quickened, except it die (15:36).” “So will it be with our Bodies,” says Watson, paraphrasing Paul, “They must die before they can be quickened, be sown in Corruption e’er they can be raised in Incorruption: And as the material Light is the Cause of this Resurrection in the natural World, so shall the Light divine be in the spiritual.”72 This observation encourages Watson to reflect upon many other ways in which the “Properties and Effects” of the “visible Sun” are precisely those of the “Sun of Righteousness.”73

The fact that Watson’s exegetical method compels him to strongly endorse empirical study confirms that he does not see biblical interpretation and natural philosophy as separate fields of study. Hutchinson’s voluminous writings betray his

invitations to consider the empirical properties and functions of air, fire, and light. Hutchinson did not oppose the zeal with which his contemporaries were studying natural phenomena. He merely wished to remind those toiling away in their laboratories that they must not forget to attend to the bible.

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 18.
73 Ibid.
conviction that he alone is able to demonstrate the accordance of the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, and he therefore carries the overwhelming responsibility of recasting Scripture as a natural philosophical textbook. Watson is similarly motivated to demonstrate the accordance of God’s two books. But unlike Hutchinson, he is content to affirm the apparent and limited accordance he finds between the Scriptural text as he finds it, and the natural world as he observes it.

**Canonical Reading and Providential History**

Watson’s biblical hermeneutic extends Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretation of select Hebrew hieroglyphs to the whole scope of Scripture.\(^\text{74}\) In his hands, therefore, it is not merely individual Scriptural words but the biblical canon as a whole that plays the role of the emblematic motto: it mediates the providential interpretation of both natural and historical particulars. In *Christ the Light of the World* Watson’s canonical hermeneutic leads him to interpret particulars of nature as Scriptural figures, but in *A Seasonable Admonition to the Church of England* (1756) and *Aaron’s intercession, and Korah’s rebellion considered* (1756) he extends the figural reach of Scripture to historical particulars. In these works Watson uncovers the tropological and therefore providential significance of historical particulars by interpreting them as Scriptural figures. I therefore argue that Watson’s hermeneutic compels him to replace Hutchinson’s devolutionary view of history with a figural view.

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\(^{74}\) This observation was aptly made by Reno in an unpublished essay on Hutchinsonianism. Reno claims that the Oxonians extend Hutchinson’s emblematic manner by transferring Hutchinson’s original claims about Hebrew words to the “larger sweep” of the biblical narrative. Rusty Reno, “Hutchinsonianism and the Emergence of Modern Conservatism,” 25.
Watson spends almost half of *Christ the Light of the World* defending his central claim that the “Sun of righteousness” is Christ, and he presents no less than seven justifications for his decision to do so.\(^{75}\) From these justifications it is clear that Watson believes the meaning of the term “Sun of righteousness” is determined primarily by the way it is employed by canonical authors.\(^{76}\) This insistence leads Watson to leave behind the traditional Hutchinsonian affirmation of the uniqueness of the Hebrew tongue, and therefore, Hebrew Scripture. Thus, when he turns to study the tiny New Testament epistle of Jude, Watson observes that what Jude

> hath written upon this occasion is full of divine energy; the sentiments have in them all the depth and majesty that is peculiar to the divine writings; and the expressions, with which they are clothed, are the inimitable language of the Spirit of God.\(^{77}\)

Newton thinks he can defend all of Scripture by proving the divine origin of a particular set of biblical words: prophetic language. Hutchinson thinks that select Hebrew

\(^{75}\) First, Watson maintains that he is compelled to interpret Christ as the “Sun of righteousness” because “Christ is the chief or principal Subject of the Psalms in general.” The Psalter, says Watson, “can be looked upon as nothing less than a rich Storehouse of Christian Knowledge,” in lieu of the fact Christians have been given the key to the Psalter, which is Christ. Watson, *Christ*, 8. “To him every page relates,” and “has its full completion in him.” Ibid., 9. Second, Watson argues that he is bound to his Christological interpretation by St. Paul’s precedent, for St. Paul says that the Gentiles received the news that Christ is the light of the world when they received the preaching of the apostles (Romans 10). Ibid., 9. Third, Watson argues that the title of the Psalm “For the Conqueror,” is a reference to Christ, since we are told in the book of Revelation that Christ, the true David, is the final conqueror. Ibid., 10-11. Fourth, it is evident to Watson that Christ is the object of verses 7-12, as he is the spiritual end of the law. Watson argues that the transition from verse six to verse seven is awkward when a Christological interpretation of verses 4-6 is refused. Ibid., 11. Fifth, Watson argues that the term “Sun or Light is above all others the Title by which [Christ] was always distinguished.” Ibid., 11. Watson proceeds to list several biblical characters who give him this name, including Balaam, David, Isaiah, Malachi, Zachariah, Simeon, St. John, and John the Baptist. Ibid., 12. Sixth, Watson argues that two other key terms used to describe the Sun—bridegroom and strong man—are also, throughout the Scriptures, used to refer to Christ. Ibid., 13-15. Lastly, Watson argues that the validity of his Christological interpretation is buttressed by the fact that “most of the antient * Fathers, and best † Interpreters . . . apply this Psalm to Him.” Ibid., 15.

\(^{76}\) For Hutchinson, the historical transmission of a Hebrew term can only have the effect of corrupting and obscuring its primordial meaning, but for Watson the meaning of a term is given in its reception history.

\(^{77}\) Watson, *A Seasonable*, 1.
hieroglyphs can carry the burden of his Scriptural apologetic. But although Watson
shares Hutchinson’s passion for Hebraic scholarship, he affirms the spiritual import of
all Scriptural words, whether Hebrew or Greek.

Watson’s only extant treatment of a New Testament text is his sermon A
Seasonable Admonition to the Church of England. The text for the sermon is Jude 5: “I
will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord,
having saved the people of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed
not.” Because this New Testament text is an explicit reflection upon Old Testament
history Watson is able to use it to defend his conviction that the meaning of New
Testament texts cannot be isolated from the Old Testament. This does not mean,
however, that he believes that the Old Testament should be given more weight than the
New, just as his decision to turn to the New Testament to generate the meaning of the
term “Sun of righteousness” does not imply that the New Testament is to be given more
weight than the Old. In Watson’s hermeneutic the Old and New Testaments are equal
conversation partners that depend upon one another to generate divine meaning.

Watson describes Jude 5 as an “awakening admonition” written “to put the
Christian Churches upon their Guard in a Time of manifest Danger, and thereby prevent
the ruinous Consequences of a general Apostasy.”78 Although this general admonition
might well have come from a number of eighteenth-century apologists, Watson’s
apologetic method is starkly uncharacteristic. Rather than turn to Newtonian science or
the commonplace appeals to miracles or messianic fulfillment, Watson defends the

78 Ibid.
Christian religion with what he calls the most “awful and affecting” argument of all.

Although Jude’s letter is less than a page long in most bibles, and his argument in defense of Christianity is contained within one brief sentence, Watson reads it in the most comprehensive terms possible as an appeal to

the whole stupendous scheme of God’s immutable Counsels, with respect to All who would, upon Tryal, accept of it, and of Judgement, without Mercy, to All who, in their State of Probation, would finally reject it; in a Word, the vast and comprehensive Plan, which God saw to be good, and therefore decreed before all Time, and the invariable Method of his Administration in Time, to execute and accomplish it.\textsuperscript{79}

For Watson, Jude’s argument is “much insisted upon by the Apostles; they frequently repeat it, they recommend it with Earnestness.”\textsuperscript{80} Jude 5 is not an isolated text, able to hold the entire weight of a grand apologetic. It can only fulfill its apologetic function when it is interpreted in canonical context as part of a larger New Testament apologetic. And this larger apologetic is but one aspect of the even larger Scriptural vision, which promotes the Christian religion by appealing to the providential character of history.

Although Hutchinson and his disciples insist upon the radical distinctiveness of the Old Testament, Watson affirms that the value of the Old Testament are perceived when its role within the Christian canon is acknowledged. Its role is to serve as the historical foundation of biblical revelation and to therefore express God’s providential ordering of history. Watson believes that the immediate problem Jude is addressing, forgetfulness of the history of the Exodus, is but one instance of a larger failure to


\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
perceive the Scriptural vision of the providential order of history. He therefore argues that Jude’s specific complaint is not so much that Christians have forgotten the historical facts that constitute the Exodus, but that they have “neglected to make the proper use of the above-mentioned history.” Their sin was to fail to consider it “as an infallible Relation of great and glorious Transactions, wherein the almighty Power and loving Kindness of Jehovah were most marvelously displayed, and for which his Name was to be praised throughout all succeeding Generations.”

Watson is convinced, however, that the purpose of the Old Testament is not merely to give a providentially ordered account of past historical events. To accept the Old Testament as an equal partner in the canon is to acknowledge the Old Testament as that which enlivens Christian participation in this providential order. Watson is supremely interested in the use of Israelite history, and he describes this use in tropological terms. He argues that Jude’s words have the “same Import” as Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “all these Things happened unto them for Examples . . . and they are written for our Admonition.” Watson also holds that Paul and Jude agree that identifying the tropological import of Scripture is not simply a matter of finding parallels between biblical and contemporary particulars. Before the exegete can compare historical particulars she must identify the providential significance of these particulars by locating them within the larger scope of providential history by reinterpreting them in figural terms.

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81 Ibid., 3.
82 Ibid.
The reason Watson believes he can make use of Jude, and the history of the Exodus, to admonish his countrymen is that “God’s government (as has been observed) is an universal, not partial one.”

The Scheme of the divine Administration . . . must be universal, because it is founded and proceeds upon the Plan of Redemption, concerning which the Prophet declares, that The Lord (is) good to All, and his tender Mercies (are) over all his Works; and the Apostles, that Jesus Christ is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but also (for the Sins) of the whole World; that God is no Respecter of Persons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him.”

Watson appeals to Scripture to defend the notion that the history of the Exodus is a particular instance of God’s universal and beneficent government. When the location of the Exodus within God’s overarching “Plan of Redemption” is identified, the history of the Exodus is able to function tropologically as a guide for members of the Church of England. The process of locating the Exodus within a larger providential scheme, therefore, far from minimizing its importance, actually enhances it. By confirming “the impartiality of God’s dealings with mankind” the Exodus is recognized as “the fittest pattern that could be given to succeeding generations” and “the greatest temporal deliverance that ever was wrought for the Church.” From this standpoint Watson is able to interpret Exodus tropologically to expound “awakening Truths” such as assurance of providential care, the necessity of faith, the inevitability of judgement, which in turn “lead us to reflect in what Situation we ourselves stand towards God.”

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83 Ibid., 4.
84 Ibid., 16.
Watson further develops his tropological approach to biblical history in a sermon on Numbers 16:47-48 entitled, Aaron’s Intercession, and Korah’s Rebellion Considered.\textsuperscript{85} In his preface to the sermon Watson returns to his pre-eminent concern to defend the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. He paraphrases Romans 15:4—“whatsoever things were, written aforetime were written for our learning”—and observes first, that “the apostle’s assertion is general, evidently involving in it all the Scriptures of the old testament” and second, that we can only hope to benefit from Old Testament texts if “they are applicable to all times, and we, in particular, apply them to our own times and to ourselves, in order to avoid whatever is displeasing to God, and to do his blessed will.”\textsuperscript{86}

Watson begins his sermon with a reaffirmation of his tropological vision of the Old Testament. He promises his listeners that if they follow him in considering “the design of the history” they will see “how nearly [they] are concerned in it” because they have “divine Authority to affirm, that the things which happened to Israel of old, under that figurative dispensation, happened unto them for examples to us, the christian church in the latter days.”\textsuperscript{87} As always Watson lays out a clear outline for his sermon. He promises first to describe the “historical relation” of the text, which in this case involves an articulation of the “occasion of Aaron’s interposition, and the consequence of it.” Next, he will “Shew the merciful design” of the history, and specifically “what it was intended to represent.” Finally, he will articulate the “father instruction that arises from the

\textsuperscript{85} The text in Watson’s Authorized versions reads as follows: “And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and behold the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people—and he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.”
\textsuperscript{86} Watson, Aaron’s, i.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 1-2.
Watson’s articulation of the “the historical relation” of the text is what we might expect from any modern preacher—an outline of the story of Aaron’s intercession in its narrative context. Although Watson discusses the role Korah and his followers had in bringing about the devastating plague described in the text, he is particularly interested in Aaron’s interposition on behalf of the people of Israel when he “exposed himself for their sake to the irresistible displeasure of his God” by standing “in the mid way between the wrath and them, between the dead and the living.” Watson praises this bold intercession as “so full of faith and love as to deserve the admiration of all ages.” But although the preacher might be expected to proceed from this reflection directly to an admonition—perhaps to sacrificial love or prayer—this is precisely what Watson refuses to do. True to his word, he proceeds from his exposition of the “historical relation” of the text to a consideration of its meaning in light of its location within Scripture. For Watson, the significance of Aaron’s intercession, like that of Moses or David, is that it is a figure of the “great mediation” of Christ. It is only once this figural relation is established that Watson proceeds to the third part of his sermon and offers a tropological reading of the text.

Some further comments regarding Watson’s method are in order. Watson’s insistence that expositors present the “historical relation” of the text before pursuing figural and tropological readings confirms he has left behind Hutchinson’s devolutionary philosophy of history. Watson does not flee from the historical particulars in the text but insists they must be duly acknowledged and interpreted. As

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88 Ibid., 2.
89 Ibid., 4.
90 Ibid.
he states at the outset, his task is to consider the history in question. His figural and tropological approach is not a movement away from historical study, but the consummation of it. Like his Renaissance forebears, Watson refuses to believe that men and women are isolated from history by an "ugly, broad ditch."91 Through figural interpretation, historical particulars come to be upheld as shining lights that guide contemporary Christian life. The second step in Watson’s method—teasing out the significance of the “historical relation” of the text—is a process in which historical particulars are interpreted as figures within the order of Scripture by means of engagement with Scriptural texts. Watson’s third step in his interpretive method is an extension of his second step. Like the second step in Watson’s method, the task of drawing out “farther instruction” from the text is the process in which historical particulars are located within a larger providential framework through their interpretation as Scriptural figures. The difference is that whereas the particulars that are interpreted as figures are found within Scripture in Watson’s second step, the particulars interpreted in the third step are taken directly from contemporary life.

It must be admitted, however, that there are two interpretations of Watson’s method. The first interpretation mutes the mediating role of Scripture because it ascribes to Watson the view that canonical mediation is not always necessary. According to this view Watson divides tropological readings into two categories. First, there are tropological readings derived directly from the “historical relation” of a given Scriptural passage, and second, there are those that are derived from the canonical

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reading of this relation. Watson says that tropological readings are “partly deducible from the history itself, and partly from the spiritual exposition of it.”92 He proceeds to offer three edifying readings derived directly from the text. First, Numbers 16:47-48 teaches the necessity of “an outward consecration to the priesthood, and that in the way of God's institution.” Second, it teaches the order of “subordination he himself has appointed amongst the persons so consecrated.” Finally, it teaches “the great duty of universal obedience to all lawful authority.”93 Here Watson interprets the fact that God's wrath “waxed more than ordinarily hot against these self-commissioned holy ones” as an explicit condemnation of English Dissent.94

The difficulty that accompanies this rendering of Watson's hermeneutic is that it runs counter to the sequence of his method in which the third step in the interpretive process, that of extracting tropological import from the text, follows the second step, that of canonical reading. Indeed, since the edifying readings Watson claims to derive directly from his initial historical exposition also follow after his canonical reflections, one would expect these edifying readings to be informed by his canonical reflections. And this is precisely what we find. After a brief discussion of Korah’s rebellion against Moses and Aaron, Watson reflects upon Paul’s warning against rebellion in Romans 13:2: “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Watson interprets the Old Testament description of Korah’s destruction in the “pit and fire” as “figurative representations” of the damnation of which Paul speaks, which is elsewhere described

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92 Ibid., 12.
93 Ibid., 11-12.
94 Ibid., 13.
as an “invisible pit” and “unquenchable fire.” Watson insists that the Christian doctrine of hell compels Christians to “pray for grace and lowliness of spirit” and to submit “themselves to their appointed governors, even as to him who appointed them.” This suggests that Watson inevitably relies upon the canon to clarify the relation between biblical and contemporary particulars, and this suggests that all of Watson’s tropological readings are, at least in some way, dependent upon canonical mediation. For Watson the canonical reading of the text in question is a bridge that unites the world of the text and the world of the interpreter.

Watson’s dependence upon the canon to establish tropological meaning is confirmed by his “spiritual exposition” of Numbers 16:47-48 which concludes the third and final section of his sermon. He begins this exposition by applying his canonical reflections upon the necessity of Christ’s mediation to the death of Korah and his followers. Death, in canonical context, Watson finds, includes not merely physical death but also “eternal death”—“everlasting exclusion from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” He points out that “no mere man, can by any means redeem his brother” from the bonds of this eternal death, and he reiterates that, “the interposition of Christ alone is sufficient for the accomplishment of this merciful work.” Watson’s ensuing reflections upon the necessity of Christ’s interposition are marked by rhetorical flourish and literary refinement, and crescendo to a celebration of the salvation wrought by the intercession of Jesus Christ, on the cross.

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95 Ibid., 19.
96 Ibid., 19-20.
97 Ibid., 22.
98 Ibid., 23.
99 Ibid.
Admittedly, as he pursues the third step in his method, Watson often appears to echo rather than extend his previous canonical reflections on Christ’s intercession. Nevertheless, his tropological orientation does shine through. Watson concludes with what he calls “an application of the great and leading subject of this discourse.” Watson continues: “The way to profit by an example, is to make the case our own,” and we will have made it our own

When what is recorded of Israel for our use shall be fulfilled in us as well as them, when all the particulars of this history, how awful soever, shall have a much more awful accomplishment such as neither I can describe to you, nor you can fully conceive. When, instead of the earthly pit opening its mouth to swallow up Korah and his company, the infernal pit of everlasting destruction shall disclose its bottomless depth, to receive alive into it the great adversary, and all that have taken part with him against God, every rebel against Christ and the Christian covenant.100

According to Watson Christians must make the particulars of Old Testament history “examples” unto themselves if they hope to grant them contemporary relevance. And for Watson, these particulars can only be recast as “examples” when they are reinterpreted in canonical context as Scriptural figures.101 It is thus that he maintains that the contemporary spiritual significance of Korah’s rebellion and death only comes to light when it is reinterpreted as a figure of rebellion against God and eternal damnation.

Watson favours the figural interpretation of Old Testament particulars because he finds it to be the most natural way of uncovering their contemporary spiritual

100 Ibid., 26-27.
101 Thus, when Watson argues that Old Testament particulars are ordered towards Christian admonition in Christ the Light of the World, he reminds his readers that the Greek word the Authorized version translates as “examples,” is more accurately rendered as “types.” Watson, A Seasonable, 3.
import. And once this import has been established through figural interpretation, the interpreter is free to explore further relations between the biblical text and contemporary life. Watson therefore proceeds to beg “rebels to claim the benefit of an act of grace.” He urges deists and dissenters to “come in now, while the act of grace affords a protection,” and above all he praises God that “To the redeemed of the Lord this history is a sure earnest of their deliverance.” For Watson, the “wide ugly ditch” that separates Aaron’s intercession and Korah’s rebellion and contemporary English life is obliterated when their tropological import is identified through figural interpretation. Once Aaron’s intercession and Korah’s rebellion have been recast as biblical figures, the particulars of Watson’s own context attach themselves to these figures and are therefore able to be similarly reinterpreted in tropological and therefore providential terms.

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102 The way Watson’s hermeneutic brings together typology and tropology is entirely characteristic of pre-modern exegesis. As Lindbeck puts it, “Traditionally expressed, one could perhaps say that typological tropology or tropological typology was the chief interpretative strategy for making the bible contemporary, for absorbing one’s own world into the world of the text.” George Lindbeck, “Postcritical Canonical Interpretation: Three Modes of Retrieval,” in Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 31. Daniel J. Treier persuasively argues that this traditional marriage between figuration and tropology confirms that exploring biblical types is not simply “a prophetic matter of extrapolating the indicative,” but rather “also involves discerning the imperative: prudential discernment of such realities in light of their divinely prepared application to God’s people in the present.” Daniel Treier, “Typology,” in Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 826.

103 Ibid., 26.

104 Ibid., 30.
Conclusion

Watson’s *Christ the Light of the World* was his most influential work. In particular, it had an enormous impact on Horne and Jones.105 Jones says that it was the inspiration behind Horne’s *magnum opus*, his *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (1776).106 After his exposition of Psalm 19 in this commentary, Horne pauses to acknowledge his debt to Watson’s sermon: “If the reader shall have received any pleasure from perusing the comment on the foregoing psalm . . . he is to be informed, that he stands indebted, on that account, to a discourse entitled, CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”107 In his *Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures* (1787) Jones is equally generous in his tribute:

An excellent sermon, which ought never to be forgotten and which I carried through the press, when I was an under graduate at Oxford, was published on *Christ the Light of the World*, from a verse of the 19th Psalm, by my admired, beloved and lamented friend, the late Rev. George Watson.108

The great appeal of Watson’s sermon was that it provided Horne and Jones a means to pursue Scriptural emblematicism without recourse to Hutchinson’s peculiar hieroglyphic method. The final two chapters of this dissertation will explore their individual appropriations of Watson’s method. Horne and Jones endorsed Watson’s Scriptural emblematicism, because they were drawn to the way it informs and upholds a providential vision of both nature and history.

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105 Horne and Jones weren’t the only Hutchinsonians to celebrate the work. See Fowler Comings, *The Printed Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Vindicated* (Oxford, 1753), 100-101 (note).
The clear progression from historical exposition to canonical reading to tropology in *Aaron's intercession* is not clearly outlined in Watson's *Christ the Light of the World*. I argue, however, that Watson's threefold method is clearly at work in *Christ the Light of the World*. As he pursues his threefold method in *Aaron's Intercession*, Watson proceeds from Aaron’s intercession on behalf of the people of Israel to Christ’s intercession on behalf of Christians, and finally, to a call to repentance. The same trajectory, which proceeds from the text in question, to canonical context, to contemporary context, is evident in *Christ the Light of the World*. In *Christ the Light of the World* Watson’s exposition proceeds from the Sun to Christ, and then finally to a reflection upon the resurrection of the people of God. In both cases the Christian canon provides the basis for the providential reading of particulars, whether natural or historical. Thus whether Watson interprets historical actions in the Old Testament text, such as Aaron’s intercession, or natural philosophical objects, such as the Sun, the result is the same. Through his canonical method Watson is able to bring them to bear on contemporary life. Watson’s method therefore establishes equilibrium between nature and history, and this equilibrium undercuts the Newtonian and early Hutchinsonian devolutionary interpretation of history. With Watson nature is no longer set apart as that which alone can offer a sure foundation for the Christian religion.

After Watson, however, Hutchinsonians continued to grapple with the relationship between Scripture and providence. I argue that this struggle can, at least in part, be placed at Watson’s feet. Watson’s suggestion that tropological readings can be drawn directly from the literal reading of texts betrays the conviction that there is a prior providential order to which both Scriptural and the contemporary world belong.
On the other hand, Watson’s more prevalent practice of drawing tropological readings from the canonical reading of texts implies that Scripture itself, in its two-testamental character, is the order that is logically and perhaps ontologically prior to the providential order that governs the world. In the final two chapters of this dissertation I will argue, first, that Horne adopts the view that tropological readings can be established directly from the literal reading of particular texts and that this suggests he believes in an overarching providential order within which Scripture must be placed. Second, I will suggest Jones upholds an alternative viewpoint on both accounts. Jones insists that tropological readings must be mediated by the Christian canon, and this implies the view that that Scripture itself is the providential order through which God governs the world. I will argue that this difference has important implications for the providential interpretation of history. Horne’s approach opens the door to a renewed appeal to the Newtonian devolutionary philosophy of history. Jones’ approach, on the other hand, makes such an appeal unnecessary.

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109 The notion that God created words before he created the physical universe has a long pedigree in Rabbinic Judaism. Early modern thinkers such as Newton and Hutchinson would have been aware of it, perhaps through Maimonides. See T. M. Rudavsky, Maimonides (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 73.
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I have been arguing that Scriptural emblematicism is the *sine qua non of* Hutchinsonianism. I do not deny that the other elements, such as natural philosophy or establishmentarian politics, are also important to the movement. Nevertheless, it is impossible to account for Hutchinsonianism as a coherent movement that lasted for over a century if natural philosophy or churchmanship is regarded as foundational, since the positions of individual Hutchinsonians with respect to these matters were wildly different. There were a number of dissenters among the early Hutchinsonians, and the status of early Hutchinsonianism with respect to the Church of England establishment was accordingly tenuous. The Oxonians and their progeny, on the other hand, were fierce establishmentarians. And while early Hutchinsonians were vehemently opposed to Newtonianism, the Oxonians and their descendents were equally passionate in their defense of Newton. I maintain that the about-face on both accounts is attributable to the fact that the Oxonians rejected Hutchinson’s devolutionary view of history and replaced it with a providential view.

Although this transition begins with Watson, it was left to George Horne and William Jones of Nayland to solidify the new Hutchinsonian perspective. Horne, more than anyone else, established the pro-Newtonian and pro-Church of England orthodoxy that came to define the movement and establish its credibility among scholarly-minded Anglicans. His positions of influence within the University of Oxford and the Church of England also enabled him to play a leading role in forging the establishmentarian
churchmanship that was the basis of nineteenth-century High churchmanship.¹ As a biblical interpreter Horne’s work on Old Testament interpretation was widely read throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but his measured Scriptural emblematicism ultimately contributed to the loss of the unique Hutchinsonian Scriptural vision.

Horne was only able to embrace the Newtonian scientific establishment and the Church of England establishment because he rejected Hutchinson’s devolutionary view of history and replaced it with a providential view. This transition is evident in Horne’s rejection of Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic method and his accompanying affirmation that the received Old Testament text has been preserved from obfuscation by divine providence. And yet, despite this strong affirmation, the role that Scripture plays in fostering a providential interpretation of particulars is not as pronounced in Horne’s thought as we might expect. I argue that the role Scripture plays in governing Horne’s understanding of providence is restricted because his Scriptural hermeneutic, like his Newtonianism and his establishmentarianism, is subservient to his larger providential interpretation of history.

**Horne’s Hutchinsonianism**

Horne’s relationship to Hutchinson was a matter of some controversy at the end of the eighteenth century. I argue, however, that it is appropriate to speak of Horne as a

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¹ Churton maintained that, "Bishop Horne, long before he was bishop, had as much influence on the minds of young men at Oxford, as ever Newman or Pusey have lately had." Edward Churton, A Letter to W. Gresley, 25 May, 1846, Gresley Papers, GRES 3/7/68. As quoted in Peter Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13, n. 44.
Hutchinsonian on account of his Scriptural emblematicism. I also recognize, though, that some found his Scriptural emblematicism hard to detect because it is subsumed within Horne’s larger theological vision. When Horne died it fell to Jones, who calls himself “one of his Lordship’s chaplains, and long his most intimate and confidential friend,” to write an account of his life. As Jones surveys the life, studies, and writings of his dearest friend he ascribes two important events to the workings of providence—Horne’s election to the Mastership of Magdalen College in 1768, and his encounter with Hutchinson’s writings in 1749, which led him away from his study of the Greek tragedians to the study of divinity. Jones relates that Horne quickly earned the reputation of being a Hutchinsonian while still an undergraduate—“which is the name of those who studied Hebrew and examined the writings of Hutchinson ‘the famous Mosaic Philosopher’ and became inclined to favour his opinions in Theology and Philosophy.”

As we have already seen, Horne embraced Hutchinsonianism through Watson’s influence. The character of Horne’s Hutchinsonianism therefore closely resembles that of Watson. Like Watson, Horne refuses to elevate Hutchinson above other thinkers and was therefore happy to supplement his reading of Hutchinson with other sources. Like Watson, Horne enthusiastically embraces Hutchinson’s natural philosophical system, and like Watson, Horne holds Hebraic studies in the highest regard. The feature of Horne’s Hutchinsonianism that most clearly bears Watson’s influence, however, is

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4 Ibid., 22. Horne was regarded as a Hutchinsonian by other Oxonians. Benjamin Kennicott’s A Word to the Hutchinsonians (London, 1756) was a direct attack on the homilies of three scholars, including one of Horne’s.
Horne's aversion to the Hutchinsonian etymological method. As early as 1753, Horne commented that many readers “highly approved of [Hutchinson's} general plan” without agreeing with him “in every particular etymology, or interpretation.” For Jones, Horne’s critical appropriation of Hutchinsonian philosophy is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he questioned the value of the Hutchinson’s etymological method and wanted nothing to do with the controversies surrounding it.

When Jones published the second edition of the Memoirs of Horne in 1799, he was clearly exasperated. Although he had only wished “to give a true idea of that good man, as it presented itself to <his> memory and affections; and to produce an edifying book, rather than a formal history,” he acknowledges that the work had offended some of his readers. “Some few exceptions,” says Jones, “have been made to the performance by little cavillers, which are not worth mentioning.” The primary controversy the work generated, however, and that which brought him “into the most serious difficulty of all,”

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5 George Horne, A Fair, Candid, and Impartial State of the Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1753), 5.
6 Mr. Hutchinson, “Fell into a new and uncommon train of thinking in Philosophy, Theology, and Heathen Antiquity; and appears to have learned much of it from the Hebrew, which he studied in a way of his own: but as he laid too great a stress in many instances on the evidence of Hebrew etymology, his admirers would naturally do the same; and some of them carried the matter so far, that nothing else would go down with them; till by degrees they adopted a mode of speaking, which had a nearer resemblance to cant and jargon, than to sound and sober learning. To this weakness, those persons were most liable, who had received the fewest advantages from a learned education. This was the case with some sensible tradesmen and mechanics, who by studying Hebrew, with the assistance of English only, grew conceited of their learning, and carried too much sail with too little ballast. Of this Mr. Horne was very soon aware; and he was in so little danger of following the example, that I used to hear him display the foibles of such persons with that mirth and good humour which he had ready at hand upon all occasions . . . he never, through the whole course of his life, was a friend to the etymological part of the controversy; as it appears from his writings; in which Hebrew etymology, however he might apply to it for himself, is rarely if ever insisted upon. In some of his private letters . . . he declared his mind very freely on the inexpediency of squabbling about words, when there were so many things to be brought forward, which were of greater importance, and would admit of less dispute.” Jones, Memoirs, 59-60.
was the fact that he had represented Horne as a Hutchinsonian. They evidently thought that Horne had begun his career as a Hutchinsonian but had later repudiated Hutchinsonianism. Jones, however, insists that Horne’s Hutchinsonianism is the departure point of all of his studies in divinity, and that it served as the foundation for all his later work. Jones’ interpretation depends on a particular understanding of the nature of Hutchinsonianism—a particular understanding that clearly bears Watson’s influence. Like Watson, Jones rejects the facile association of the etymological method and Hutchinsonianism. And like Watson, Jones believes that Scriptural emblematicism is central to the Hutchinsonian project. This enables him to minimize the application of

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8 Ibid., i-ii. Jones evidently perceived this matter as having central importance to Horne’s legacy. A New Preface to the second edition deals almost exclusively with the question of Horne’s Hutchinsonianism. 9 Ibid., ii.

10 This conclusion was reasonably drawn, for the last time Horne mentions Hutchinson in print is his 1756 pamphlet An Apology for Certain Gentlemen in the University of Oxford (Oxford, 1756). Jones, however, interpreted Horne’s silence very differently. Watson, as we have seen, urged Jones not to pursue Hutchinsonianism because it would be detrimental to his friendships and hinder his chances at preferment. For Jones, Horne’s silence concerning his Hutchinsonianism is nothing but a prudential acknowledgment of the wisdom of Watson’s advice. The establishment viewed Hutchinsonianism with suspicion, and Horne was evidently hindered by his association with Hutchinson. His first important ecclesial post didn’t come to him until 1771.
the etymological method as discretionary and affirm Horne’s Hutchinsonianism as fundamental to his intellectual pursuits.11

Horne affirms that Scriptural words relay the emblematic import of objects of nature to contemporary readers. In his *magnum opus*, his *Commentary on the Psalms* (1776) he affirms that

The visible works of God are formed to lead us, under the direction of his Word, to a knowledge of those which are invisible; they give us ideas, by analogy, of a new creation rising gradually, like the old one, out of darkness and deformity, until at length it arrives at the perfection of glory and beauty.12

Horne insists that humans are dependent upon the Word of God to expose the spiritual significance of objects of nature. Thus, when he turns to consider human nature he begins by observing that, “Man is often in Scripture compared to a merchant.”13 And when he gazes at flowers, he cannot help but do so through the lens of the Sermon on the Mount:

    The Lily
    
    Emblem of Him, in whom no stain
    The eye of Heav’n could see,
    In all their glory monarchs vain
    Are not array’d like me.14

It is, however, in his Scriptural meditations upon light that Horne’s work most clearly bears the mark of Hutchinson’s Scriptural emblematicism. Horne begins his commentary on Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God,” by paying tribute to

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11 Ibid., vii.
Hutchinson’s ethereal theory. “The heavens,” says Horne, are composed of “that fluid mixture of light and air, which is everywhere diffused about us; and to the influences of which, are owing all the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, all vegetable and animal life, and the various kinds of motion throughout the system of nature.”¹⁵ This consideration of the physical properties and functions of light enables Horne, following Watson, to ponder anew “the manifestation of the Light of Life, or Sun of Righteousness, and the efficacy of evangelical doctrine.”¹⁶

The fact that Horne continued to enthusiastically embrace Hutchinson’s Scriptural emblematicism in his mature Commentary on the Psalms, confirms that Jones’ detractors were misguided in their belief that Horne had repudiated the Hutchinsonianism of his youth. This being said, Horne’s Scriptural emblematicism is far more restrained than Jones’. Whereas Jones dives headlong into the waters of Scriptural emblematicism, Horne gives the impression that he is merely dipping in his toes. This difference, I argue, must be understood not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. Horne’s providential reading of the Scriptures, which is often expressed in emblematic terms, is grounded in his strong affirmation of the providential order of the world, but

¹⁶ Ibid., 81. Hutchinson’s influence on Horne is seen in the way Horne devotes much of his commentary on the Psalm to pondering celestial motions, and Watson’s influence is evident in the way the spiritual import of these motions is rendered by means of canonical readings of particular Hebrew terms. Horne ends his commentary on the Psalm with a tribute to Watson and Christ the Light of the World: “If the reader shall have received any pleasure from perusing the comment on the foregoing psalm, especially the first part of it, he is to be informed, that he stands indebted on that account, to a Discourse entitled, CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, published, in the year 1750, by the late Reverend Mr. GEORGE WATSON, for many years the dear companion and kind director of the author's studies; in attending to whose agreeable and instructive conversation, he has often passed whole days together, and shall always have reason to number them among the best spent days of his life; whose death he can never think of, without lamenting it afresh; and to whose memory he embraces, with pleasure, this opportunity to pay the tribute of a grateful heart.” Ibid., 87.
for Jones, Scripture itself is the ground upon which the providential interpretation of particulars is established.

**Providence and Nature**

Under Watson’s influence Horne came to believe that the mechanical workings of nature play a crucial role in testifying to the existence of providence. Moreover, Watson convinced Horne that Hutchinson’s natural philosophy is uniquely suited to this object. Horne’s first published work, *The Theology and Philosophy in Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis Explained* (1751), confirms that for Horne, endorsing Hutchinson meant rejecting all other natural philosophical authorities. The ridicule it heaps on Newton and Clarke is as caustic as Hutchinson’s invective. Horne laughs at the notion that the best ancient philosophers were Newtonian metaphysicians, and he disparages the Newtonian argument that Christianity can stand on “the certainty, and infallibility of mathematical principles.”\(^{17}\) Most of all, however, Horne takes up Hutchinson’s crusade against the ancient pagan idea of *anima mundi*, which he attributes to Newton on account of his belief in an absolute vacuum and action at a distance.\(^{18}\) For Horne as well as for Hutchinson, the fact that Newton does not believe in a “clock-work” universe renders his natural philosophy apologetically deficient and theologically suspect.

Horne’s next published work, *A Fair, Candid, and Impartial State of the Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Hutchinson* (1753), represents a startling contrast to his previous work. Whereas *The Theology and Philosophy in Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis Explained* demonizes Newtonianism as antithetical to all true (Hutchinsonian) natural

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\(^{18}\) Ibid., 12, 14.
philosophical principles, *A Fair, Candid, and Impartial state of the case* presents Newtonianism and Hutchinsonianism as complementary natural philosophical systems.\(^\text{19}\) “The piece,” comments Jones,

Certainly is what it calls itself, *fair, candid, and impartial*; and the merits of the cause are very judiciously stated between the two parties: in consequence of which, a reader will distinguish, that Newton may be of sovereign skill in measuring *forces* as a Mathematician; and yet, that Hutchinson may be right in assigning *causes*, as a Physiologist.\(^\text{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) Although it is hard to ignore the novelty of Horne’s interpretation, the groundwork for it was laid by influential Newtonian, Scotsman Colin Maclaurin. Interpreters of Newton working in the second half of the eighteenth century largely read Newton through Maclaurin’s *An Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophical Discoveries* (London, 1748), and what they found in it was, in Aston’s words, “a profoundly anti-metaphysical stance that led [Maclaurin] to denounce system builders from Aristotle to Leibniz.” Aston, “From Personality,” 639. Horne quotes Maclaurin to defend the idea that that the mathematical foundation of Newtonianism must be complemented by further study. “Geometry,” says Maclaurin, “can be of little use in philosophy till DATA are collected to build on,” and it is, therefore, “the province of mathematics to put the LAST hand to physics.” Horne, *A Fair*, 22. Horne bemoans the fact that Hutchinson’s work has been neglected because “Sir Isaac’s philosophy is considered certain and infallible because it is founded upon and proved by mathematics.” Horne also decries the fact that the followers of Newton have bestowed “such extravagant encomiums upon him as they have done” that they have fashioned him “as a writer who had made such amazing and stupendous *physical* discoveries into the *agency* of nature.” Ibid., 6; Ibid., 41. Like the scholars of the new Newtonian studies, Horne levels these complaints not against Newton but against Newton’s disciples. Newton himself, remarks Horne, “complained he was killed by the kindness of his friends,” for it was “contrary to his own declarations” that they insisted that, “he had made such amazing and stupendous *physical* discoveries into the *agency* of nature.” Ibid., 42. Although Horne genuinely believes that Hutchinson’s work complements Newton’s, his intent is not to argue that mathematical discourse must be grounded in Scripture. Such a view would merely duplicate the error of the Newtonians that wish to ground natural philosophical discourse in mathematics. Hutchinson’s scriptural philosophy is one thing, and Newtonian mathematical physics is another. Each discourse has its own distinct methods and objects of enquiry. Horne traces Hutchinson’s pursuit of natural philosophical knowledge to Adam himself, for Adam, “by the material elements of a visible world, to the knowledge of one that is immaterial and invisible . . . found himself excited by the beauty of the picture, to aspire after the transcendent excellence of the divine original.” George Horne, *Discourses on Several Subjects and Occasions*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1787), 69. Horne believes that no human being can claim comprehensive knowledge of the natural world, let alone the divine. The contributions of even the best mathematicians and natural philosophers are but pieces of a larger puzzle, and those who, through party allegiances, dismiss the insights of rival natural philosophers foolishly spurn the opportunity to inherit a fuller picture of the natural world and therefore the divine mind than they would otherwise be able to obtain.

Jones attributes Horne’s about-face to the fact that he “soon saw the impropriety of the style and manner, which as a young man he had assumed for merriment.” Once “he had taken time to bethink himself, he resumed and reconsidered the subject.”

*A Fair, Candid, and Impartial State of the Case* helped to establish the conciliatory approach to Newton that marked later Hutchinsonianism. The Oxonians, as Aston observes, worked hard to “repackage the message” by incorporating into their work a “wider range of orthodox references” and omitting the “anti-Newtonian rhetoric altogether.” Horne’s about-face was consistent with the developing logic of the Oxonian providential vision. In order to defend the indispensability of the hieroglyphic method it was necessary for early Hutchinsonians to dismiss all natural philosophical knowledge acquired through alternative channels as misguided and corrupt. On this account even the smallest concession to Newton destabilized their entire system. Since the Oxonians, however, were not invested in defending the Hutchinsonian etymological method, they had no reason to fear Newton, or any other natural philosopher, for that matter.

There are at least two other reasons why it was appropriate for Horne to leave behind his anti-Newtonianism. The first has to do with the nature of Emblematicism itself. Although Alciato’s book of emblems was a touchstone for later Emblematicists, his emblematic associations never atrophied into dogmatic truths. As we have seen, Emblematicism was marked, from the beginning, by a fluidity of association and a

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21 Ibid., 38-39.
22 That being said, Horne’s work does not bear this distinction alone. See, for example, Samuel Pike, *Philosophia Sacra: Or, the Principles of Natural Philosophy* (London, 1753).
willingness to consider the emblematic potential of every object it encountered. By embracing Newton’s natural philosophy as potentially able to testify to divine providence Horne was simply being consistent with the dominant impulse of the emblematic manner. The second reason why it was appropriate for Horne to leave behind his anti-Newtonianism follows from his growing confidence that God’s providence extends not only over created things, but over human history as well.

Watson had taught that the Church of England was under attack on two fronts. First, established truths were being called into question (including the Trinity, the efficacy of the sacraments, the spiritual sense of the Bible, and justification by Christ) and second, established “divine” institutions were being jettisoned (including holy matrimony, episcopacy, church hierarchy, and church discipline). The religious vision Horne inherited from Watson was founded upon the conviction that the institutions that formed the foundation of English society were the given means God had ordained to bestow grace upon His people and order their lives. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Newtonian science was undoubtedly one such institution. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Whiston and others, Newtonianism was enthusiastically embraced not only by the gentry but also by the middling classes. In intellectual circles, thinkers pursuing all manner of studies regarded themselves as Newtonians, as did the entrepreneurial barons of the new industry. Horne’s providential view of human history grants him a willingness to interpret everything he encounters as infused with the light of God. It doesn’t bother Horne in the least that Newton’s principles were newly discovered. Horne is happy to concede that they were unknown to the greatest ancient natural philosophers. He insists that Newton be put in his proper place—that he
not be given pre-eminence in either empirical or religious matters—but is prepared, nonetheless, to affirm with his countrymen that Newton’s mathematical principles are both demonstrably true and apologetically useful.

For Horne, putting Newton in his rightful place means regarding him, not as a physicist, but as a mathematician. Horne quotes Newton’s Principia on several occasions to defend this opinion. He reminds his readers that Newton described his objective in the following terms:

I shall at present go on to treat of the motion of bodies mutually attracting each other; considering the centripetal forces as attractions; tho’ perhaps in a PHYSICAL strictness they may more truly be called impulses. But these propositions are to be considered as purely MATHEMATICAL; and therefore, laying aside all PHYSICAL considerations, I make use of a familiar way of speaking, to make myself the more easily understood by a mathematical reader.24

Horne’s analysis of Newton’s physical and metaphysical speculations certainly lacks the nuance of modern studies such as The Janus Faces of Genius, but Horne is accurate in his assessment inasmuch as Newton continually flirted with and sometimes embraced agnosticism concerning the cause of universal gravitation.25

Horne’s is a well-ordered universe in which individual physical sciences find their proper and distinctive place. He celebrates the “widely different nature and genius of each science,” and when he considers mathematical and natural philosophical

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24 Horne, A Fair, 36.
25 In A Fair, Candid, and Impartial State of the Case Horne rejects Hutchinson’s belief that Newton attributes active powers to nature, and he quotes Newton to this end: “I likewise call attractions and impulses in the same sense accelerative and motive; and use the words attraction, impulse, or propensity of any sort towards a centre, promiscuously, and indifferently one for another; considering those forces not PHYSICALLY, but MATHEMATICALLY: wherefore, the reader is not to IMAGINE, that by those words I any where take upon me to define the kind or the manner of any action, the CAUSES or the PHYSICAL reason thereof, or that I attribute FORCES in a TRUE and PHYSICAL sense to certain centres (which are only mathematical points;) when at any time I HAPPEN to speak of centres as attracting, or endowed with attracting powers.” Horne, A Fair, 35-36. Isaac Newton, The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, trans. Andrew Motte (London, 1729) 1.8-9.
discourse, he concludes that they work together in perfect harmony. Natural philosophy “is conversant about causes,” and mathematics “effects.” Natural philosophy “finds out agents,” and mathematics “adjusts the proportions of the powers of those agents.” On this basis Horne argues that Hutchinson’s natural philosophical speculations complement, and indeed, perfect Newton’s mathematical work. Indeed, says Horne, “Isaac never intended or thought of any thing farther than illustrating actions and effects, leaving the agents to be discovered by succeeding philosophers.” Horne then asserts that, “Mr. Hutchinson has made farther enquiries—that he has attempted from scripture and experiment” that prove “Sir ISAAC’s conjectures” and enable him identify the agents that generate the motions represented by Newton’s mathematical laws. Together Newton’s *Principia* and Moses’ *Principia* give the modern English interpreter a wondrously full picture of the universe. Suddenly Newton and Hutchinson have become the best of friends.

**Providence and the Church**

Although Horne’s willingness to embrace Newton represents a broadening of Hutchinson’s perspective, Horne’s broadening perspective is most clearly seen the way that, following Watson, he affirms the providential significance, not only of objects of nature, but of historical objects as well. For Horne, the providential order of history is

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26 Horne, *A Fair*, 8. Horne quotes Clarke to defend his interpretation of Newton. Clarke challenges Leibniz in the following way: “If Mr. Leibnitz or any other philosopher can explain these phaenomena by the laws of mechanism, far from meeting with any opposition he will receive the thanks of all the learned world.” Ibid., 54. Hutchinson, by claiming to have uncovered the mechanical cause of all celestial movements, presented himself as the philosopher the “learned world” had been waiting for, and Horne seems to approve of this appraisal.

27 Ibid., 53.

28 Ibid., 23.
most clearly seen in the doctrine and institution of the Church, and under Horne’s leadership the Hutchinsonians earned the reputation as the most vociferous defenders of the Church establishment. Establishmentarianism, however, is not to be regarded as the foundation of Horne’s theological vision. His establishmentarianism is grounded in his larger providential interpretation of history.

In his Memoirs of the life of Horne, Jones remarks that in the early years of the movement many dissenters embraced Hutchinsonianism. Jones observes—and he seems somewhat surprised by this fact—that these dissenters, despite “all the information they had acquired, did not appear (as might reasonably have been expected) to be much softened in their prejudices against the constitution of [the Church of England].” Jones relates that, “With some of these, Mr. Horne frequently fell into company” and that it was therefore likely “that he might come by degrees to be less affected, than he ought to be, to the Church of which he was a member.” Horne, however, broke with the dissenting Hutchinsonians, and Jones attributes this break to the most unlikely of influences: the controversial Church of Ireland bishop Robert Clayton (1695-1748). Horne wanted Jones to write an answer to Clayton’s An Essay on Spirit (1750), and the two friends worked together for over a month on the project using the library of Sir John Dolben (1684-1756), who was overseeing Jones’ assistant curacy at Finedon in Northamptonshire. Clayton had downplayed the importance of Trinitarian orthodoxy to promote the comprehension of dissenters, and the fact that he

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29 Jones, Memoirs, 64.
30 Ibid.
employed Arian doctrine as an olive branch led Horne and Jones to "look into the controversy" as centrally concerned with the issue of non-conformity. Their studies led them to conclude that heresy always works its leaven against the established order of the Church, and they therefore came to believe that the surest preservative against heresy was the preservation of Church establishment.

The association between early Hutchinsonianism and dissent was tied to the esoteric nature of Hutchinson's method and philosophy. The early Hutchinsonians were violently antagonistic to all who rejected their secret Kabbalah, and their antagonism was, as we might expect, directed towards established doctrinal and natural philosophical conclusions. And because it was the divines rather than the natural philosophers who took up the mantle to refute Hutchinson, the revolutionary impulse of Hutchinsonianism was directed against the Church. Jones confirms that the relationship between early Hutchinsonianism and dissent was solidified by the protracted controversies surrounding Hutchinson's ideas: many early Hutchinsonians harbored jealousy “against their superiors both in Church and State, on account of the unfair and angry treatment (I may say, persecution) some of them had suffered, and the dislike and aversion which their principles had met with from persons of established reputation.” Horne himself was attacked on account of his association with Hutchinson. Nevertheless, the early controversies surrounding Hutchinsonianism centered on the validity of the hieroglyphic method, and on this account Horne’s allegiance was not with Hutchinson. Since he believed the method obscured the salutary elements of Hutchinson’s philosophy, he had no reason to resent the

33 Jones, Memoirs., 67.
34 Ibid., 64.
establishment’s rejection of it.

   It is easy to see where the revolutionary foment of early Hutchinsonianism might have led. Their hieroglyphic method was, as we have seen, firmly entrenched in a devolutionary interpretation of religious history, and the Church of England was subject to this interpretation. Hutchinson, like Clarke and other devolutionists, may well have affirmed the necessity of conforming to the Church of England as the best option on offer, but such conservatism is contingent upon discretionary criteria of adjudication and is therefore tenuous. Given that Hutchinson, like Newton and Clarke, insists that all religion, not merely Roman Catholicism, is subject to devolution, and all Christians, not only Roman Catholics, have obscured the true import of the Scriptures, there is little to stop his philosophy from moving to an explicitly dissenting, and perhaps deistic orientation. Horne, more than anyone else, was responsible for the fact that this possibility failed to actualize.

   Although Watson presented the outlines of what would later be considered a High church ecclesiology, he was never able to fully develop his ecclesiological position. When he left Oxford in 1758, he slipped into obscurity, and it fell to Horne, his most famous pupil, to establish the ecclesiological orientation of the movement. Horne gradually rose to the highest echelons of the University of Oxford administration: he was elected junior proctor of the University in 1758, received his Doctor of Divinity in 1764, was elected President of Magdalen College in 1768, and was elected Vice-chancellor of the University in 1776.\textsuperscript{35} Ecclesiastical preferment was slower in coming. In 1771, he was elected Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty, in 1781 he was promoted

to the Deanery of Canterbury, and he was finally consecrated Bishop of Norwich in 1790. Yet even before his consecration, his position of influence allowed him to solidify the Hutchinsonian commitment to the establishment of the Church of England. Horne’s establishmentarianism became the provenance of High churchmen in the nineteenth century, but in Horne’s context establishmentarianism was not tied to a particular ideological party. Horne occupies what can be described as a centrist or “orthodox” position. He upholds the legitimacy of the Hanoverian monarchy and Church of England not because of his allegiance to a particular ideology or party but because he believes that as established, they are providentially ordained.

Few works have altered the face of eighteenth-century studies like J. C. D. Clark’s *English Society, 1660-1832*. Clark’s work opened “a new phase in English historiography which questioned much of the received picture of English society as secular, modernizing, contractarian and middle class.” For Clark, the eighteenth century “has an integrity of its own which belongs neither to ‘pre-modernity’ nor to ‘modernity,’” the defining feature of which is “the close relationship of monarchy, aristocracy and church.” Clarke insists that “if symbolic dates have any value, then not 1642, not 1688, not 1714 or 1776 but 1832 is the more meaningful,” for it is in 1832, that the *ancien régime*

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36 See Meadows, Cowper, *The Lives of the Deans of Canterbury, 1541-1900* (Canterbury, 1900), 194-197. Of the Oxonian coterie Horne was the only one elevated to the Bench.
37 The notion that the eighteenth century Church was comprised of different warring parties owes much to W. J. Conybeare’s influential essay “Church Parties.” As Andrews remarks, however, “Attempting to classify and define the nature and makeup of such ‘parties’ is a task that cannot be achieved without a great deal of subjectivity and ahistorical labeling.” Robert Andrews, *Lay Activism and the High Church Movement of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 20-21, n. 45.
39 Clark, *English Society*, 14, i.
finally collapsed.\textsuperscript{40} Although scholars wishing to uphold the traditional emphasis upon the radical enlightenment have contested Clark’s work, it has compelled many to acknowledge that the religious establishment enjoyed widespread if tacit support in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{41}

Clark’s emphasis on the strength of the religious establishment in the eighteenth century has led to a resurgent interest in eighteenth-century High churchmanship. Mather observes that the Latitudinarian, or “Low church” wing of the Church was already on the wane in the 1740s and 1750s and that Latitudinarians ultimately “lost their battle for the soul of the Church of England.”\textsuperscript{42} As he traces the ascendency of High churchmanship in mid-eighteenth century, Mather pays tribute to the influence of Archbishop Thomas Secker (1693-1768) as “the principal enemy of ‘Low church controversialists.’”\textsuperscript{43} He equally acknowledges, however, that the Hutchinsonians—whom he credits with breathing “a genuine spirit of religious revival”—played a crucial role in “getting the ball rolling towards High churchmanship even before Secker.”\textsuperscript{44}

Gibson, in his \textit{The Church of England 1688-1832}, also traces the fortunes of

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 16. Nevertheless, Clark insists that what was lost in 1832 was not “‘the old world’ tout court” but “the hegemonic status and the integrity of a certain body of ideas, beliefs, customs, and practices.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Sanna argues that, “At the practical level it is a little difficult to sustain the thesis that eighteenth century England was a confessional polity, even if it was still one in theory. Yet, few recent books have caused more fluttering in academic dovecotes. Indeed at the end of the 1980s scarcely one among professional historians of Hanoverian Britain was averse to acknowledge the need to incorporate religion in his work.” Gugleimo Sanna, “The Eighteenth Century Church of England in Historical Writing,” in \textit{Cromohs Virtual Seminars. Recent historiographical trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries)}, ed. M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino, 1-6, http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/sanna_church.html, accessed 22 July 2015.

\textsuperscript{42} Mather, \textit{High Church}, 21. Following Clark, F. C. Mather questions the assumption that “those who remained in the Established Church were excluded from ecclesiastical preferment as tainted with Jacobism and for the most part fell into obscurity.” Ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 10. The church establishment was suspicious of the Hutchinsonians, but they eventually found their champion in archbishop Secker. Nigel Aston, “Horne and Heterodoxy: The Defence of Anglican Beliefs in the Late Enlightenment,” \textit{The English Historical Review} 108, no. 429 (1993): 898.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
Latitudinarianism at mid-century, albeit with a different emphasis. As Sanna observes, Gibson’s study demonstrates that, “High and Low church were not well-defined homogenous parties but rather blurred and broad streams within Anglicanism that often merged, overlapped and coincided.” Sanna finds that in the middle of the eighteenth-century clerical attitudes often “incorporated elements of diverse provenance” and could therefore be “both rationalist and open to revelation, anti-dogmatist while ready to subscribe to articles of faith, tolerant towards Nonconformists but impatient to bring them into the establishment.” The diverse provenance of mid-century churchmanship, and specifically, the fusion of Latitudinarian and High church ideals, is apparent in Oxonian Hutchinsonianism.

When Horne stood before the University on Friday 30, 1761, “the day appointed to be observed as the Day of the martyrdom of Charles I,” and paid tribute to Charles I, “a blessed martyr,” he was employing Royalist rhetoric that, since the Glorious Revolution, was bitterly contested. Although Jacobites appealed to the martyrdom of Charles I to justify the restitution of the house of Stuart, Latitudinarians used Charles’s death to rhetorical advantage by emphasizing the necessity of submission to governing authority—in other words, the Williamite and then Hanoverian regimes. Earlier in the century, Horne’s sermon would have clearly allied him with the Latitudinarian cause.

45 William Gibson, The Church of England, 1688-1832: Unity and Accord (London: Routledge, 2001). Gibson’s work importantly challenges the prejudices that many historians continue to have against the eighteenth-century church, prejudices he finds they have inherited from the ideologically driven historiography of the Victorians. Ibid., 1-2.
46 Sanna, “The Eighteenth,” 5.
47 Ibid.
48 With Watson, for example, we see both the traditional Latitudinarian emphasis on fidelity to the Williamite and Hanoverian regimes and the traditional High church refusal to negotiate the terms of comprehension with dissenters. George Watson, Aaron’s Intercession and Korah’s Rebellion Considered (London, 1756), 18-19.
49 Horne, An Apology, 41. The Hutchinsonians, like the non-jurors, advocated passive obedience to a regime that blocked their promotion Mather, High Church, 227.
The object of Horne’s sermon was to draw comparisons “between the Lord and the royal martyr” and to urge men “to eradicate out of the minds of men those diabolical principles of resistance to government in church and state.” For Horne, Charles I has become both a figure of Christ and a figure of the establishment.

The defense of the Hanoverians on the basis of the appeal to the martyrdom of Charles I became a favourite Hutchinsonian refrain. It must be emphasized, however, not only that Horne’s Royalism was indistinguishable from that of non-Hutchinsonian High churchmen, but also from that of moderate Low churchmen. Although radical “Whiggishness” was associated with dissent, the moderate Rockingham Whigs, for whom Edmund Burke (1729-1797) played the role of chief spokesman, upheld the traditional Whig defense of the legitimacy of the Hanoverian regime, despite the fact that they were often outspoken critics of it. When Burke looked at English society he saw, if not a confessional state, then certainly something closely resembling one. And what he saw across the channel was equally not merely the destruction of an ancient

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 5. Horne teems with confidence that the given order has been established by God in direct opposition to High churchmen such as Francis Atterbury who allowed their desire to restore primitive order become the seeds of insurrection.
52 The Rockingham Whigs were not, however, the only ones to critique the establishment while defending its legitimacy. Gibson remarks that although “It has settled into the foundations of British historical orthodoxy that the bishops of the Hanoverian era were servile lap dogs for their Whig masters,” he documents a number of clear instances where principled Bishops opposed and defeated government motions. Ibid., 64. And for Gibson, these “Displays of independence by bishops in the Lords raises a significant problem for the traditional interpretation of the Hanoverian bench.” Ibid., 71.
53 Burke insists that, “Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood; and paid it with usury, by enlarging their ideas, and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master!” Burke, Reflections, 67-68.
monarchy, but the collapse of a confessional state. For Burke the horror of regicide and the descent into despotism were not the decisive events of the Revolution. They followed unremarkably from the decisive act of the National Assembly, the confiscation of Church property. Burke insists that the protection of individual property is integral to human society as providentially ordered. Seen in this light, the government’s protection of church property has symbolic significance for the maintenance of providential order and is integral to it. The fact, therefore, that it was church property that was confiscated, made the Revolution doubly appalling to Burke, and it led him to condemn it as—in Turner’s words—the “self-consciously arbitrary and tyrannical rejection of experience, tradition, historical precedent, religion, and natural social hierarchy.”

Burke’s publication of Reflections on the Revolution in France in 1789 provoked a furious controversy not only concerning the legitimacy of the French Revolution, but importantly, concerning the relationship of church and state in England. This comes as no surprise given that, while the work is presented as a response to the enquiry of a young French nobleman, Burke’s real opponent is the popular Unitarian minister...

54 Burke refused to be caught up in the euphoria for the Revolution that swept up many European commentators. In August 1789, he mused that he found “something in it paradoxical and Mysterious,” and he predicted all of the major events that were to transpire, including regicide and military despotism. Frank Turner, “Introduction,” to Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), xix.
55 Ibid., xxx.
56 Ibid., xxi.
57 Ibid., xxiii-iv.
58 Burke’s impassioned and uncompromising condemnation of the Revolution left some of his fellow Whigs puzzled, and to this day critics have wondered about the consistency of his position as outspoken defender of the American Revolution and bitter enemy of the French Revolution. Burke insists however, that the British Crown’s treatment of the colonists is analogous to the French populace’s treatment of the French Crown: both are in clear violation of the “ancient constitution” which has, as its pillars, “spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion.” Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. Frank Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 67.
Richard Price (1723-1791). On November 4, 1789, Price delivered a political discourse before the Society for Commemorating the Revolution (of 1688) and argued that the revolution of 1688 was the analogue of the revolution in France.\textsuperscript{59} The central issue for Burke, therefore, is the interpretation of the English Constitution, which Burke insists is but a modest departure from previous arrangements rather than, as Price claimed, the establishment of the people’s “right to choose their own king.”\textsuperscript{60}

At the time of his \textit{Reflections} Burke’s own political fortunes had already suffered bitter disappointment, and he was desperate for allies. When Bishop Horne published an endorsement of Burke’s \textit{Reflections} in 1791, Burke was ecstatic to receive the affirmation of so eminent a spokesman. In \textit{A Charge Intended to have been Delivered to the Clergy of Norwich} Horne cuts short his reflections on “the proper opinions to be held with regard to the constitution of the state” because

\begin{quote}
All farther reflections on this subject are rendered needless by a late work of a learned and eloquent layman, who hath very effectually exposed those wild opinions lately risen up to disturb the peace of mankind; and hath called us back to the measures of common sense and experience, at a time, when we were hasting towards anarchy, under the specious name of liberty; pointing out to us a more excellent way, which if we follow we shall do well. As Christians and Englishmen, we are unquestionably obliged to those, who are not afraid to declare themselves against the overbearing violence of licentious principles, and the torrent of calumny which followeth so close after them: and it is to be hoped, \textit{our} zeal will be stirred up by so laudable an example.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

On December 9, 1791, Burke wrote a letter to Horne thanking him for his generous endorsement. “I have been honoured,” begins Burke, and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{59} The work was written to Charles-Jean-Francois Depon, a young French acquaintance of Burke’s. Burke, \textit{Reflections}, 3 n. 1.
\textsuperscript{60} Turner, “Introduction,” xxxvii. For Burke, Price’s nonconformity had already compromised his position as a spokesman for the Revolution, and Burke was not alone in this opinion. For Burke and others Price’s nonconformity made him complicit in the revolutionary rejection of the French establishment.
\textsuperscript{61} George Horne, \textit{A Charge Intended to have been Delivered to the Clergy of Norwich} (Norwich, 1791), 33.
\end{flushright}
I flatter myself thro’ your Lordships indulgence, with your truly Episcopal Charge to the Clergy of your Diocess. It appears to me full of Wisdom, and piety, and of doctrine not only sound in itself, but for the time most seasonable. I should say a great deal more, which however would be short of what I think, of the merits of that piece, and of my reverence to the Character of the writer, if your Lordships polite and generous acceptance of my feeble endeavours in our Common Cause might not appear as some ingredient in my admiration of the author of his work. I ought not to be too much ashamed neither of receiving some Bias on my Judgement from the Sentiments of my Gratitude. In one respect I shall be justified in expressing the highest opinion of whatever comes from the Bishop of Norwich, by its being known, that I am in unison with the publick Voice.62

As an establishmentarian, Burke views Horne’s position as Bishop as an inherently political one, and he pays tribute to Horne as one who speaks with “the publick voice.” Burke’s exchange with Horne is intriguing because it shows that even at the end of the eighteenth century a Tory could identify the political theology of a Whig as his own, and visa versa. In this, it confirms Clark’s opinion that the ancien régime was upheld by those across the political spectrum. It also suggests that upholding this ideal is a wholly inadequate marker to identify the churchmanship of individuals at the dawn of the French Revolution.

Scholars have tended to view Horne’s theological position entirely in terms of ideological categories, and to interpret him, therefore, as a being “Tory,” “High church,” or “right wing.” There can be no doubt that Horne held positions that, in the nineteenth-century, would have clearly allied him with such parties. Within Horne’s own context however, these terms should be applied cautiously.63 To describe Horne’s position in

63 Andrews acknowledges the point that the Hutchinsonians and other High churchmen saw themselves as “orthodox” rather than members of a High church party, but he nevertheless insists that they should be called High churchmen despite the fact that they did not have a party allegiance. He rightly maintains that someone can be a High churchman even at a time when no High church party exists. Andrews, Lay, 20-21, n.45. Nockles is also willing to regard Horne and other establishmentarian ecclesiastics “High churchmen,”
ideological terms is to ignore his self-understanding. Horne dissociates himself from the term “High church” for the same reason that he dissociates himself from the term “Hutchinsonian;” he refuses to be enlisted in any cause that might be interpreted as sectarian. From his position at the centre of the ecclesial-political establishment, Horne used his influence to build bridges with those at the margins. His willingness to align himself on theological and political issues with churchmen of diverse loyalties confirms his willingness to make his personal theological opinions subservient to his establishmentarianism. In particular, he was surprisingly happy to associate with

and he does so in order to challenge the notion that the Tractarians brought High church principles to a church that had fallen away from the Caroline tradition. Nockles, The Oxford, 12-26. Even as he does so, however, Nockles is keenly aware of the important distinctions that separate late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century High churchmen from the Tractarians. The danger that accompanies the application of the term “High church” to eighteenth-century ecclesiastics is that it is easy to take current understandings of High churchmanship, which are based upon nineteenth-century categories, and impose them on previous eras. In particular, since the Oxford Movement, the term has been used to refer to a specific party within the Church of England with anti-establishmentarian sensibilities. But since establishmentarianism was central to the High churchmanship of previous generations, the application of the term to eighteenth-century churchmen runs the risk of obscuring this important distinction. Ibid., 90. Sack argues that the defense of the Church of England establishment was the central element in English conservatism prior to 1832. See James J. Sack, From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993).

While Horne’s agreement with Burke does not disconfirm the existence of a High church party in the second half of the eighteenth century, it suggests that the existence of such a party must be established on the basis of something other than political theory. Mather, for one, discusses several controversies of the late eighteenth century that he believes helped to consolidate such a party. First, there was the battle with the Methodists concerning “breaches of parish order and the holding of irregular services, with which was connected an attack on the ‘enthusiasm’ and moderate Calvinism of the Anglican Evangelicals.” Mather, High Church, 17. Second there was the even more urgent task of reaffirming the “Catholic teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper against the reductionism of the advanced Latitudinarians.” Ibid., 17-18. For Mather, “A prolonged controversy over Prayer Book revision was the third main dispute in which High Churchmanship developed its identity.” Ibid., 20. Admittedly, Horne’s involvement in these controversies gives further reason to call into question his identity as a leader of the High church party. Horne, as we have seen, was very friendly to Evangelicals, and as Mather himself acknowledges, “Horne created an entente between High churchmanship and Calvinism when he defended six Calvinistic Methodists expelled from St. Edmund Hall in 1768 for praying and preaching in private houses, and he collaborated with Augustus Toplady to resist alterations in the liturgy and articles in 1772-3.” See C. J. Abbey, The English Church and its Bishops, 1700-1800, vol. 2 (London, 1887), 125-27. On the other hand, Horne’s Eucharistic piety was consistent with that of nineteenth-century High churchmen. Nevertheless, this piety seems to have been regarded as extremely idiosyncratic in Horne’s day, and it can therefore hardly be used to substantiate his leadership in of a distinct party. Magdalen College archivist Darwall-Smith observes that, “Magdalen became the stage on which the new President developed his distinctive devotions. He observed fasting; in the 1780s he placed lighted candles on the altar during
“Low-church” Evangelicals. He worked eagerly with them on issues of societal reform. He happily adopted their rhetoric of conversion. He nurtured a friendship with John Wesley, and he even entrusted the education of his daughter Sally to Hannah More (1745-1833).

Describing Horne’s churchmanship as “orthodox” is appropriate for at least three reasons. The first is that he spurned innovation and strove, as far as he was able, to uphold the consensus of the catholic tradition. The second is that his establishmentarianism was, within his context, entirely “orthodox,” as most of his fellow clergy saw the church and state as two institutions that formed a single entity.

The third reason is that Horne’s establishmentarianism was, as we have seen, grounded in a concern to preserve Trinitarian orthodoxy. Horne, like many other churchmen, came to believe that conformity is the best preservative against heresy.

Mather observes that under Horne’s leadership the Hutchinsonians became “the celebration of the Eucharist; and he occasionally practiced private confession—all very unusual things at this date.” Robin Darwall-Smith, “The Monks of Magdalen, 1688-1854,” in Magdalen College, Oxford: A History, ed. L. W. B. Brockdiss (Oxford: Magdalen College, 2008), 339. Darwall-Smith also relates that the young demy Henry Best was surprised by Horne’s religious formality: “The President,” says Best, “even bowed to the altar on leaving the chapel, without any dread lest the picture of Christ bearing the Cross, by Ludovico Caracci [sic], should convict him of idolatry. Here we all turned towards the altar during the recital of the Creed.” Henry Best, Four Years in France (London, 1826), 8-9. Horne’s espousal of “Catholic” devotion to Christ is seen in his sermon, Christ the Object of Religious Adoration: And therefore, very God. A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary’s (Oxford, 1775). Horne was “one of the few Georgian theologians to win approval from Tractarians in the 1830s.” Darwall-Smith, “The Monks,” 266.

In private conversation Darwall-Smith related to me that he is quite convinced that the formal worship practices of the Oxford Movement had their rise at Magdalen through the influence of Horne and his successor Martin Routh.

65 It is not clear that pre-Tractarian Evangelicals should be regarded as “Low churchmen.” Mather finds that the term was first applied to Evangelicals in 1833. The label “Low church” was originally used to describe the Erastianism of Hoadly, which the Evangelicals vigorously opposed. Mather, High Church, 32.

66 In other words, Horne’s theology also contains elements that, while “orthodox” in his own context, came to be associated in the nineteenth century, not with High churchmen, but with Evangelicals. George Horne, Letters on Infidelity, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1786), 213, 295.


69 Gibson, The Church, 27.
nearest thing to a coherent body on the High Church side of the eighteenth-century Church of England.”

I do not deny that it may ultimately be appropriate to regard Horne and his allies as High churchman. I have argued, however, that the danger that accompanies this attribution is that it can obscure what was more fundamental about their churchmanship, namely their establishmentarianism. I also maintain that although the Hutchinsonians may well have distinguished themselves from other clerics by the sheer intensity of their establishmentarian apologetic, the fact that “orthodox” churchmen from across the political spectrum were strong establishmentarians confirms that establishmentarianism is not the distinguishing feature of Hutchinsonianism. Accordingly, I have emphasized that what distinguishes the theology of Hutchinsonians from that of other churchmen is their Scriptural hermeneutic. It must equally be said, however, that it is not clear that Horne’s establishmentarianism has a uniquely Hutchinsonian Scriptural basis.

Hutchinsonian sensualism played an important part in leading Horne to the conviction that it is necessary to defend the establishment as providentially ordered. But although Horne occasionally appeals to Charles I as a figure of Christ, his establishmentarian apologetic can hardly be said to be the outworking of a figural Scriptural hermeneutic. While the emblematic interpretation of Scripture is the means through which Horne discerns the providential order of nature, it does not play the same role in his reflections upon the providential order of history. Indeed, it is tempting

70 “Linked by ties of friendship and blood they formed a compact coterie, whose members corresponded and helped one another whenever possible. Though their numbers were few they exerted a large and growing influence in the Church during the first half of George III’s reign.” Mather, High Church, 13.

71 I discuss the relationship between the Tractarians and early nineteenth-century High churchmanship in the Conclusion of this work. Whereas the High churchmanship of the early nineteenth-century was grounded in a providential view of the Church establishment, the Tractarians sought to dismantle this establishment in order to reinstitute their primitive ideal.
to ascribe to Horne the view that the providential order of history is apparent and therefore does not rely upon Scriptural discernment. The fact that Horne’s establishmentarianism was so widespread does not necessarily point to the unraveling of the Scriptural basis of Hutchinsonianism (although admittedly such a Scriptural basis would likely result in some important divergences from the mainstream). There can be no doubt, however, that as Hutchinsonianism gradually came to be understood exclusively in terms of political and ecclesial commitments, Scriptural emblematicism came to be regarded first, as useful for the maintenance of the established order, and then unnecessary towards this end, and then finally, irrelevant.72

Providence and Scripture

One of the basic difficulties with Hutchinson’s defense of the Old Testament was that he tried to elevate the status of the Old Testament while insisting all the while that the text of the Old Testament is fundamentally corrupt. The early Hutchinsonians were unable to resolve this tension, for while they were vociferous in their defense of the Hebrew tongue, they continued to promote Hutchinson’s theory of textual corruption.73 In fact, the early Hutchinsonian emphasis on textual corruption was integral to their defense of Hutchinson’s etymological method: early Hutchinsonians found that the surest way to highlight the wonder of Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic decipherment was to emphasize the corruption of the Old Testament text. When the Oxonians quietly moved

72 I discuss the fortunes of Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism in the nineteenth century in the Conclusion of this work.
73 Bate, for one, insists that Hutchinson’s quarrel was not with the Christian grammarians and lexicographers but with the Jews. The Jews intentionally obscured the Christological import of the original Hebrew words, for although “The Scriptures were wrote for Evidence of Christ—they renounce Christ.” Julius Bate, The Examiner Examined (London, 1739), 62.
away from Hutchinson’s etymological method they therefore no longer found it necessary to parade Old Testament textual obfuscation. In fact, the Oxonians became the eighteenth-century’s great defenders of Old Testament textual integrity. Horne’s pamphlet exchange with noted Old Testament textual critic Benjamin Kennicott (1718-83) played an important role in this about-face. Because Horne argued that textual transmission was guided by divine providence, his defense of the Old Testament, like his defense of the providential order of nature and of the Church establishment, displays an increased willingness on the part of Hutchinsonians to affirm the providential order of history. In what follows I will argue that Horne’s defense of the Old Testament suggests that he has come to instrumentalize Scripture as a means of defending this overarching providential order.

Like Hutchinson, Kennicott insisted that the Old Testament had a central role to play in the defense of Christianity against atheists and infidels; like Hutchinson, Kennicott’s object was to reclaim the Old Testament as a Christian text; like Hutchinson, he held that the single most important factor hindering the Old Testament from fulfilling this role was textual corruption; and like Hutchinson, he insisted that the importance of his own work could only be discerned when the sheer extent of textual corruption was made known. "Since the last Translation was made," says Kennicott,

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75 Kennicott insists that "All Scripture was given by inspiration of God—and, that the Volume of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New, is to be reverenced, and received by Christians for their instruction in righteousness." Benjamin Kennicott, *The Sabbath. A Sermon Preached in his Majesty’s Chapel, Whitehall* (London, 1781), 5. Kennicott, like his Hutchinsonian opponents, is well aware that upholding the Old Testament as Christian Scripture means affirming its ability to direct Christian behaviour. Following seventeenth-century Sabbatarians, Kennicott insists that, "ALL MANKIND are bound to observe A SABBATH DAY." Ibid., 14.
Many imperfections and errors in it have been discovered by learned men. And several passages have been lately pointed out, in which the older English Translations had better expressed the sense of the originals, both in the Old and in the New Testament. But, notwithstanding these blemishes, and even mistakes; and though it is certain, that great improvements might be now made in translating the whole Bible, because the Hebrew and Greek languages have been much cultivated, and far better understood, since the year 1600: yet we shall then only see the great Expediency, or rather the Necessity, of a more exact English Bible; when we reflect, that the Heb. Text itself is now found to be wrong in many instances, some of which are of considerable consequence.\(^76\)

Kennicott’s lifelong work, which built upon the text-critical labours of Louis Cappel and Jean Morin (1591-1659), was to “organize a census of hundreds of biblical manuscripts” and to present “a systematic collation of variant readings.”\(^77\) After almost thirty years of work Kennicott finally published his \textit{Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum} (1776-80).

Horne was opposed to Kennicott’s project from the beginning.\(^78\) Horne may well have been willing to keep the matter to himself, but in 1756 Kennicott published \textit{A word to the Hutchinsonians: Or remarks on three extraordinary sermons lately preached before the University of Oxford by The Reverend Dr. Patten, The Reverend Mr. Wetherall and The Reverend Mr. Horne}. In \textit{A word to the Hutchinsonians} Kennicott argues for the inherent reasonableness of textual criticism to overcome the problem of textual corruption, and he complains that the Hutchinsonians are Men

who, despising reason and learning, and indulging their minds in all the wildness of imagination and unbounded whim, make Words signify what they please, turn the plainest History into sublime Prophecy, and compel Sentences to be oracular, in


\(^{78}\) Jones, \textit{Memoirs}, 97
various ways, with all such meanings as were never meant.”

Kennicott evidently perceived that the popularity of Hutchinsonianism at Oxford was an obstacle to his massive project. For Kennicott, the fact that the Hutchinsonians irresponsibly made "Words signify what they please" is indicative of the fact that they are untroubled by the fact that the words they interpret have been subject to the corrosive waves of time. The great irony, therefore, is that Kennicott, of all people, is troubled that the Hutchinsonians no longer endorse the devolutionary philosophy of history he, in fact, shares with Hutchinson.

Horne responded to Kennicott with An apology for certain gentleman in the University of Oxford (1756). Horne begins this work by complaining that he and his compatriots have been unjustly derided as schismatics. He insists that while all those that claim that Christ is “the end of the law, and the fullness of the Gospel” are branded as Hutchinsonians, he and his compatriots are not party men. Far from being “a sect, or schismatical combination of separatists from other Church of England Christians,” they are “fully persuaded of the necessity of being in the unity of the church, to obtain salvation.” Horne then proceeds to outline eight objections to Kennicott’s work, which are largely concerned to dispel the accusation that Hutchinsonians are anti-intellectual brigands. Like any good apologist however, Horne is not merely content to defend himself. He uses the pamphlet as an opportunity to go on the offensive against Clarke and his disciples. He insists that there is a powerful link between Antitrinitarianism and

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79 Kennicott, A Word, 42.
81 Ibid., 3.
82 Ibid., 6-23.
natural religion, for those who are zealous to promote Christianity as moral religion invariably come to devalue faith in Christ.\textsuperscript{83} The implication of Horne’s argument is clear: by accusing the Hutchinsonians of turning “the plainest history into sublime prophecy” concerning Christ Kennicott shows himself to be an ally of those who repudiate Christian orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{84} Horne ends his piece with a defense of the way in which he and his compatriots read the Old Testament in Christological terms, and he insists that, \textit{“prophecy is a sign only to those that believe, who by reason of use have their [spiritual] senses exercised and the eyes of their understanding enlightened, to see wonderful things in God’s law.”}\textsuperscript{85}

Contemporary scholars have tended to assume Kennicott won his argument with Horne because his text critical approach was ultimately victorious within the eighteenth-century context, but the effectiveness of the Hutchinsonian critique of Kennicott’s project must not be underestimated.\textsuperscript{86} The Hutchinsonians were, in Ruderman’s estimation, “the most vocal opponents” of Kennicott’s scheme, and they helped to provoke a “huge storm” that ultimately involved the king himself.\textsuperscript{87} Horne’s most important contribution was his subsequent work, \textit{A View of Mr. Kennicott’s Method} (1765).\textsuperscript{88} Curiously, Horne’s earlier emphasis on the necessity of Christological

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 48-51.
\textsuperscript{84} Kennicott, \textit{A Word}, 42.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 58. St. Paul’s example in this respect is important for Horne, but Horne does not suggest that he is only licensed to offer figural interpretations that have been previously sanctioned by him. Horne finds that “there is enough of the Old Testament applied to the new to enable us to apply the rest, if we have but humility to receive the key of knowledge from Christ and diligence to use it.” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ruderman, for one, finds that Jones’ portrait of Kennicott is fair. Ruderman points out that there were several methodological problems that troubled Kennicott’s enterprise. David Ruderman, \textit{Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 52-55.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{88} George Horne, \textit{A View of Mr. Kennicott’s Method of Correcting the Hebrew text} (London, 1765). Jones summarizes Horne’s argument against Kennicott in his \textit{Memoirs}, pages 97-107. Katz sees the Hutchinsonians as Antisemites, but the Antisemitic impulse of early Hutchinsonianism disappeared when
interpretation is conspicuously absent from this work. He argues, not that the
Hutchinsonian interpretive method is inherently superior to Kennicott’s, but that
Kennicott’s method is dangerous for the Christian religion since it is liable to be
misunderstood by the masses and maleficiently used by Socinian dissenters. The tone of
Horne’s muted criticisms stands in sharp contrast to his earlier work and confirms that,
as an experienced churchman and administrator, Horne has become skilled in the art of
diplomacy. Horne’s shift in perspective also suggests that he no longer sees the
controversy primarily as a battle of either hermeneutical methods or Christologies. As
he surveys the ecclesial landscape from his position of power within the establishment,
his primary objective is pragmatic: to uphold the providential order. And he hopes to do
so by upholding the integrity of the established Scriptural text. Contra Kennicott, he
therefore argues that the hard work of noting significant textual variants has already
been done, and the integrity of the given Old Testament text has already been aptly
defended.

In A View of Kennicott’s Method Horne’s primary concern is that further prodding

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the Oxonians rejected Hutchinson’s devolutionary theology of history. Horne and Jones deny the idea that
the Old Testament text is in need of improvement because “the Masoretical Jews had guarded and
secured the Text of their Bible in such a manner, that no other book in the world had ever been so
guarded and secured.” Jones, Memoirs, 98. See David S. Katz, “Christian and Jew in Early Modern English
Perspective,” Jewish History 8 (1994): 68. Manasheh ben Israel “was convinced that as long as the Old
Testament was venerated by Christians, there would always be a place of honour for the Jews.” It comes
as no surprise, therefore, that as the Old Testament became increasingly marginalized in eighteenth-
century England, anti-Semitism was the victor. In particular the cutting edge work of Orientalist Sir
William Jones and others on the priority of Sanskrit “eliminated the Jews as a necessary component in the
history of mankind, and reduced them to… freaks who could be persecuted and expelled.” Ibid., 69.
89 Jones celebrates “the friendly way in which Dr. Kennicott and Dr. Horne lived together, forgetting all
their former disputes, yet without changing their opinions on either side.” Jones, Memoirs, 108. Mrs.
Horne and Mrs. Kennicott were intimate friends, and may well have had a part in reconciling their
husbands. A collection of thirty-four letters from Mrs. Kennicott to Mrs. Horne, three from Mrs. Kennicott
to Dr. Horne, and three from Dr. Kennicott to Mrs. Horne, has been preserved in the Magdalen College
archives. Papers of George Horne, MC: PR29 MS 2/1, fols. 66-136, Magdalen College Archives, University
90 Horne, A View, 21.
into the matter will only serve to compromise the status of the text, and thereby the
status of the Christianity. But although he worries the project will be detrimental to
established religion, Horne no longer condemns it as inherently problematic. Indeed,
Horne even claims that he is willing to be convinced that the project is valuable in the
service of Christianity. The development of Horne’s approach in his argument with
Kennicott does not imply that Horne has rejected the emblematic interpretation of his
youth. What it does suggest, however, is that Horne’s Hutchinsonian hermeneutic has
been subsumed within his larger providential vision. Horne has come to regard the
Christological interpretation of Scripture instrumentally. It is only necessary to the
extent that it preserves providential order. This argument is borne out through the
study of Horne’s renowned two-volume commentary on the Psalms.

**Horne’s Measured Emblematicism**

Horne’s *Commentary on the Psalms*, like Hutchinson’s *Principia* and Watson’s
*Christ the Light of the World*, begins with an impassioned defense of the emblematic
interpretation of the Old Testament. I argue, however, that like Hutchinson’s own
application of the emblematic method, Horne’s is decidedly restricted. Horne is willing
to interpret only a few Psalms emblematically. Although he follows Watson’s threefold
emblematic method on certain occasions, the mediatorial role that the Christian canon
plays in Watson’s method is restricted in Horne’s work. Much of the time Horne is

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91 Jones relates that Horne “thought it would be of disservice to turn the minds of the learned more
toward the letter of the Bible, when they were already too much turned away from the spirit of it. The
best fruits of divine wisdom may be gathered from the word of God, in any language, and in any edition.
To what the Scripture itself calls the spirit of the Scripture, the learned of late days were become much
confident that the devotional significance of individual psalms can be exploited by relating the passage directly to contemporary circumstances. This confirms that for Horne, Scripture does not establish the providential order of the world, but is, itself, subject to it.

Horne’s two volume *Commentary on the Psalms* is, in Jones’ estimation, his greatest achievement. Jones concludes his *Memoirs of Horne* with a transcription of his epitaph for Horne, which praises Horne for “Depth of Learning,” “Brightness of Imagination,” “Sanctity of Manners,” and “Sweetness of Temper.” Jones’ most effusive praise, however, is reserved for the commentary itself: “His Commentary on the psalms will continue to be / A Companion to the Closet, / Till the Devotion of Earth shall end in the Hallelujahs of Heaven.” Although the *Commentary* was Horne’s most widely read work, Jones admits that there were several scholars who opposed it from the beginning.

There are good and learned men, who cannot but speak well of the work, and yet are forward to let us know, that they do not follow Dr. Horne as an interpreter. I believe them; but this is one of the things we have to lament: and while they may

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92 Jones says that, “The first edition in quarto was published in the year 1776 when the author was vice-chancellor; and it happened, soon after its publication, that I was at Paris. There was then a Christian University in that place! and I had an opportunity of recommending it to some learned gentlemen who were members of it, and understood the English language well. I took the liberty to tell them, our church had lately been enriched by a Commentary on the Psalms; the best, in our opinion, that had ever appeared; and such as St. Austin would have perused with delight, if he had lived to see it. At my return the author was so obliging as to furnish me with a copy to send over to them as a present; and I was highly gratified by the approbation with which it was received. With those who could read English, it was so much in request, that I was told the book was never out of hand; and I apprehend more copies were sent for. Every intelligent Christian, who once knows the value of it, will keep it, to the end of his life, as the companion of his retirement.” Jones, *Memoirs*, 122.

93 Here Jones refers to himself as Horne’s “other chaplain.” He relates that “one of his Lordship’s chaplains attended him to his grave, and then returned in sorrow to Norwich: his other chaplain paid the tribute due to his memory in a plain monumental inscription.” Ibid., 173. See also, William Henry Teale, “The Life of William Jones, M. A., Perpetual Curate of Nayland,” in *Biography of English Divines: The Life of Launcelot Andrews, D. D., Bishop of Winchester* (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), 392.

94 Jones, *Memoirs*, 173-74. Jones insists that the *Commentary* is Horne’s finest work, “His Commentary on the Psalms was under his hand about twenty years. The labour, to which he submitted in the course of the work, was prodigious: his reading for many years was allotted chiefly to this subject; and his study and meditation together produced as fine a work, and as finely written, as most in the English language.” Ibid., 121.
think this an honour to their judgement, I am afraid it is a symptom that we are retrograde in theological learning.\textsuperscript{95}

One reader who was willing to praise the work while all the while questioning its underlying hermeneutic was John Wesley. When he “met with” the Commentary he declared that he supposed it was “the best that ever was wrote.” And yet, he also confessed, “I could not comprehend his aggrandizing the psalms, it seems even above the New Testament.”\textsuperscript{96}

While Wesley paid tribute to the commentary and yet found Horne’s Christological method bewildering, others, such as Unitarian minister Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), rejected the commentary outright as “imaginative.” As a disciple of Samuel Clarke, Lindsey emphasizes the necessity of the rational interpretation of the literal sense of the bible by individual interpreters.\textsuperscript{97} He insists that by using the Psalms as the basis of his ecclesiological and theological reflections, Horne not only violates the literal sense, he demonstrates that he believes that “anything may be made out of any thing.” Horne, complains Lindsey, finds “all his own peculiar notions and doctrines,

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{97} According to Lindsey, who is largely recognized as the founder of the Unitarian Church of England, “Few men in any age have, by their writings cast more light on the dark parts of the word of God, or more laboured to restore his true worship, than Dr. Samuel Clarke.” Theophilus Lindsey, The Apology of Theophilus Lindsey (London, 1782), 82. Lindsey sees Clarke as one of the chief spokesmen of a Unitarian tradition that dates back to the Reformation. Lindsey interestingly also identifies Newton as a Unitarian. Theophilus Lindsey, An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship from the Reformation to our own Times (London, 1783), 366-95, 401-404.
largely and continually displayed in these sacred songs; whilst others can discover nothing of the sort, neither in them, nor throughout the whole bible.”

Questions concerning the validity of Horne’s method were invariably provoked by his bold defense of the Psalms in his introduction to his commentary, which begins by “aggrandizing” the Psalms as “the epitome of the Bible . . . adapted to the purposes of devotion.” Horne quotes Hooker to the effect that “This little volume, like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, everything that groweth elsewhere.” Here Horne draws upon the microcosm-macrocosm distinction that was central to Renaissance Neoplatonism to defend the principle of emblematic mediation. As the “epitome” of the bible “adapted to the purposes of devotion,” the Psalms play the role of the emblematic motto—they relay the biblical message to the contemporary context through devotional idiom.

Despite this bold defense of the Psalms Horne is extremely cautious in his application of his emblematic method. He assures his readers that while he plans to interpret the Psalms by means of the ancient art of spiritual interpretation, he is equally indebted to the labors of modern interpreters who have “set themselves to investigate with diligence and ascertain with accuracy their literal scope and meaning.” Indeed, Horne says that, “All who desire to understand the Scriptures, must enter into their labours.” “But let us also bear in mind,” urges Horne, that all is not done, when this is done. A work of the utmost importance still remains, which is the business of Theology to undertake and execute; since, with respect to the Old Testament, and the Psalter more especially, a person may attain

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99 Horne, Commentary, ii.
100 See Chapter Three, note 88.
a critical and grammatical knowledge of them, and yet continue a Jew, with the
veil upon his heart; an utter stranger to that sense of the holy books, evidently
intended, in such a variety of instances, to bear testimony to the Saviour of the
world; that sense, which is style, by divines, the PROPHETICAL, EVANGELICAL,
MYSTICAL, or SPIRITUAL sense.101

In order to refute the notion that spiritual and philological interpretation are
incommensurable Horne’s intent is to liberally use the methods and insights of each
insofar as they assist him in his overarching devotional purpose: “To bring them in
some measure together,” he says, “is the design of the following work.”102

Horne can be regarded as ultimately tipping his hat to spiritual interpretation,
since he suggests philological interpretation is barren without it. Spiritual
interpretation, says Horne, is what renders the Psalms “profitable for doctrine, for
reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”103 Horne is, however, equally
insistent that spiritual interpretation creates fictitious allegories when it roams free
from the mooring of the literal text.104 Horne is therefore at pains to emphasize that the
Davidic history is the foundation upon which Messianic interpretations must be
established.105 “Very few psalms,” says Horne,

Appear to be simply prophetical and belong only to Messiah without the
intervention of any other person. Most of them, it is apprehended, have a double
sense, which stands upon the ground and foundation of the ancient patriarchs,

101 Ibid., vii.
102 Ibid., iii.
103 Ibid., xvii.
104 Ibid., xxiv.
105 Ibid., xxi. In the commentary itself Horne is consistent in his application of the method he outlines in
his introduction. His insistence that the literal and spiritual senses must both be addressed is most clearly
seen in his treatment of King David. Horne is careful to protect the integrity of David as a historical
person, and this leads Horne to consistently distinguish between David and Christ, and thereby the
historical and ecclesial readings of the text. In Psalm 6 he observes, for example, that, “David makes a
solemn appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, as judge of his innocence, with regard to the particular
crime laid to his share.” This appeal however, is very different than that of Christ, who alone “could call
upon Heaven to attest his universal uprightness.” Ibid., 23.
prophets, priests, and kings.\textsuperscript{106}

Horne insists that modern interpreters are not constrained to extract Messianic import only in those instances where the New Testament does so,\textsuperscript{107} but he equally holds that many Psalms have no Messianic import whatsoever.\textsuperscript{108} Horne finds this concession unproblematic, for at least two reasons. First, because he reads the Psalms canonically, he insists that individual psalms that lack Messianic import acquire their devotional significance from the fact that they are providentially located within the Psalter, which is “written upon a divine, preconcerted, prophetical plan.”\textsuperscript{109} Second, Horne insists that the psalms do not need to have Messianic import because they are “very delightful and profitable . . . in their literal and historical sense, which well repayeth all the pains taken to come at it.”\textsuperscript{110} Horne, following Watson, suggests it is possible to proceed directly from the literal sense to the contemporary application of it. In this Horne can be seen to favour the literal sense, for while the spiritual sense is only sometimes necessary, the literal sense is always indispensible to the interpreter.

Horne’s appropriation of Watson’s threefold emblematic method is clearly seen in his commentary upon Psalm 7:5: “Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.” Horne begins


\textsuperscript{107} Horne, Commentary, xiv.

\textsuperscript{108} Wesley observes that Horne considers some Psalms to be far more important than others. He complains that “some of them he hardly makes anything of; the eighty-seventh in particular.” Wesley, An extract, 14; The works, 245. I maintain that this unequal treatment is attributable to Horne’s selective application of his emblematic method.

\textsuperscript{109} Horne, Commentary, xii.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., xiii.
by reflecting upon the “evils which David imprecates on himself” but quickly turns to reflect upon the manner in which “Christ, for our sakes,” submitted “to the imputation of guilt.” Since Christ was “innocent in himself,” however, “he pursued and overtook his enemies, he conquered the conquerors, and trampled them under his feet.” Horne then applies his Christological reading to tropological ends: “He enableth us, through grace, to do the same.” Following Watson, however, Horne is often equally prepared to draw devotional import directly from the literal sense of the text. Thus, having reflected upon David’s “solemn appeal to God” in Psalm 7:3 Horne observes that, “Any person, when slandered, may do the same.” Indeed, says Horne, “Believers in every age have been persecuted in this way; and the King of saints often mentions it as one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup of sorrows.” The Christian reader of the psalm, then, finds Christ in the text on the same basis that he finds himself in the text, namely: points of contact with David’s own personal experience. Christ’s experience may assist Christians in drawing devotional application from the text, or it may not, depending on the nature of the case. On this account, interpreters of the Psalms will sometimes find that canonical, and specifically Christological, reading is necessary, and sometimes find that it is not.

The fact that Horne was measured in his Scriptural emblematicism in his commentary was apparent to Jones. Jones celebrates the Puritans as “excellent spiritual interpreters of the word,” and he bemoans the fact that when his fellow churchmen rejected their overzealous piety, they also rejected their interpretive method. Jones

111 Ibid., 24.
112 Ibid., 23.
113 Ibid.
finds that interpreters such as “Clarke, Hoadley, Hare, Middleton, Warburton, Sherlock, South, William Law, Edmund Law and others since the restoration” have completely neglected the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, and he praises Horne’s attempt to re-establish it through his Commentary.¹¹⁴ Jones admits however, that as Horne wrote the work he was cognizant that it was a work that his countrymen were “ill prepared to receive.”

This put him upon his guard; and the work is in some respects the better for it, in others not so good; it is more cautiously and correctly written, but perhaps not so richly furnished with matter as it might have been. Had he been composing a novel, he would have been under none of these fears: his imagination might then have taken its course, without a bridle, and the world would have followed as fast as he could wish.¹¹⁵

Jones insists that Horne’s measured application of his favored spiritual method is prudential. As the work was oriented towards the promotion of piety within the Church of England, Horne wished to remove any roadblocks that would hinder its reception, and he discerned that the “imaginative” exploration of emblems and allegories would have been counter-productive. Horne’s Old Testament hermeneutic, therefore, is governed by pragmatic concerns. When he is able to extract devotional import directly from the literal text he is quick to do so, so as not to offend his critically minded colleagues. He equally recognizes however, that some psalms do not readily bear this fruit, and when they do not Horne looks to the New Testament for assistance.

As he studies the Old Testament, Horne finds it is sometimes necessary to employ figural readings in order to generate devotional readings, but when he studies the New Testament, he finds that no such assistance is necessary. Because devotional import can

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 122.
be drawn from the New Testament text by comparing it directly to contemporary circumstances, figural reading plays no part in Horne’s New Testament hermeneutic. Horne finds that the New Testament is able to function as Christian Scripture without the assistance of the Old Testament, and that the Old Testament is sometimes able to do the same. When the Old Testament struggles to stand on its own two feet, however, figural reading can be happily employed as a crutch.

The fact that Horne’s measured emblematicism establishes disequilibrium between the canons is clearly born out by the study of his late devotional essays on great biblical characters. Horne’s Considerations on the Life and Death of Abel, Considerations on the Life and Translation of Enoch, and Considerations on the Life of Noah are part of the larger Hutchinsonian attempt to defend the canonicity of the Old Testament, and are, more specifically, part of Horne’s concerted attempt to do so on devotional grounds. In Considerations on the Life and Death of Abel it takes Horne less than a page to proceed from Abel to Christ: “The days of [Abel’s] pilgrimage,” says Horne, “were quickly ended, he hasted away to an abiding city . . . And so the holy Jesus, King of saints and Prince of martyrs, made but a short stay amongst us in the days of his flesh.”\(^\text{116}\) In Considerations on the Life and Translation of Enoch it takes Horne less than a paragraph: according to Horne, the translation of Enoch is “a rehearsal of the ascension of the holy Jesus” intended for the “building up of those before the law” and so that “we of these latter days might admire the wisdom of God in foreshowing what hath been accomplished.”\(^\text{117}\) In Considerations on the Life of Noah Horne begins by reflecting upon the meaning of the name “Noah,” which involves “in it the ideas of rest and consolation.”
This name, says Horne, was assigned to Noah on account of the prophecy that he “shall comfort us concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.” The salvation which Noah provided, however, was “but a temporary reprieve,” and could only

Prefigure and shadow forth, until the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, and in whom alone it could be fulfilled. Of the blessed Jesus may it be said emphatically, and in every sense of the words;—This same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands.

In all three essays on Old Testament saints the New Testament plays a central role in drawing out the devotional import of the Old Testament text. The Old Testament, however, plays no such role in Horne’s Considerations on the Life and Death of St. John the Baptist. In this work Horne teems with confidence that, "knowledge drawn freshly, and as it were in our view, out of particulars, knows the way best to particulars again.” In order to illustrate this point Horne refuses to read the New Testament texts he studies in canonical context. When he reflects upon the devotional import of the life and death of John, he is careful to extract tropological import directly from the text in question rather than appealing to the larger Scriptural witness.

Horne often appeals to the New Testament as he studies the Old Testament, but does not frequently appeal to the Old Testament as he studies the New. Horne comes to treat the Old and New Testaments differently because of his measured emblematicism. Horne finds that certain things he encounters in Scripture are relatively transparent. When he does, he moves quickly to point out their devotional import. There are,

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119 Ibid., 139.
120 George Horne, Considerations on the Life and Death of St. John the Baptist (Oxford, 1769), ii.
however, certain things he encounters that he finds more obscure, and he overcomes this obscurity through figural reading. As it turns out, Horne finds more obscurity in the Old Testament than the New, and this is why he frequently offers figural readings of Old Testament texts but does not often employ figural readings of the New Testament.

Conclusion

George Horne’s theology is governed by a robust providentialist vision. Horne teems with confidence that creation, the church establishment, and Scripture testify to God’s beneficent government. The reason he sets his face against deists, skeptics, dissenters, and revolutionaries is that their opposition to the established order tears down what God himself has established. It is appropriate to describe Horne as a conservative. But he does not merely defend the given structures and institutions of the world because he wants to preserve the established order. He wants to preserve the established order because he thinks the given structures and institutions bear the mark of divine providence. Like Newton, Horne worships the great pantokrator, the Lord God of dominion. And Horne is quite confident that he can identify just where this Lord God of dominion is at work: he is at work in making himself known to humans through their knowledge of creation, in strengthening and upholding the Church establishment, and by making himself known in the revelation of Scripture.

Horne employs Scriptural emblematicism to assist him in the interpretation of Old Testament particulars when he struggles to understand their significance. However, he rarely, if ever, relies upon the emblematic interpretation of Scripture to guide his

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121 For an introduction to Horne’s apologetic work see, Aston, “Horne,” 895-919.
interpretation of historical particulars, and he does not use emblematicism to assist in his interpretation of New Testament texts. Horne is measured in his Scriptural emblematicism because he believes the primary role of Scripture is to testify to the existence of an overarching providential order, rather than to serve as the grounds upon which the discernment of providential order is established.122

The fact that Horne is measured in his emblematicism appears to give credence to the idea that he is merely “partly Hutchinsonian.” On this account however, so is Hutchinson. Hutchinson is extremely selective in his emblematicism, as he is only willing to interpret natural philosophical objects emblematically. Scriptural emblematicism plays an important role in the work of both Horne and Hutchinson, yet both Horne and Hutchinson are inconsistent in their application of it. The difference between Horne and Hutchinson is that, whereas Hutchinson is unwilling to interpret historical objects emblematically because he believes they have been given over to devolution, Horne refuses to do so because he is confident in his ability to articulate their established providential orientation.

The fact that thinkers as theologically diverse as Wesley and Lindsey found even Horne’s measured emblematicism extravagant does not merely confirm that the figural interpretation of the Old Testament was widely dismissed in the second half of the eighteenth century. The constriction of figural reading is symptomatic of a larger shift

122 Horne’s difficulty in promoting the idea of an all-encompassing providential order is that it is impossible to celebrate everything he encounters with equal vigor. The emphasis he places on the providential significance of certain things is, correspondingly, a decision not to emphasize the providential orientation of others. Admittedly, Horne’s decision to zero in on the providential signification of empirical science, the church establishment, and Scripture is not arbitrary: he celebrates them because of the prominent position they occupy in the world he inhabits. Nevertheless, Horne might just as well have emphasized other elements—England’s market economy, or parliamentary democracy, for example. The discretionary element in Horne’s providentialism looms large.
in Old Testament interpretation. For Wesley, Lindsey, and even for Horne, the role of the Old Testament is to stand as a monument to God’s providential engagement with ancient Israel. It can still serve as a guide for providential discernment, but in order to do so it must jump across Lessing’s “ugly, broad ditch.” God’s providential workings with Israel are not His workings with contemporary Christians. For Horne and his opponents, belief in God’s providential ordering of contemporary existence therefore functions independently of the Old Testament, and does not depend upon it.

Clarke, as we have seen, does not deny that the Old Testament testifies to divine providence. He simply chooses to focus on other elements that he finds more perspicuous in this regard. In order to challenge Clarke’s prejudice Horne might well appeal to his favourite figural readings of Psalms. Clarke would presumably find at least some of these readings compelling. But in the end Horne is still held captive to Clarke’s own rationality. If Clarke were to retort that while he acknowledges God’s providence in Israelite history, the providential significance of the historical events of the New Testament—the Incarnation, the Passion, the coming of the Spirit and the establishment of the Church—supersede those of the Old Testament, Horne would be at pains to say otherwise.

That Horne is willing to interpret the Old Testament figurally confirms his retention of the traditional Christian idea that the providential orientation of the Old Testament is unveiled by bringing it into conversation with the New Testament. Yet Horne’s conviction that the New Testament does not require figural interpretation is a departure from the traditional Augustinian understanding that, “The grace of the New
Testament was veiled in the law, but is revealed in the Gospel."¹²³ For in the traditional Augustinian understanding, the New Testament “lies hidden” in the Old, and yet the fullness of the New Testament also resides within the Old Testament, because all that the New Testament says is brought to bear on all the forms presented in the Old Testament.¹²⁴ “The same things,” says Augustine, “are in the Old and the New Testaments—there overshadowed, here unveiled, there prefigured, here manifest.”¹²⁵ Horne’s measured figural interpretation of the Old Testament, on the other hand, is accompanied by the conviction that only some of what God revealed in the New Testament is present in the Old Testament. This marks a return to Clarke’s conviction that the New Testament is superior to it. It does not, however, mark a return to Clarke’s devolutionary philosophy of history. Because Horne rejects Clarke’s basic conviction that natural religion is the foundation of all true religion, he has no reason to see the Old Testament as a figure of religious devolution. Nevertheless, in the hands of Horne’s nineteenth-century descendents, what for Horne was simply a measured preference for the New Testament grew to become a reinvigorated history of decline, which looked upon the New Testament as the pristine ideal, and Church history as a figure of historical devolution.

¹²⁴ Ibid.
WILLIAM JONES OF NAYLAND

Along with his closest friend and ally George Horne, Anglican cleric, theologian, and natural philosopher William Jones of Nayland was one of the most influential churchmen of his day. Jones’ career path, however, looks almost nothing like that of Horne. Whereas Horne was given administrative and ecclesiastical posts that eventually made him a very powerful figure within the establishment, Jones spent his entire adult life serving as a cleric in obscure rural parishes. The fact that he was unencumbered by administrative duties, however, meant that he became a far more prolific author than Horne.¹ In Jones’ works eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglicans found intellectually robust defenses of Nicene Trinitarian doctrine and church tradition, as well as powerful justifications for the belief that the church establishment and natural world were providentially ordained. Although these elements are all present in Horne’s work, they function somewhat independently within Horne’s larger providential vision. Jones, on the other hand, is able to bring them together within a coherent Scriptural framework.

Like Horne, Jones owes not merely his Hutchinsonianism, but the unique character of his Hutchinsonianism, to George Watson. Following Watson, Horne and Jones both reject the Newtonian devolutionary interpretation of history in favour of a providential interpretation. This providential interpretation is expressed in the way

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¹ Twenty-five years after his death the editor of Gentleman’s Magazine could still call Jones “the pious and learned author of numerous highly esteemed theological and philosophical works,” and fifty-two years after his death the biographer of Jones’ student remarked that Jones is “so widely and universally known, that any notice of him here, beyond that which is to be derived from his letters, would be superfluous.” “Obituary: Benjamin Harenc, Esq.” Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle, New Series, 18, no. 2 (1825): 567; John Freeman, The Life of Rev. William Kirby, M.A. (London, 1852), 34.
Horne and Jones interpret not merely natural objects as emblems, but historical objects as well. But whereas Horne is measured in his application of the emblematic method, Jones employs a thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism. The consistent emphasis Jones places on the necessity of the emblematic interpretation of Scripture for both constructive theology and providential discernment grants Scripture an epistemological priority in his thought.

Within the Hutchinsonian apologetic tradition Scriptural emblematicism is utilized as the primary means of making the Old Testament necessary for providential discernment. Because he is only willing to use the Old Testament to render providential interpretations of cosmological objects, however, Hutchinson severely restricts the scope of his apologetic. Horne’s apologetic is also restricted by the fact that he rarely uses the Old Testament to establish providential interpretations of historical objects, and because he does not draw upon the Old Testament to render emblematic interpretations of New Testament texts. In Jones’ thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism, on the other hand, the emblematic interpretation of the Old Testament plays a central role in forging providential interpretations of the full spectrum of natural philosophical and historical objects. Jones’ thoroughgoing emblematicism equally compels him to call upon the Old Testament to assist him in the interpretation of the New Testament. This ensures that Jones engages the Old Testament as an equal partner in the Christian canon. It protects him against the prevailing impulse, which is found in even Horne’s work, that appealing to the Old Testament for the purpose of providential discernment is discretionary. On this account, Jones’ thoroughgoing
Scriptural emblematicism is not only what makes his Old Testament apologetic compelling, it is also the apogee of a tradition.

**The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity**

Jones was one of the most prolific and influential theologians of the eighteenth-century, and in the nineteenth century Jones was revered as perhaps the eighteenth-century's greatest defender of Trinitarian orthodoxy. This reputation rests largely with the publication of what was long his most popular work, *The Catholic Doctrine of Trinity*, which Jones published when he was only thirty-one years old. Although the primary object of the work is to refute the subordinationist Trinitarian doctrine of Samuel Clarke, Jones makes it clear that what separates Clarke and himself is not merely doctrinal formulations but Scriptural hermeneutics. Whereas Clarke is confident he can extract doctrinal particulars directly from Scriptural texts, Jones insists that individual texts be read in canonical context before they can be employed for the purpose of doctrinal discernment. Jones' application of Watson's principle of canonical mediation in *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* is important because it serves as the foundation of Jones’ subsequent application of the same principle to non-Scriptural objects.

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2 Jones' friend bishop Samuel Horsley said he was "a man of quick penetration, of extensive learning, and the soundest piety; and he had, beyond any other man I ever knew, the talent of writing on the deepest subjects to the plainest understanding." Quoted in William Henry Teale, "The Life of William Jones, M. A., Perpetual Curate of Nayland," in *Biography of English Divines: The Life of Launcelot Andrewes, D. D., Bishop of Winchester* (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), 418.

3 In the second half of the nineteenth century Daniel Waterland surpassed Jones in this respect, but Waterland was not rescued from obscurity until 1823, when Hutchinsonian William van Mildert published his collected works.

4 William Jones, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* (Oxford, 1756). The work went through seven London editions and two Dublin editions and was republished several times in the nineteenth century in the first volume of Jones’ collected works. Its popularity in the nineteenth century, however, was surpassed by *A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of Holy Scripture* (London, 1787) and *A Letter to John Bull, Esq.* (London, 1793).
Jones begins the work with a strong affirmation of a figural view of the Church. This affirmation is Jones’ emphatic rejection of Hutchinson’s devolutionary view of history. Israelite religion is not the devolution of pristine religion. Nor is Christianity that which supersedes it.\(^5\) For Jones, the primary distinction the theologian must make is between ancient Jews and Christians (those who believe in the only true God), and “the unchristian part of mankind, who are by far the majority” (those who “either know him not, or willfully deny him”).\(^6\) Such people are under the spell of “a fashionable notion, propagated by most of our moral writers, and readily subscribed to by those who say their prayers but seldom, and can never find time to read their Bible, that all who worship any God, worship the same God.”\(^7\) Jones’ work, then, is grounded in an affirmation of the particularity of the God of Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the face of religious pluralism, and Jones is certain that those that deny this “Catholic doctrine of the Trinity,” do so because they have come to rely upon their own learning rather than the wisdom of God. Jones thus reiterates a favourite Hutchinsonian refrain that, “All that can be known of the true God, is to be known by Revelation.”\(^8\)

Jones proceeds to defend this conviction by appealing to the doctrine of original sin. The only source of evil is the heart of “natural man,” which, “remaining in that state wherein the fall left him, is so far from being able to discover or know any religious truth, that he hates and flies from it when it is proposed to him.”\(^9\) The means of

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\(^6\) Jones, *The Catholic*, ii-iii. This second group includes modern Jews, Mahometans, Socinians, Arians, and many who call themselves Christians.

\(^7\) Ibid., iii.

\(^8\) Ibid., xii.

\(^9\) Ibid., xvii.
restitution the Scripture therefore prescribes is that natural man should be
“transformed by the renewing of his mind,” a process whereby the Holy Spirit leads the
human mind to become subject to Scripture. The mind of natural man, however,
“abhors restraint and subjection; and is ever aspiring, right or wrong, to be
distinguished from the common herd, and to exalt itself against the knowledge of God.”10

For Jones, the thinker that is most representative of this abhorrence of
subjection to Scripture is Clarke, who is “deservedly placed at the head of the Arian
disputants in this kingdom.”11 Jones observes that the first proposition in Clarke’s
Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, that the one God, spoken of in Matthew 19:17 is only
one person, is accompanied by the affirmation that “This is the first principle of Natural
Religion.”12 Jones capitalizes on this admission to argue that Clarke’s religion is
fundamentally at odds with the Christian religion: while Clarke’s own natural religion is
founded on the conviction that the one God is one person, the Christian religion insists
that the one God is three persons.13 Jones proceeds to condemn natural religion as “the
Gospel of the natural man, unsanctified by divine grace, and uninstructed by any light
from above.”14 According to Jones, then, Clarke’s basic problem is that he imports a
logical framework he has devised as natural man and imposes it upon Scripture.15

10 Ibid., xxxi. Here Jones is quoting 2 Corinthians 10:5.
11 Ibid., xxxii. At the end of his life Jones was still convinced that Clarke was a serious threat to the Church
of England. In an unpublished 1796 sermon Jones takes up arms against the “learned metaphysician” that
“argues upwards to a first-cause and when he has found it, concludes on the authority of human
philosophy, that this first cause can be no other than a single person. Thence he goes to the Scripture, and
of course either rejects the Scripture or finds his own doctrine there.” William Jones, MS Sermons by the
Rev. W. Jones of Nayland, 1.14, Pusey House, Oxford, UK. In this sermon Jones also insists, against Clarke,
that “Absolute titles of divinity” are conferred upon Christ in both the Old and New Testaments.” Ibid., 23.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., xxxiii.
15 Ibid., xxxiv-xxxv.
Jones’ work presents evidence from Scripture by means of an exegetical method that is intended to stand in stark contrast to that of Clarke. But before Jones performs his alternative hermeneutic, he re-emphasizes his ontology of Scripture.¹⁶ For Jones there are not two covenants, that of works, and that of grace. Nor are there two religions, that of Old Testament monotheism and New Testament Christianity. The basis of Jones’ hermeneutic, therefore, is the conviction that the Old and New Testaments present a unified witness concerning the nature of the Triune God.

Jones’ refutation is not—like the great tomes of Clarke’s great adversary Daniel Waterland—a reasoned disquisition of the logic of Trinitarian orthodoxy. The structure and argument of the work is actually closer to that of Clarke. Like Clarke, Jones thrusts Scriptural passage after Scriptural passage at the reader, seemingly in the hope of overwhelming him by cumulative weight of evidence. But whereas Clarke asks the reader to consider the merits of individual Scriptural passages in themselves, Jones always presents two passages consecutively, and more often than not he places Old Testament and New Testament texts side by side.¹⁷ He begins by juxtaposing Isaiah 8:13-14, which states that the Lord of hosts himself will be “a STONE OF STUMBLING and ROCK OF OFFENCE” and 1 Peter 2:7-8, which states that Christ has been made a “STONE OF STUMBLING and ROCK OF OFFENCE.” From this it follows, reasons Jones,

¹⁶ Jones insists that Scripture is a unified whole because it speaks with one voice concerning the nature of God in opposition to those that follow the deists in failing to attend to the whole of Scripture because they find parts of it contrary to natural religion. To this end Jones appeals to the words of Jesus himself in John 5:46: “Had ye BELIEVED Moses, says our LORD, ye would have believed me.” Ibid., xxxv.

¹⁷ Jones’ insistence that Christian theology is generated by the principle of Scriptural accordance makes him a true descendent of the ante-Nicene fathers. Recent work in New Testament studies and Patristics confirms that historically, the Christian doctrine of God grew out of the basic conviction that the Jesus of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. This principle, when applied to the interpretation of Scripture was given the title “the rule of faith.” Christopher Seitz, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 20-23. See also, Richard Bauckham, God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998).
that Christ is the “Lord of Hosts himself.” Jones moves quickly to consider a second set of texts, Isaiah 6:5, “Mine Eyes have SEEN the King, the LORD OF HOSTS,” and John 7:41, which insists that when Isaiah said this it was because “he SAW HIS (CHRISTS) GLORY, and spake of HIM.” The Christian must therefore conclude, says Jones, that Jesus is “the Lord of Hosts.” The third set of passages Jones considers is Isaiah 44:6, in which the Lord says “I am THE FIRST, and I am THE LAST, and BESIDES ME there is NO GOD,” and Revelation 22:13 in which Jesus declares “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the End, THE FIRST and THE LAST.” When the titles “the first” and “the last”—as titles reserved for the one “besides whom there is no God”—are applied to Jesus, says Jones, He is confirmed to be the God besides whom there is no other. Jones’ straightforward method—juxtaposing two Scripture passages and then commenting on their accordance—is pursued relentlessly in order to defend not only the divinity of Christ, but the divinity of the Spirit, the plurality and Trinity of Persons, and the unity of persons within the Trinity as “Scripture doctrines.”

Jones is deeply troubled by the way in which the Old Testament has fallen into disrepute, and his object is to offer a hermeneutic that makes the Old Testament, as well as the New, doctrinally authoritative. Following Wells and Knight, he complains that Clarke’s collection of “ALL the Texts relating to the matter” is “finished and shut up

19 Ibid., 2.
20 Ibid., 3.
21 Jones even quotes one author that claims that he “may reject Arguments brought from the old Testament to prove the Trinity, as trifling, and proving nothing but the Ignorance of those that make use of them.” Ibid., 26-27; Francis Hare, The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures in the way of Private Judgment (London, 1714), 17. Jones appears to have not read Hare very carefully. Hare regards the idea that the Old Testament is impotent to prove the Trinity as one of several fashionable notions that will bring “Certain Mischief, but no certain Good at all.” Ibid., 19.
without a single Text from the *old Testament!*" And like Hutchinson, Jones articulates what Wells and Knight could only venture at: an interpretive method that makes the Old Testament necessary for the formation of Christian doctrine. Unlike Hutchinson, however, Jones' method does not depend upon the veracity of a particular natural philosophical theory. It simply requires that the Old and New Testaments be allowed to interpret one another. This method, admittedly, does not always consist in juxtaposing Old Testament and New Testament texts. Sometimes the passages Jones juxtaposes are both from the New Testament, and sometimes they are both from the Old. On rare occasions passages within a single biblical book are juxtaposed to generate unanticipated Trinitarian renderings. Jones' method exudes an interpretive freedom that minimizes the distinction between the Old and New Testaments, and therefore renders his hermeneutic consistent with his ecclesiological starting point. The doctrine Jones defends is catholic because it has been preached by the Church “in all places, at all times, and by all the faithful.” It is also, catholic, that is, universal, because it takes into account, not merely select decontextualized Scriptures, but the entire Scriptural testimony.

Jones’ insistence that the entire canon of Scripture must be attended to in constructive theology is bound to his conviction concerning the generation of Scriptural

22 Jones, *The Catholic*, 79. For a discussion of Clarke’s controversy with Wells and Knight following the publication of *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, see Chapter Two.
23 Jones was a student of the New Testament’s use of the Old. In an unpublished sermon on Hebrews he claims that, “The chief design of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to demonstrate the divinity and dignity of Christ from the old Testament to the unbelieving Jews.” Jones, MS Sermons, 1.19
24 See, for example, Ibid., 15; 17.
meaning. For Clarke, as we have seen, the meaning of a particular Scriptural word becomes apparent only when all external references and resonances are cast aside. The goal of exegesis is thus a comprehensive isolation and atomization of words in order to achieve maximal denotative precision. For Jones, on the other hand, the meaning of Scriptural words is obscured when they are taken in isolation from one another—or, to put matters more precisely, such atomized words are empty receptacles that are easily filled by the prejudices of natural man. Jones strongly endorses Watson’s notion of canonical mediation because he is keenly aware of just how easy it is for humans impose their own preconceptions on the text. If interpreters are allowed to apply Scripture directly with their own contexts, Clarke’s doctrine will likely follow. But if Scripture is allowed to mediate the interpretation of Scriptural words, interpreters will be led to the catholic doctrine of the Trinity. For Jones, the meaning of particular Scriptural words must be complemented by the attributions of other Scriptural passages both to render an accurate appreciation of a Trinity of persons within the Godhead, and to uphold a Christian understanding of Scripture as inclusive of the Old Testament. Jones therefore confronts Clarke with a dilemma: either he must embrace Jones’ juxtapositional method and turn away from his subordinationist Christology, or he must reject the Christian understanding of the canon because the isolation of textual meaning inevitably brings contradictions that destroy the unity of Christian Scripture. Jones insists that, "If the Scripture, thus compared with itself, be drawn up into an

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26 The term “Lord of Hosts” in Isaiah 8:13, for example, is in danger of being interpreted by "natural man" according to the preconceived categories of natural religion unless the meaning of the term in 1 Peter 2:7-8 is brought into consideration. Jones does not deny, of course, that the meaning of the term in Isaiah 8:13 is of great importance. The fact that it refers to the one God of Israel is retained as an essential component of his Trinitarian formula.
argument, the conclusion may indeed be *denied*, and so may the whole Bible, but it cannot be *answered.*” Scripture must be taken in whole or rejected in whole—it cannot be taken in part.

**The Figurative Language of Holy Scripture**

After serving as an assistant curate for several years Jones was given a living in Bethersden (Kent) in 1764, made rector in Pluckley (Kent) in 1765, and made perpetual curate of Nayland (Suffolk) in 1776. As he preached weekly sermons in his parish, dutifully catechized his parishioners, wrote letters to his friends, and published works on subjects ranging from natural philosophy to music, Jones continued to employ and refine his original hermeneutical method, which he describes as the practice of allowing Scripture to be “compared with itself.” A full thirty years after the publication of *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* he presented *A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of Holy Scripture* in the obscurity of his rural parish of Nayland.

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27 Ibid., 2. Thus Jones, in *Letters to a Predestinarian* complains chiefly that while “We take the whole word of God, as the rule of our faith and obedience: you take a part of it; and that part you interpret, in such a way of your own, as to endanger all the rest.” William Stephens, ed., *The Theological, Philosophical, and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones*, vol. 12 (London, 1801), 341.


29 Jones interestingly describes this process as follows in *Zoologia Ethica*: “the only rational method of interpreting the Scripture is to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*; to clear up one passage of divine writ by others which relate to it: and *in the mouth of two or three witnesses* of this sort every word ought to be established.” William Jones, *Zoologia Ethica: A Disquisition concerning the Mosaic Distinction of Animals into Clean and Unclean* (London, 1773), 2.

30 In his final work, *A Letter to the Church of England*, Jones complained “I learned very early in life that if any one would go through the world with peace to his mind and advantage to his fortune, he must *hear, and see, and say nothing*; but I learned afterwards that the truth of God is worth all the world; and in this persuasion; as I have long lived, so now I hope to die.” William Jones, *A Letter to the Church of England, Pointing out some Popular Errors of Bad Consequence* (London, 1798), 32. Despite these melancholic musings, Jones had reason to expect rapid preferment since his defenses of Church of England Trinitarian orthodoxy were widely celebrated. In the eighteenth century scholars were frequently elevated to the bench for similar displays (Joseph Butler, Samuel Chandler, and Thomas Newton come immediately to mind). Bishops may well have regarded Jones with suspicion because of his Hutchinsonianism. The preferments Jones received were extremely modest, and he had to wait a long time for them to come. In
In *A Course of Lectures* Jones extends the canonical approach that he had used to generate Trinitarian doctrine to the question of providential discernment. The lectures demonstrate that for Jones, the objects of the natural and historical realms are granted providential significance through Scriptural mediation.

*A Course of Lectures* is Jones’ most comprehensive articulation of his Scriptural hermeneutic, and while it adds much to earlier expositions, it is remarkably consistent with the basic principles outlined in *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*. The major themes in the introduction to *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*—the figural view of the church and of history, the emphasis on the need for revelation because of Adam’s fall, and the distinction between natural and spiritual men—all feature prominently in the introduction to *A Course of Lectures* and in the lectures themselves. In the introduction, however, Jones also adds a new emphasis: the figurative language of Scripture.31

Jones develops the concept of the figurative language of Scripture to enable him to extend Hutchinson’s hieroglyphic interpretation of Hebrew words to the entire scope of Scripture. Following Horne, Jones takes Hutchinson’s notions about the Hebrew language very seriously despite the fact that he never explicitly utilizes Hutchinson’s

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31 Jones promises that although his method will separate “the figures of the scripture into their proper kinds, with examples and explanations in each kind,” he will consistently conform to “the rule of making the scripture its own interpreter.” Jones, *A Course*, 32.
hieroglyphic method in his writings. Jones’ early fascination with the Hebrew language followed his early acceptance of Hutchinson’s conviction that, “the language is in itself instructive: its words give us light into things, in a manner different from those of any other language in the world: and this, beyond all other arguments, convinces me of its divine original.” It is evident, however, that this strong Hutchinsonian affirmation is contradicted by Jones’ practice of Scriptural interpretation. The canonical method Jones employs clearly treats Greek words and Hebrew words as equally authoritative. It comes as no surprise therefore that Jones claims the infidelity of his age can be attributed, not merely to the fact that young graduates are ignoring Hebraic studies, but because of the “general neglect in schools and seminaries of the study of the Scriptures in their original languages.” When Jones complains that Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) cannot be trusted because he does not know the original languages of Scripture, his statement is but one plank in his larger argument that Priestly does not give the revelation of God due diligence. The importance of Greek and Hebrew, for Jones, therefore, is a matter of historical contingency—it is because the eternal word of God has been given in Greek and Hebrew that the languages are to be held in high esteem.

32 Stevens, The Theological, vol. 12, 225. Jones endorses the foundation of Hutchinson’s Mosaic philosophy, the conviction that Hebrew was the prima lingua. He also endorses the attendant notion that, “If the Hebrew were the original language (which, however, is disputed, as all other things are) the different languages of the world must partake of it more or less; and consequently they may be traced up to it.” Ibid.
33 Ibid., 235.
35 William Jones, A Small Whole-length of Dr. Priestley, from his Printed Works (London, 1797), 3.
36 This difference points to an inversion of Hutchinson’s Scriptural apologetic. For Hutchinson, Scripture is authoritative because Hebrew is authoritative, but for Jones, Hebrew is authoritative only because it is contained in Scripture.
Because the sacredness of Greek and Hebrew follows naturally for Jones from their location in Scripture, he has no interest in constructing elaborate arguments to defend the notion that they are ontologically unique. In particular, Hutchinson’s quest to trace the history of linguistic devolution is conspicuously absent from Jones’ voluminous corpus. Jones is not naïve: he acknowledges that a certain degree of textual corruption inevitably accompanies the passage of time. All languages are subject to history: “Words are changeable; language has been confounded; and men in different parts of the world are unintelligible to one another as barbarians.”  

This should not lead to despair however, for God, in his providence, has given all human languages (not just Hebrew), the capacity to be used figuratively. When language is used in its figurative capacity it becomes a “language of things.”

When it is said, *God is a sun and a shield*, then *things* are added to words, and we understand that the being signified by the word *God*, is bright and powerful; immeasurable in height, inaccessible in glory; the author of light to the understanding, the fountain of life to the soul; our security against all terror, our defense against all danger. See here the difference between the language of words and the language of things. If an image is presented to the mind when a sound is heard by the ear, then we begin to understand; and a single object of our sight, in a figurative acceptation, gives us a large and instructive lesson; such as could never be conveyed by all the possible combinations of sounds.

Although “the language of words” is able to grant a modest degree of conceptual knowledge, it struggles to penetrate the divine meaning of created things. The associative capacity of Scriptural language, as figurative language, on the other hand, grants it the capacity to make things speak, and thereby unveils the “language of

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37 Jones, *A Course*, 294. Jones juxtaposes the power of the figurative language of Scripture with that of common vernaculars: “Thus, for example, if we take the word *God*, we have a sound which gives us no idea; and if we trace it through all the languages of the world, we find nothing but arbitrary sounds, with great variety of dialect and accent, all of which still leave us where we began, and reach no farther than the ear.” Ibid., 294-95.

38 Ibid., 295.
Jones feels no need to translate the words sun and shield into Hebrew idiom to convey their figurative and tropological import. He may have a preference for the interpretation of Scripture in the original languages, but he does not make the interpretation of Scriptural figures dependent upon them. It is enough for English speakers to have an awareness of suns and shields as objects of sense, and on this basis he celebrates the fact that “we have the scripture in our mother tongue; a blessing which was denied to us so long as we were under the authority of the Church of Rome.”

Jones’ willingness to grant every human language the ability to function figuratively confirms that he has moved well beyond Hutchinson’s Hebraic fundamentalism. The primary distinction, for Jones, is not between biblical languages and vernaculars, but between Scriptural and non-Scriptural words. On what basis, then, does Jones uphold the uniqueness of Scriptural words? The answer for Jones is that the words of Scripture are the words God has ordained as his favored means to communicate the figurative meaning of the world to his people.

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39 In his 1960 essay “The Nature of Things and the Language of Things” Gadamer endorses the term the “language of things” as able to protect things against technological manipulation and desire by helping people remember that things have their own existence and are not, as Heidegger says, “forced to do anything.” Gadamer finds that the term “roused the memory (slumbering in us all) of the being of things that are still able to be what they are.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Nature of Things and the Language of Things,” in Philosophical Hermeneutics, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 72. Inasmuch as Jones’ hermeneutic instrumentalizes created things by refashioning them as tools that promote Christian virtue, his usage contradicts that of Gadamer. Nevertheless, Gadamer insists that things are not self-interpreting and that “The mediation of finite and infinite that is appropriate to us as finite beings lies in language.” Ibid., 80. Thus Gadamer maintains that it is through language that things find their proper place because language expresses their proper relation to the whole. And this is precisely what Jones believes Scriptural words are able to achieve on behalf of things. What distinguishes Jones and Gadamer is the fact that Jones restricts “the language of things” to the figurative language of Scripture.

40 Jones, A Course, 5.

41 “The knowledge of human languages,” says Jones, “Prepares us for the reading of human authors; and great part of our life is present in acquiring them. But the interpretation of this sacred language takes off the seal from the book of life, and opens to man the treasures of divine wisdom, which far exceed all other
theory, apply Jones’ figurative hermeneutic to non-Scriptural words, but such an application would generate human rather than providential interpretations. The Christian seeking to uncover the providential import of created things will be frustrated in the attempt until she uses the figurative language of Scripture to describe them.

For Jones, however, the uniqueness of Scriptural words is not an abstract principle. It is palpable in their obscurity, and this obscurity calls forth figurative interpretation. Jones confesses that, “there is a certain obscurity in the language of the bible, which renders it difficult to be understood,” presumably because of its divine origin. He therefore maintains that all Christians are drawn to ask the question of the Ethiopian Eunuch, “How can I understand unless some man should guide me?”42 Jones admits that “something more than the guidance of man is necessary.”43 Linguistic proficiency and philological criticism are ultimately unable to overcome Scriptural obscurity: “The great difficulties of the scripture arise totally from other causes and principles; namely from the matter of which it treats, and the various forms under which that matter is delivered.”44 Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, Christians are dependent upon the illumination of Christ to open “their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures.”45 Without such illumination Christians will remain like the unbelievers that had “eyes without seeing, and ears without hearing” despite the fact that they were “familiarly acquainted” with the writings of Moses and the prophets, and “understood

learning, and will be carried with us into another world, when the variety of tongues shall cease, and every other treasure shall be left behind.” Ibid., 316-17.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 6.
the original language in which they were delivered.”46 Jones nowhere suggests that his interpretive method will eliminate textual obscurity. He does, however, believe that since his method is appropriate to the form in which God has chosen to reveal himself, and seeks to take inventory of God’s whole revelation, it is maximally conditioned for divine illumination.

The eyes of natural man see only immediate physical entities, but illumined eyes perceive the spiritual significance of physical things. The role of the Scriptures, as revelation, therefore, is to “open to us an invisible world.”47 Of all the objects of sense we have ideas, and our minds and memories are stored with them. But of invisible things we have no ideas till they are pointed out to us by revelation: and as we cannot know them immediately, such as they are in themselves, after the manner in which we know sensible objects, they must be communicated to us by the mediation of such things as we already comprehend. For this reason, the scripture is found to have a language of its own, which doth not consist of words, but of signs or figures taken from visible things. It could not otherwise treat of God who is a spirit, and of the spirit of man, and of a spiritual world; which no words can describe. Words are the arbitrary signs of natural things; but the language of revelation goes a step farther, and uses some things as the signs of other things; in consequence of which, the world which we now see becomes a sort of commentary on the mind of God.48

For Jones, “the professed design of the scripture” is nothing less than to grant God’s children the ability to see the world the way that He sees it by rendering it in providential terms.49 The figurative expressions of Scripture render the world in providential terms, and such renderings “cannot proceed without them.”

If we descend to an actual examination of particulars, we find [Scripture] assisting and leading our faculties forward; by an application of all visible

46 Ibid., 4.
47 Ibid., 8.
48 Ibid., 9-10.
49 Ibid., 10.
objects to a figurative use; from the glorious orb which shines in the firmament, to a grain of seed which is buried in the earth.\textsuperscript{50}

Jones refuses to exclude \textit{anything} from his comprehensive providentialist vision.\textsuperscript{51} For Jones, providence is not, however, an abstract principle that can be imposed without discretion upon created things. Jones believes that, as a “commentary on the mind of God,” each and every object in creation has a unique divinely mandated ability to assist Christians in their knowledge of God and their pursuit of Christian virtue. Jones equally believes that Christians have a divine mandate to uncover the providential ordering of everything they encounter, and Jones believes that the breadth of Scriptural language makes this object achievable.

In \textit{A Course of Lectures}, Jones guides the bible reader through the different types of figurative expressions he finds in Scripture. He discusses five types of expressions, classified according to the nature of the figures themselves: figures taken from (1) images of nature, (2) institutions of the law, (3) the persons of the prophets, (4) the

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\item[50] Ibid.
\item[51] Jones develops this point further in a sermon entitled, “Trust in Providence, the Comfort of Man’s Life.” “Our Saviour,” says Jones, “hath extended the attention of Providence to the lowest particulars in the creation; to the hairs of our head, and to the life of a sparrow.” William Jones, “Trust in Providence, the Comfort of Man’s Life,” in \textit{Sermons on Moral and Religious Subjects}, vol. 1 (London, 1790), 222. Jones therefore concludes, “His attention therefore does not only extend to single persons, but to the dust of the earth, and to single atoms.” Ibid., 222-23. Jones’ conviction that the most insignificant things can carry profound divine significance points to Auerbach’s famous analysis of the Christian rejection of the classical doctrine of separations of styles, which he regards as the foundation of Christian figural interpretation. Auerbach argues that the Christian message and early Christian literature were direct affronts to the classical doctrine of separations of style, which insisted that significant events could only be undertaken by great and divine persons and described with grand and florid rhetoric: “The true heart of the Christian doctrine,” says Auerbach, was “totally incompatible with the principle of the separation of styles. Christ had not come as a hero and king but as a human being of the lowest social station. His first disciples were fishermen and artisans; he moved in the everyday milieu of the humble folk of Palestine; he talked with publicans and fallen women, the poor and the sick and children. Nevertheless, all that he did and said was of the highest and deepest dignity, more significant than anything else in the world. The style in which it was presented possessed little if any rhetorical culture in the antique sense; it was \textit{sermo piscatorius} and yet it was extremely moving and much more impressive than the most sublime rhetorico-tragical literary work.” Erich Auerbach, \textit{Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought}, intro. Edward Said (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 72.
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history of the Church of Israel, and (5) the miraculous acts of Moses, Christ, and others. Detailed discussions of these figures comprise lectures two through ten. Jones’ eleventh lecture on “The uses and effects of the symbolical style of the Scriptures” helpfully lays the groundwork for the application of Jones’ figural method to particulars that fall outside of the five categories he discusses.

In *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* Scriptural accordance is the primary tool Jones utilizes to generate Trinitarian doctrine. It is equally the case in his lectures that Scriptural accordance is what enables Jones to proceed from Scriptural particulars to spiritual truth. Thus, when Jones reflects upon the spiritual import of the sacrifices of the priesthood in the Old Testament, he finds that Hebrews 10:1 and 1 Corinthians 5:7 instruct Christians to believe that Christ Himself is the Passover lamb. In this manner, not merely the paschal lamb but, indeed, all of the particular elements in the Old Testament sacrificial system are given their divinely assigned spiritual meaning. The same can be said for the other Scriptural figures Jones investigates. When Christians read of the tabernacle in the book of Exodus it strikes them as a historical curiosity, but when they are told in St. John’s gospel that the Word “tabernacled amongst us,” they are

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52 Jones, *A Course*, 34.
53 Ibid., 91-92.
54 Jones argues that, “From the various applications of particular passages from the law, previous to the revelation of the gospel, it appears that the law was in itself a spiritual as well as a figurative system, for the forming of the heart, and the purifying of the mind.” Ibid., 149. In his *Lectures*, the accordance of Old Testament and New Testament referents continues to be the primary lens through which spiritual import is generated. For Jones, the spiritual import of Old Testament events is already inherent in the Old Testament itself. Thus, Jones finds that the spiritual import of the “redemption of the people of God from Egypt” is a major theme in the Old Testament. Ibid. 163. Contra Warburton, Jones insists that, “The prophets warned the people not to rest in the redemption that was past, but to look for another, and that so much more excellent in its nature.” Ibid., 164. Jones insists on pursuing figural interpretation only insofar as is necessary to unveil the tropological import of Scriptural figures. In his dedicatory preface to a volume of sermons published in 1790 he therefore tells Horne that he has, in his Lectures, been moderate in his interpretation of Scriptural figures: “I have carried the apostolical mode of interpreting them as far as I thought it needful.” William Jones, preface to *Sermons on Moral and Religious Subjects*, vol. 1 (London, 1790), iv.
confronted by the mystery that, “as the glory of the Lord was once present in the tabernacle, it was now present in the body of Christ.”55 When the Christian reads of Jonah’s being “buried in the body of a fish, and cast up alive again after three days” it strikes him as “monstrous,” but when it is compared with “the return of Jesus Christ from the dead” it becomes “fit and reasonable” as a sign “to instruct the people of God in the truth of their salvation”56 Jones insists that when Scripture is interpreted with Scripture every Scriptural word can be used to render the world in providential terms.

**Jones’ Thoroughgoing Scriptural Emblematicism**

Jones’ willingness to apply the emblematic method to every Scriptural word is appropriately described as a thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism.57 Within the Hutchinsonian apologetic tradition, the function of emblematicism is to render providential interpretations of selected objects. With his thoroughgoing emblematicism Jones is therefore able to fulfill the latent promise of the Hutchinsonian tradition by presenting a providential interpretation of every object that comes under scholarly gaze, whether it be located in Scripture or in the contemporary context, whether in nature or in human history.58

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57 A prominent eighteenth-century scholar that may perhaps be regarded as having a hermeneutic that is analogous to Jones’ thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism is Jonathan Edwards. Recent work on Edwards suggests that his figural interpretation of the Old Testament is far more prominent than was previously recognized. For instance, Nichols argues that for Edwards, the Christological relationship that binds the Old and New Testaments is “manifest not only at finite specific points, but at every moment.” Stephen R. C. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards’ Bible: The Relationship of the Old and New Testaments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 106. Nichols also finds that Edwards’ figural interpretation of natural philosophical objects grants them “multiple referents” in order to draw them into his overarching metaphysic. Ibid., 106-107.
58 Although many eighteenth century thinkers struggled to believe that the historical realm was subject to providential order, most of Jones’ contemporaries had no problem believing that the providential order
The year after Jones died his dear friend and fellow Hutchinsonian William Stevens (1732-1807) published a twelve-volume edition of his collected works. He included a little piece in the eleventh volume entitled *A Key to the Language of Prophesy, with References to Texts of the Old and New Testaments*. The work, which is but fourteen pages in length, is a dictionary of Scriptural emblems that may have been intended for private use. Because it stabilizes the correspondence between Scriptural words and their figural referents, it harkens back to the final volume of the 1748 edition of Hutchinson’s works, to which a dictionary of Scriptural emblems was appended. It was, as we have seen, Hutchinson’s entrenchment of emblematic referentiality that gave rise to the violent debates between Hutchinsonian etymologists and their adversaries. Although Jones repudiated these debates, he was not entirely able to free himself from their problematic. Scriptural figures for Jones as for Hutchinson, are the filaments that bind Scriptural words to nature, thus allowing the epistemological certainty that accompanies natural philosophical knowledge to be transferred to Scripture.

*A Key to the Language of Prophesy* makes it clear that Hutchinson’s ethereal theory provides the basis of Jones’ own emblematic vision. The first terms Jones interprets are the terms upon which Hutchinson built his theory, including “Firmament,” “The Sun,” and “The Light of the World.” These and similar terms are succinctly defined in of nature could be readily discerned. Thinkers such as Priestly that now tend to be regarded as *avant-garde*, were often the most vociferous defenders of the providential order of nature. See Joseph Priestly, *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., (Birmingham, 1782).

59 Stevens was Horne’s cousin. The two boys grew up together in Kent and formed a lifelong friendship. Stevens’ modern biographer Robert Andrews argues that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century High churchmanship “received much of its influence and direction from Stevens.” Robert M. Andrews, *Lay Activism and the High Church Movement of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.
unmistakably Hutchinsonian language.\textsuperscript{60} The definitions, however, are followed by a complement of Scriptural references. The decisive difference between Jones and Clarke’s Trinitarian apologetic, Jones’ engagement with Old Testament texts, is fully evident in Jones’ selection of references.\textsuperscript{61} The sheer range of references Jones includes, some of them taken from such obscure books as Joel and Jude, is remarkable. The deliberate way in which Old Testament and New Testament texts are placed side by side is also noteworthy, and it thus becomes apparent that the two or three texts that follow each definition are not intended to function in isolation from one another. Rather, the generation of meaning is to be found in their accordance.\textsuperscript{62} Even here, as he plays the role of lexicographer, Jones remains faithful to the juxtapositional method outlined in\textit{ The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity}.\begin{quote}

Jones’ juxtapositional method pushes him beyond Hutchinson’s constrained emblematicism in two important ways. First, Jones is able to leave behind the Hutchinsonian association of divine activity and cosmology by drawing all natural philosophical artifacts into the Scriptural world. Thus, after he discusses cosmological figures in\textit{ A Key to the Language of Prophesy}, he proceeds to discuss plants, animals, and
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\textsuperscript{60} Following Hutchinson, Jones believes these terms refer to “The Divine Power ruling over the world,” “The Lord God,” and “Christ.” William Stevens, ed., \textit{The Theological, Philosophical, and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones}, vol. 11 (London, 1801), 185.

\textsuperscript{61} Jones willingness to engage the Old Testament as an equal partner in Christian Scripture is also confirmed by the frequency with which he preached from the Old Testament. Of the twenty-nine sermons contained in the two-volume compilation of sermons published before his death, nine of them (31\%) are on Old Testament texts. William Jones, \textit{Sermons on Moral and Religious Subjects}, 2 vols. (London, 1790).

\textsuperscript{62} The juxtaposition of Scriptural texts plays a crucial role in Jones’ homiletic. Jones often scrawled out Scripture references on the reverse side of his sermons in a handwritten volume of unpublished sermons located in the library of Pusey House, Oxford. Most of the time these Scripture references are found in groups of two. Thus, for example, on the back of page 21 of a sermon on the Trinity, Jones wrote two Scripture references, 1 Corinthians 10:9 and Psalm 68:56 and then joined them with a bracket. Further down the page he listed two other texts, John 20:28 next to Romans 9:5. Jones, MS Sermons, 1.21.
minerals. The significance of Jones’ willingness to interpret plants, animals, and minerals figurally comes to light in a collection of four sermons published by Jones on (1) The Religious Use of Botanical Philosophy, (2) Considerations on the Nature and Oeconomy of Beasts and Cattle, (3) On the Natural History of the Earth and Its Minerals, and (4) On the Natural Evidences of Christianity. Jones begins the third sermon by pointing out that “Writers, who have given us descriptions of the natural world, have divided it into three grand departments or kingdoms, of plants, animals, and minerals.” Jones’ argument becomes apparent only when the place of the third discourse is considered in relation to the previous two discourses: having demonstrated that Plants can be used to relay spiritual truths in his first discourse, and Animals can be used to relay spiritual truths in his second, his demonstration that spiritual truths that can be derived from minerals is a demonstration that everything in creation can function as an emblem of spiritual truth. When the interpreter condescends to interpret nature figuratively, says Jones, “a vast field is open to us, as wide as the world itself.” In his first discourse Jones thus observes that, “Herbs and flowers may be regarded by some persons as objects of inferior consideration in philosophy; but every thing must be great which hath God for its author.”

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63 Ibid., 187-91.
66 Jones, *Four*, 4. Jones continues: “To [God] all the parts of nature are equally related. The flowers of the earth can raise out thoughts up to the Creator of the world as effectually as the stars of heaven; and till we make this use of both, we cannot be said to think properly of either.” Ibid. The effusive language Jones uses in celebration of the contemplation of nature rivals that of even the most lyrical Romantics: “happiest of all is he who having cultivated herbs and trees, and studied their virtues, and applied them for his own and for the common benefit, rises from thence to a contemplation of the great Parent of good, whom he sees and adores in these his glorious works.” Ibid., 36.
The second reason Jones’ juxtapositional method moves beyond Hutchinson’s constrained emblematicism is that he applies it, not merely natural objects, but to historical ones as well.\textsuperscript{67} Although the first four sets of figures Jones interprets in his \textit{A Key to the Language of Prophesy} are taken from nature, the final five sets come from human society: “Different States of Men” comprises figures that capture the entire spectrum of human experience—words such as King and Captive, Master and Slave, Virgin and Harlot, Physician and Beggar;\textsuperscript{68} “Husbandry” comprises figures that deal with the relation between humans and the earth, including “The Harvest,” “The Reapers,” and “The Labourer;”\textsuperscript{69} “The Body of Man, and its Clothing” includes physical descriptors of the body and clothing and terms related to the constitution of man such as “Sleep,” “Death,” “Bread,” and “Hunger;”\textsuperscript{70} “Places and Buildings” includes a handful of select figures, including place names (“Jerusalem”), and general locations (“house”);

\textsuperscript{67} As I argued in Chapter Three, Emblematicism regards the entire realm of human experience as potentially subject to emblematic illumination. Furthermore, since emblematicism insists that the interpretation of nature requires human words, it necessarily brings nature and history together into a single realm of interpretation. The fact that Jones, like Watson, and Horne, is willing to interpret historical objects emblematically therefore draws Hutchinsonianism back to its emblematic roots.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 191-93.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 193-94.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 194-97. In the modern era the pervasive unwillingness to render providential interpretations of human history and society, and the attendant tendency to focus exclusively upon the providential interpretation of nature is closely tied to the problem of evil. Webster maintains that the existence of evil is only problematic for the belief in providence to the extent that it causes people to restrict their providentialism: “A theology of providence,” says Webster, “need not and cannot wait upon demonstration of the divine righteousness, because providence is not asserted on the basis of the insignificance of evil but on the basis of the belief that God outbids any and all evil. What makes evil problematic for providence is not its existence but the fact that we resist applying belief in providence to cases of it, especially those in which we are concerned. Theological answers to this will therefore be as much ascetic as argumentative: we need to learn what it is to apply belief in providence, and how to apply it, in order to be persuaded of the viability and fruitfulness of making the application. Reconciling providence and horrors is a task within fellowship with God; inability to commend and receive the proffered reconciliation indicates estrangement.” John Webster, “On the Theology of Providence,” in \textit{The Providence of God}, ed. Francesa Aran Murphy and Philip Ziegler (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 158. Jones was quite prepared to apply his belief in providence to the worst of horrors. On January 29, 1762 Jones wrote the following words to his friend George Berkeley Jr.: “My wife has lately been delivered of a son, whom I baptized by the name of George, but it hath pleased God to take him from me.” William Jones, A letter to George Berkeley Jr., 29 January, 1762, Add. MS 39311, 109, The British Library, London, UK.
and “Rites and Ceremonies of the Mosaic Law” offers figural interpretations of the Tabernacle, the High Priest, and various articles of the temple.\textsuperscript{71} More than half of the figures Jones deals with in \textit{A Key to the Language of Prophecy} are taken from human society and history.\textsuperscript{72} The historical particulars Jones examines are infused with providential import through their treatment as Scriptural figures. As Jones undertakes to interpret Scriptural figures, particulars from human history are inevitably drawn up into Jones’ figural universe, and in the process they lose their devolutionary character and become emblems of divine light.\textsuperscript{73}

In Hutchinson’s work Scriptural signifiers can only hope to convey divine meaning if they are removed from history and refashioned as hieroglyphs that refer to natural philosophical objects. Within this framework select Hebrew hieroglyphs become the hinges between the fallen world of human history and the heavens. But because the signifiers Jones interprets figurally are not decontextualized and dehistoricized as they are interpreted, they retain their place within human history.\textsuperscript{74} This means that for Jones, figural interpretation operates within human culture and experience.\textsuperscript{75}

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\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 197-98.
\item \textsuperscript{72} This emphasis upon human culture is consistent with that of \textit{A Course of Lectures}. In \textit{A Course of Lectures} four of five categories of figures are taken from history rather than nature.
\item \textsuperscript{73} In Jones’ figural universe nothing can be regarded as devolutionary in an absolute sense. For Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson, historical devolution is absolute because it is the gradual alienation from a primitive and objective standard. For Jones, however, the experience of devolution is itself a Scriptural figure that can be applied to various contexts for the purpose of Christian edification. The student of Scripture finds that there was a descent into anarchy before the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and that of Jerusalem. The experience of devolution, therefore, is God’s call to us to refuse to set our “affections on the pleasures of this unsteady world, so apt to disturb and alarm us with the misery of the present, and the terror of future evils.” William Stevens, ed., \textit{The Theological, Philosophical, and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones}, vol. 5 (London, 1801), 276, 294. Jones, evidently, was not immune from the millennial furor that accompanied the catastrophic events in France, but it is not clear that Jones’ engagement with these events led him to create a philosophy of history. He certainly suspects that descent into anarchy will precede God’s restitution of all things, but he does not conceive of all of human history as such a descent. Freeman, \textit{The Life}, 45-46.
\item \textsuperscript{74} It is thus that Reno, in an unpublished essay, observes that, “Horne and Jones turned to theological categories and arguments that accentuate the \textit{historical} and \textit{linguistic} character of Christian truth, and in
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The breadth of Jones’ emblematic vision is exemplified by his interpretation of the term “light.” Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretation of “light” is confined to his Christological rendering of the particles that emanate from the orb of the Sun. Watson and Horne extend Hutchinson’s reflections on the emblematic manner of light by considering the functions and powers of light that are exercised within the terrestrial realm. Watson marvels at the ability of light to bring seeds and buds to life, and he therefore celebrates the miracle of bodily resurrection in Christ. Horne, following Hutchinson, ponders the ability of light to penetrate “even to the inmost substances of grosser bodies,” and this leads him praise the “unbounded and efficacious . . . influence of the Sun of Righteousness, when he sent out his word, enlightening and enlivening all things by the glory of his grace.” Although Jones pays tribute to Watson’s Christ the Light of the World before he launches into his own emblematic interpretation of the term, his own interpretation moves well beyond that of the other Hutchinsonians. Jones finds that in Scripture the

natural image of the light is applied to so many great purposes . . . You see, our God is light; our Redeemer is light; our scripture is light; our whole religion is light; the ministers of it are light; all Christian people are children of the light, and have light within them. If so, what an obligation is laid upon us, not to walk as if we were in darkness, but to walk uprightly as in the day, shewing the people of this world, that we have a better rule to direct us than they have.  

this way disarmed important aspects of the Enlightenment.” Rusty Reno, “Hutchinsonianism and the Emergence of Modern Conservatism,” 3.

75 Ibid., 23. Reno observes that although Hutchinson is only willing to apply the emblematic manner to particular Hebrew roots, Jones extends it to include the entire sweep of biblical narrative. On this basis Reno finds that, “The divine pedagogy that Hutchinson imagined invested in ancient Hebrew words has become much broader. The entire sweep of biblical history . . . becomes the instrument of divine pedagogy. Therefore, the mind that seeks the dwell in the comprehensive truth of reality must immerse itself in the endless and always historically particularized project of seeking coherences and interconnections within these divinely chosen instruments.” Ibid., 25.


77 Jones, A Course, 46-47.
There are two features of Jones’ application of Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretation of light that must be highlighted. The first is its sheer expansiveness. The figural import of light is no longer confined to God the Son, as it now includes no less than seven specific spiritual referents. The second is Jones’ insistence on drawing tropological import from his findings. The tropological aspect of Jones’ Scriptural emblematicism is an essential component of Jones’ application of the emblematic manner to the historical realm. Since history is comprised of the decisions and actions of human actors, tropology makes history subject to Scripture.

The importance of Jones’ Scriptural emblematicism in creating a comprehensive providential vision can hardly be overemphasized. The Scriptural references Jones includes in *A Key to the Language of Prophecy* have a latent generative capacity. Since they include not merely the term that is being defined, but other terms as well, they have the potential both to extend the meaning of the term in question and to serve as the beginning of an extended chain of references that renders providential interpretations of numerous other terms. Thus although Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretation of the word light allows him to offer a providential interpretation of the wave/particle we receive from the Sun, Jones’ emblematic interpretation of the term is extended to include Scripture, the Christian religion, the Priesthood, the laity, righteous living, and indeed, the entire moral order of the world. Jones’ thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism, which is grounded in his juxtapositional interpretive method, is what protects him from the woodenness of Hutchinson’s approach, and it is equally that which leads him away from Hutchinson’s restricted interpretation of providence. Even if he tried to restrict his providentialism he would not find it easy to do so, since his
method continually draws objects of Scripture, objects of nature, and objects of history into the emblematic, and therefore providential frame.

The World of Scripture

The three steps Watson outlines in Aaron’s Intercession (the interpretation of the “historical relation” of the text, canonical reading, and tropological reading), all feature prominently in Jones’ hermeneutical method. Following Watson, Jones believes that the object of textual interpretation is to render tropological readings of them. But unlike Watson, Jones insists that tropological readings must be generated by the figural interpretation of Scriptural texts, and this suggests that he is interested in more than simply “applying” one set of particulars to another. Since he believes that—to quote Lindbeck—“A scriptural world is . . . able to absorb the universe,” he conceives of the task of interpretation as that of extending the “domain and meaning” of Scripture “over the whole of reality.”78

Like Watson, Jones begins many of his sermons with what might be described as a literal or historical rendering of the text. For example, he begins his sermon on

78 George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 117. The notion that Christian Scripture has the ability to “absorb” the world appears in Auerbach, Mimesis, 72. Kathryn Greene-McReight observes, however, that the notion that it has gained currency due to the work of members of the “Yale school,” Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, and more recently, Bruce Marshall. Although Greene-McReight is clearly intrigued by Frei’s observation that the orientation of pre-critical interpretation was to incorporate “extra-biblical thought, experience, and reality into the one real world detailed and made accessible by the biblical story—not the reverse,” she complains that Frei and his allies fail to tell us “in concrete terms what such an absorption would actually entail.” Kathryn Greene-McReight, “We are the companions of the Patriarchs’ or Scripture Absorb’s Calvin’s World,” Modern Theology 14, no. 2 (1998): 213. Following Frei’s suggestion, she looks to John Calvin as one who “read the Bible as one continuous narrative, whose reality was overcome by the reality of the biblical world,” and she finds this clearly articulated in Calvin’s preface to his commentary on Genesis. Ibid., 214. Greene-McReight observes that it is Calvin’s interpretation of Genesis as not only a “history of the creation of the world” but as the “the sum of the Christian story.” On this account it becomes “the story of the reader,” which enables Calvin to conclude that, “we are companions of the patriarchs.” Ibid., 215.
Genesis 6:5—“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”—by reflecting upon the nature of the human condition before the deluge. More often than not, however, Jones’ discussions of literal textual elements are interspersed throughout his work, set within discussions of related Scriptural texts and moral lessons. Watson’s influence on Jones is most vividly seen in Jones’ appropriation of the second and third steps of Watson’s method. Jones wholeheartedly embraces Watson’s conviction that the interpretation of Christian Scripture must be tropologically oriented, and he follows Watson by insisting that this end can be rendered through Scriptural accordance. In particular, Jones follows Watson by emphasizing that Christians must interpret Old Testament particulars as figures, since it is only through their figural import that they are able to engage contemporary Christian experience. Jones observes, for instance, that St. Peter applies the history of the salvation of Noah as “a figure of that Salvation which we now obtain as the family of Jesus Christ in the Ark of the Church by the waters of Baptism.” From this it follows, argues Jones, echoing the Church Fathers, that a “practical inference is to be made in favour of the ordinance of the Church; that as the ark could not be saved but by water, so must all the Church of Christ be baptized.”

The notion that the tropological rendering of Scriptural particulars is generated through the figural reading of Scripture is the guiding principle of Jones’ hermeneutic. Unlike Horne, Jones applies this principle consistently, and to the whole scope of Scripture. This is clearly illustrated in one of Jones’ final works, A Discourse on the Use

79 Like Horne, Jones affirms the necessity of literal interpretation while insisting that it stands in need of further reflection. Jones, A Course, 28.
80 Jones, A Course, 155.
81 Ibid., 156.
and Intention of some Remarkable Passages of the Scripture (1798). In the opening pages of the work Jones offers a tropological reading of the Magnificat, and the method Jones employs to render it is identical to the method he uses to render Noah’s ark as a figure of the Church. For Jones any comparison that is to be drawn between Mary and the Christian must first be established through the mediation of Scripture. “Many good Christians,” says Jones

who read the word of God with a desire to profit by it, and have been taught, that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning (Rom. xv. 4.), have their doubts concerning the use of many things they find in the Scripture; not being able to see how they can answer that general design of adding to our learning, and thereby leading us to more patience and comfort.82

Jones observes that the St. Paul’s comments follow his application of a passage from the Psalms to Christ, and he finds that for the Apostle, this is but one instance of a general rule that “the things written aforetime are to be thus applied to Jesus Christ.” Jones finds that unless they are applied to Christ, such passages “are nothing to us as Christians, neither shall we find in them the comfort they were intended to give.”83

Jones relates that he once met “a clergyman of no mean learning” who “objected to the use of the Magnificat, in the service of the church, as a form that could have no relation to us.”84 To the contrary Jones insists that,

Christ, who was formed in the blessed virgin, is also formed in us; and the mother of Christ, like Sarah, the mother of the promised seed, in her spiritual capacity, is a figure of the church, that blessed Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all: so that the words, which were spoken by her, may be used by all Christians, with the utmost truth and propriety. Each of us may truly say, My soul doth magnify the Lord, for he, who regarded the virgin, did regard her for my salvation; that Christ might be formed in me, as he was in her . . . When the

82 Ibid., 13.
83 Ibid., 14.
84 Ibid., 15.
promise, made to the church of Israel in our father Abraham, was fulfilled to the blessed virgin, it was fulfilled to us, that is, to the seed of Abraham for ever, which seed are we at this day. Thus is the magnificat brought home to us, and the use of it in the church, to the end of the world, is justified.85

Jones’ exegesis of the Magnificat illustrates that he is quite unwilling to follow Watson and Horne in drawing out “unmediated” tropological readings of biblical texts. Here Jones refuses to draw a direct analogy between Mary’s psychological state and that of modern man, or a comparison between her relationship with God and that of the Christian. The basis of the bond between Mary and the Christian is not that the feeling of having Jesus in the womb is akin to the feeling of having Jesus in the heart, or even, more abstractly, that Mary’s experience of being redeemed is similar to that of contemporary Christians. Christians can only join in Mary’s song because Mary’s song is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. It is only on account of Abraham that Mary becomes a figure of the Church, and that Christians can join with her in singing “He that sent away the rich, and accepted a lowly maiden” as a tribute to God for his condescension “to regard and magnify us poor Gentiles.”86

As Jones interprets the Magnificat he finds that it depends upon the Old Testament to unveil its tropological import. Although Horne is confident that he can interpret the New Testament without the assistance of the Old Testament, Jones believes that the New Testament needs the Old Testament as much as the Old needs the New. "Too many mistakes," says Jones, “are current amongst us in regard to the Old Testament; without

85 ibid., 15-16.
86 Ibid., 15.
which, the New never was and never will be understood.”

This insistence that New Testament interpretation requires canonical mediation protects Jones against Horne’s nascent primitivism, and makes it impossible for Jones to divide history into epochs of either growth or decline. For Jones, Scriptural time, and therefore historical time, is comprised of but one dispensation. The “matter” the bible treats, says Jones, is the “dispensation of God, which began before this world, and will not be finished till the world is at an end, and the eternal kingdom of God is established.”

For Jones, the problem of the historical relation of the Old Testament to the contemporary context is no more perplexing than the problem of the historical relation between the contemporary context and the New Testament. The relevance of the New Testament and its status as Christian Scripture can be attributed neither to the fact that it deals with Christians nor to the fact that European culture has far more in common with Greco-Roman culture than it has with ancient Hebrew culture. It is therefore tempting to say that for Jones, the “wide ugly ditch” that separates Christians from the early Church is the same “wide ugly ditch” that separates them from the ancient Israelites. But for Jones no such “wide ugly ditch” exists.

Because Jones is fluid and imaginative in his application of Watson’s threelfold method, he sometimes appears to construct tropological readings that lack canonical mediation. It must be emphasized however, that while tropological application is the ultimate object of his method, it is not always the final step in the structure of his argument. Jones jumps back and forth between his literal, allegorical, and tropological

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87 William Jones, A Letter to the Church of England ... By an Old Friend and Servant of the Church (London, 1798), 20.
88 Jones, A Course, 6-7.
reflections. His fluid movement between the contemporary application and the canonical rendering of a given text has the effect, both of granting the text a degree of contemporaneity, and of drawing contemporary events into “salvation history.” It is hard to read Jones without feeling the pull of the idea that “we are companions of the Patriarchs.”

Jones’ hermeneutical method is motivated by the desire to absorb the entire world within the world of Scripture. His appropriation of the second step of Watson’s hermeneutic, the canonical reading of particular texts, can be described as a process in which the contours of the Scriptural world are established; the numerous figural threads he draws as he juxtaposes Scriptural texts binds them together by establishing a shared referentiality within what can justly be called the “world” of Scripture. But because Jones always interprets texts canonical in order to discover their contemporary import, the contours of the Scriptural world are extended to include the immediate experience of Jones and his contemporaries. For Jones, therefore, tropological reading is best described, not as a process in which the truth of Scripture is applied to the contemporary world, but as a process in which elements of the contemporary world are absorbed within the Scriptural world.

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89 This approach implies a philosophy of time that differs from that of Watson and Horne. For Watson and Horne the movement from the literal text of the Old Testament, to its spiritual rendering in the New, to its contemporary application depends upon a chronological understanding of time. See Conclusion, note 23.
90 See note 70 above. In an unpublished sermon Jones says, “Our friends also are in that country to which we are travelling. To the Christian, considered as such, the world hath never been nor will its principles ever suffer to be, a friend. The friend of the Christian is Christ, whom the Jews in scorn called the friend of publicans and sinners: the blessed Angels are friends to those that love God: the saints departed are friends to those who are passing through the trials which they have happily escaped; the Prophets and Evangelists are friends to those who are enlightened by their writings. We are brought to a communion with these, and are intimately related to them, from the time that we are made Christians.” Jones, MS Sermons, 1.16.
By reading the bible as a text that draws Christians into the Scriptural world, Jones draws Hutchinsonianism back to its emblematic roots. As I have argued, Hutchinson’s work sits awkwardly within the emblematic tradition because he cuts short the chain of emblematic associations by restricting emblematic referentiality to single natural philosophical objects. Jones’ work harkens back to that of Quarles and other emblematicists because he locates natural objects of all kinds and objects of historical experience within his emblematic frame. Emblem books create a world that is morally charged by reinterpreting these objects as part of an overarching moral order. For Jones, Christian edification similarly requires that every element of human experience be located within a larger frame, and for Jones that frame is the Scriptural world. Jones is thus able to conclude that the, “law and the gospel are the same religion under different forms.” The experience of the Patriarchs is therefore found to be morally relevant not because it is found to be like our experience but because it is found to be truly ours once our experience is absorbed within the Scriptural world.

The Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture

Jones’ epistemological justification for his belief that Christian edification is only possible through the emblematic interpretation of Scripture has two aspects: sensualism and biblicism. As a sensualist Jones believes that providential discernment can only be achieved through engagement with sensible particulars, and as a biblicist he

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91 Emblem books tend to be read anachronistically as motivated to employ natural and historical objects to render moral lessons, but this analysis fails to account for what was, in fact, a far larger ambition.

92 It is inappropriate to speak of Jones as guilty of Scriptural decontextualization inasmuch as he is continually drawing non-Scriptural elements into the Scriptural world. Jones’ Scriptural words remain within the Scriptural world and therefore remain Scriptural words.

93 Jones, A Course, 368-69.
holds that it is equally dependent upon Scriptural words.\textsuperscript{94} The relationship between Jones’ sensualism and his biblicism can be helpfully clarified by reflecting upon the relationship between the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture in his thought. That Jones sometimes treats the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture as distinct authorities is attributable to the influence of deistic notions of providence, mediated through Hutchinson.\textsuperscript{95} As we have already seen, eighteenth century thinkers that emphasized the distinction between God’s two books, such as Clarke and the deists, found it easy to regard the Book of Nature as a superior foundation for divine knowledge than the Book of Scripture. I argue, however, that because Jones’ thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism makes natural knowledge subject to Scripture, Scripture is given epistemological priority in Jones’ thought.

Jones inherited his sensualist epistemology, and, in particular, the notion that truths found in the Book of Nature are the only certain and demonstrable truths, from Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson.\textsuperscript{96} Jones therefore assumes, as they did, that his task as

\textsuperscript{94} Jones’ interpretive method is grounded in the conviction that, “we are obliged to attain to all our knowledge of things spiritual or invisible, that is, by using the creation as a mirror in which to behold them.” And he finds justification for this view in Scripture: “The invisible things of God, concerning his being and power, and the oeconomy of his are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by things that are made.” William Jones, \textit{A Full Answer to the Essay on Spirit} (London, 1753), 83-84. For Jones, even our conviction that our knowledge is dependent upon physical things is dependent upon Scripture. Such is the intimate link between sensualism and biblicism in Jones’ epistemology.

\textsuperscript{95} This being said, one of the primary reasons why the metaphor of God’s two books fell from common use during the eighteenth century is that the emblematic worldview was being replaced with a modern scientific one. The notion that nature is a book presupposes that human words are necessary for the interpretation of nature. See Chapter Three, note 42.

\textsuperscript{96} Jones was a natural philosopher of some repute, being elected to the Royal Society in 1775. Jones does include Scriptural and tropological reflections in his natural philosophical work, but much of it is strictly empirical and can be seen as the result of an intensely inquisitive intellect. In his \textit{Physiological Disquisitions}, for instance, Jones reflects upon the nature of (1) matter, (2) motion, (3) the elements, (4) fire, (5) air, (6) sound, (7) fossils, (8) natural history, and (9) the weather. Jones’ willingness to embrace the insights of a vast array of thinkers continues the process begun by Horne’s work on Newton and Hutchinson. Jones is even willing to endorse the work of Hutchinson’s arch-nemesis Woodward, although he does criticize Woodward for trying to use universal gravitation to defend his cause. See William Stephens, ed., \textit{The Theological, Philosophical, and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones}, vol. 10.
a Scriptural apologist is to demonstrate the accordance of the Book of Nature and the
Book of Scripture. This presupposition is what accounts for Jones’ consistent defense of
Hutchinsonian natural philosophy: he defends Hutchinsonian natural philosophy
because he believes it proves the accordance of God’s two books.97 Jones’ desire to
demonstrate this accordance leads him to attempt to prove, not that the Book of
Scripture is superior to the Book of Nature, but is rather equal to it.

When the maker of the world becomes an author, his word must be as perfect as
his work: the glory of his wisdom must be declared by the one as evidently as the
glory of his power is by the other: and if nature repays the philosopher for his
experiments, the scripture can never disappoint those who are properly
exercised in the study of it.98

Here Jones insists upon the equilibrium of God’s two books while nevertheless
continuing to affirm their distinction. The danger that attends Jones’ project is the same
danger that troubles Hutchinson: the attempt to bind Scripture to nature is prone to
give way to the positivistic assumption that naturalistic knowledge is superior to
historically conditioned knowledge. Nevertheless, I argue that Jones’ biblicism stops
this possibility from materializing.

In 1787 Jones published his Fairchild Lecture entitled A Lecture on the Natural
Evidences of Christianity.99 The natural philosophical apologetic Jones articulates in the
work stands in stark contrast to that of the renowned apologist William Paley (1743-

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97 Jones’ confidence that the Book of Nature is able to grant certain knowledge is predictable given his
context. But it is also apologetically shrewd. Jones, like most other eighteenth-century Anglican apologists,
concedes Tindal’s point that if Scripture is found to be contrary to nature, it is proved to be false. See
Chapter Two, note 61. For Jones’ appropriation of Hutchinson’s natural philosophy see, William Jones, A
Short Way to Truth: Or the Christian Doctrine of a Trinity in Unity, Illustrated and Confirmed from Analogy
in the Natural Creation (London, 1793).
98 Jones, A Course, 1.
99 The lecture is appended to the 1787 edition of A Course of Lectures.
1805). Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802) duplicates the Newtonian apologetic of Clarke’s Boyle Lectures by establishing the principles of revealed religion through logical deductions. For Jones, on the other hand, it is impossible to proceed deductively from the natural world to revelation for the simple reason that, “The world, always has been, and now is, to those that are shut up under its laws, a schoolmaster to turn men away from Christ.” Only when the existence of revelation is presupposed can the providential significance of the world be discerned. Jones therefore begins his lecture by insisting that although he is considering the wisdom of God in the natural world, “the knowledge of the scriptures is not excluded,” and he will therefore attempt “to bring them both together into one discourse; for they illustrate one another in a wonderful manner.”

> To those who search for it, and have pleasure in receiving it, there is a striking alliance between the oeconomy of Nature, and the principles of divine Revelation; and unless we study both together, we shall be liable to mistake things now, as the unbelieving Sadducees did, in their vain reasonings with our blessed Saviour. They erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God: they neither understood them separately, nor knew how to compare them together.

Here Jones articulates his intriguing appropriation of the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Following William Chillingworth (1602-44), and like Clarke, Jones understands Scripture itself to be the Rule of Faith, but he adapts this conviction to

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100 *Ibid.*, 150.
101 *Ibid.*, 435. Jones’ student William Kirby wholeheartedly embraced Jones’ belief that natural philosophical reflection must be done in conversation with Scripture. To this day Kirby continues to be heralded as one of the founders of entomological science. See William Kirby, *The Bridgewater Treatises: The Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God as Manifested in the Creation*, 2nd ed. (London, 1835). The front matter of the work includes a quote from German naturalist Henrich Moritz Gaede: “C’est, la bible a la main, que nous devons entrer dans le temple auguste de la nature, pour bien comprendre la voix du Créateur.” Kirby’s interest in entomology is consistent with Jones’ conviction that the smallest things in creation can carry great spiritual significance. See note 51.
eighteenth-century empirical sensibilities by insisting that Scriptural authority does not function independently of its ability to accurately describe the world.  

For Clarke, the authority of the bible is confirmed by its ability to give a factually correct description of the godhead. This description is consistent with natural religion, which establishes the singularity, beneficence and authority of the Creator. In Clarke’s apologetic, however, the bible refers to the divine being quite apart from its relationship to the natural world. Similarly, natural religion, in itself, has the capacity to lead humans to divine truth without the aid of the bible. Jones’ defense of the accordance of God’s two books, on the other hand, is issued in a single apologetic movement. He brings together Scripture and nature in a single act of interpretation, which affirms, simultaneously, that the providential order in creation is inaccessible to human minds apart from the mediation of Scripture, and that the divine meaning of Scripture is imperceptible apart from its relationship to the natural world. On this account Jones unites Scripture and nature in a way that is impossible for Clarke. The knowledge of nature is only rendered infallible when it is rendered in Scriptural terms, and Scriptural knowledge, likewise, is only rendered infallible because of its conformity to the providential order instituted in the natural world.

For Jones, the unity of God’s two books, which is expressed in a shared emblematic capacity, stems from their common divine origin. Interpreting Scripture emblematically is warranted because creation itself is ripe with emblematic potential. The task of the Christian exegete, therefore, is not merely confined to working with the

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103 In good Protestant fashion Jones places the Church under the authority of Scripture: “The Church doesn’t determine whether there is a Christ or a Holy Ghost,” says Jones, it “only declares the faith which it has received; and instead of her imposing, this faith is imposed upon the Church by the uncontrollable authority of God in Holy Scripture.” William Jones, A Letter to the Common People (London, 1767), 8.
biblical text. In fact, Jones maintains that the Christian exegete must be conversant in empirical science. His job is not merely to interpret Scripture with Scripture, and nature with nature, but also Scripture with nature so as to draw every physical specimen he encounters into the Scriptural world. "Whoever mediates upon the world thus applied as a figure of truth," says Jones, “and sees that agreement between nature and revelation which revelation itself hath pointed out to us, will want no miracle to persuade him of the Christian doctrines; for nature itself is christian, and the world a daily miracle.”

The divine, emblematic meaning of the Book of Nature is given in the Book of Scripture. The Scriptural interpreter simply draws out correspondences God has already established in His Word.

As Jones disciplines himself to make his knowledge of the natural world subject to Scripture, the biblical witness inevitably shapes his knowledge of nature. Indeed, Jones’ understanding of the very concept of the Book of Nature is shaped by his thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism. This is confirmed in Jones’ work *The Book of Nature*, a children’s catechism published one year after the publication of Jones’ lectures on the figurative language of Scripture. In the introduction to the work, Jones

105 Scripture abounds with “Metaphorical allusions to the natural creation. Sometimes they refer us to the heavens and the firmament, to the sun, the moon, and the stars; which, in the emblematical language of divine revelation, are but other names for Christ, the church, and the saints of God." William Jones, *A Free Inquiry into the Sense and Signification of the Spring* (London, 1772), 1-2.
revisits the distinction between the language of words (here he calls it the language of the mind) and the language of things, and he insists that children, since they love pictures, are predisposed to learn about God through the language of things. His object therefore, is to employ the figurative language of Scripture to instruct children that, "the whole world is a picture and that everything we see speaks something to the mind, to instruct and improve it." ¹⁰⁷

Each of Jones’ sixteen catechetical lessons begins with a discussion of things children are familiar with, whether animals, natural objects, or things taken from human life and society. These things are then refracted through the lens of Scripture in order to generate tropological interpretations of them. Although the moral lessons Jones extracts from biblical figures throughout the work are pithier than those found in his course of lectures his favored emblematic hermeneutic remains unaltered in the catechism. Other intellectuals who took a keen interest in child development, such as Isaac Watts (1674-1748), had already identified the importance of teaching children with things as well as with words. With Watts, however, it turns out that reliance on things is simply a heuristic device, an accommodation to the restricted intellectual abilities of children. ¹⁰⁸ With Jones, however, there is never any question of being able to rise above and beyond either the human reliance on sensory input or the concrete forms that are presented to the human intellect in the pages of Scripture. The path to

¹⁰⁸ Isaac Watts, “On Instruction by Catechism,” in *The Works of the Rev. Isaac Watts*, vol. 5 (London, 1813), 215. Watts praises the ability that things have to powerfully relay moral lessons. Ibid., 234. Watts does not, however, question the ability of words to relay Christian knowledge on their own. For Watts words are the husk that contain the marrow of divine, immaterial truth. Ibid., 214. Since Scriptural words, like other words, are only the husk of immaterial truth, however, Watts does not find it necessary to always rely on them. For Watts, the primary purpose of Scripture, therefore, is to offer proof texts for Christian doctrine. Ibid., 222.
Christian virtue and divine illumination is one and the same for both the child and the sage.

The fact that Jones is willing to include objects taken from human culture and society in *The Book of Nature* is exemplary of the way his Scriptural emblematicism has the capacity to draw both natural and historical objects into the Scriptural world. It also confirms that for Jones, the Book of Nature has expanded to include the entire realm of human experience. When Jones compares the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, therefore, he is not following Clarke in evaluating Scripture according to the “mathematical” standard of natural philosophy. He is simply comparing Scripture, as it is read, with the world, as it is experienced. In other words, Jones’ Book of Nature has been historicized. There is therefore no question of being able to prop up the Book of Nature as a primordial standard against which historical contingencies can be evaluated. Furthermore, the fact that *The Book of Nature* is a children’s catechism, is not without importance. It illustrates that Jones has historicized human engagement with his historicized Book of Nature: human engagement with the Book of Nature takes place within time. It begins in childhood and continues until death. Opening the book of nature is no longer restricted to Newton the mathematician or Clarke the metaphysician. And the Book of Nature itself is no longer a mechanism that can allow the scholar to escape the vicissitudes of history. The Book of Nature has become an emblem of creaturely existence.

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109 Furthermore, in *The Book of Nature*, as elsewhere, Jones’ canonical method leads him to apply words that refer initially to natural objects to historical ones. Jones, *The Book*, 18. Jones’ tropological orientation plays a further role in breaking down the distinction between history and nature. The objects he takes from nature are also drawn into the historical realm when they take on an existence within the moral lives of people. See, for example, Ibid., 26.
Scripture and Providence

In the previous chapter I argued that Horne’s belief in the providential order of the world serves as the foundation of his affirmation of Scriptural authority. Conversely, because Jones gives the Book of Scripture epistemological priority over the Book of Nature, Scriptural authority is the basis of his belief in providence. For Jones, the Scriptural authority of a text is its ability to render the world of the reader in providential terms. Jones’ Old Testament apologetic, therefore, is an attempt to convince Christians that they cannot hope to understand the divine order of the world in which they live without the Old Testament. This being said, Jones believes that this order is revealed, not simply in the Old Testament, but in the whole of Christian Scripture. In Jones’ configuration it is thus impossible to divide the bible into two parts, law and gospel. Nor is it possible to drive a wedge between the Old and New Testaments. A single apologetic upholds them both.

Jones believes that the nature of Scripture itself calls forth this view. The Old Testament itself renders theological interpretations of the Mosaic Law, and the New Testament extends this process of reflection by applying the law to other concrete realities, such as Christ and the Church. Thus, concludes Jones, “From the various applications of particular passages from the law, previous to the revelation of the gospel, it appears that the law was in itself a spiritual as well as a figurative system, for the forming of the heart, and the purifying of the mind.”¹¹ Like the New Testament, the Old Testament is able, on its own, to render the world in providential terms in addition to

¹¹ Ibid., 149.
its ability to speak truthfully about the nature of God. In other words, Jones would still be able to venerate the Old Testament as Christian Scripture in a world in which there was no New Testament. This being said, the full force of Jones’ Old Testament apologetic is only expressed when the Old Testament is brought into conversation with the New, and this makes his apologetic very different from that of Hutchinson.

Hutchinson’s Old Testament implicitly draws upon the New Testament in its Trinitarian renderings of Hebrew words. Nevertheless, because Hutchinson is so insistent on creating an apologetic that is unique to the Old Testament, he severs the Old Testament from the New, and he therefore has great difficulty convincing Christians that the Old Testament must be upheld as a guide for the Christian life. At its best, Hutchinson’s Old Testament apologetic is able to convince the empirically minded that the Old Testament speaks truthfully about the divine meaning of natural world. By drawing the Old and New Testaments together, on the other hand, Jones makes it difficult for his readers to dismiss the Old Testament as an ancient artifact and irrelevant curiosity. Through his juxtapositional method, which brings Old Testament texts into conversation with other Scriptural texts, Jones is always able to make these

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111 This ability of the Old Testament to speak truthfully about the nature of the Christian God is what Seitz calls the “discrete witness” of the Old Testament. Christopher Seitz, “Scripture Becomes Religion(s): The Theological Crisis of Serious Biblical Interpretation in the Twentieth Century,” in Renewing biblical Interpretation, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 43. The concern to uphold the Old Testament “on its own terms” is, as we might expect, a top priority for theologically minded Old Testament scholars. See also, R. W. L. Moberly, The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A study of Abraham and Jesus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Jones’ Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity confirms that he shares this concern. This being said, the fact that much of his work is oriented towards the Christian interpretation of creation suggests that it is appropriate to ascribe to Jones the view that proving that the Old Testament has the ability to speak truthfully concerning the nature of God is apologetically inadequate.

112 This is further evidence that Jones’ hermeneutic echoes that of the early Church. The fact that the early Church was able to apply a figural hermeneutic to the Old Testament without the aid of the New is confirmed not only by the fact that St. Paul himself did so, but by the fact that the contours of the New Testament were not firmly established until the third century.
Old Testament texts bear upon the contemporary context. More often than not, this process draws upon texts from the New Testament. This does not only mean, however, that the New Testament always has the last word in establishing the meaning of the experience of Old Testament Israel. The experience of Old Testament Israel is equally given priority as that which determines the nature of the experience of the New Testament Church. Through canonical reading the New Testament is given the ability to draw contemporary Christians into the story of ancient Israel, thereby enabling them to make it their own.

Although the Scriptural authority of the Old Testament is often upheld by the New Testament, the Scriptural authority of the New Testament equally depends upon the Old Testament, for the simple fact that the scope of the New Testament is so limited. It is limited in its reflections on the experiences that make up the bulk of human existence, including family life, human love, human labour, human warfare, human governance, and human society at large. And it is even more limited in its narrative depiction of them. Because of these limitations the New Testament is unable to draw many of the central aspects of human existence into God’s providential order. For this, it relies upon the Old Testament. As Jones reflects upon the experiences of ancient Israel he concludes, “Not a single circumstance befell them, which, at some stage of our journey through life, does not happen to us.”

The Christian reader of the Old Testament finds much that is familiar; family rivalry and conflict, struggle with governments and foreign powers, internal wrestling with conscience and sin, friendship and hostility, war and peace. Canonical reading

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gives voice to this familiarity. Once the basic elements of human existence, as depicted in the Old Testament, are drawn up into God’s providential order through the process of Scriptural accordance, the experiences of Old Testament Israel are seen in a new light. Christ’s light, which shines on them, shows them to be far more than historical curiosities, the aimless struggles of a small confederation of ancient tribes. This grants them moral authority as a “divine commentary” on the contemporary experience of Christians. Thus for Jones, the Old Testament is upheld not merely because it describes the providential grounds of history in impersonal terms, but because its breadth gives it a crucial role in drawing contemporary Christians into the providential order that governs the world.114

Jones’ defense of the Old Testament is more modest than that of Hutchinson because he does not go to great lengths to defend its uniqueness. Jones wants nothing more than for his readers to come to regard the Old Testament and the New Testament on equal terms. He therefore refuses to regard the question of the authority of the Old Testament as distinct from the question of the nature of Christian Scripture: the nature of Christian Scripture dictates his Old Testament apologetic. For Jones, Christian Scripture is God’s ordained means of revealing the providential order of the world to his people.

For Jones the ability to interpret human experience providentially is retrospective. Jones believes that good men find there is no greater joy than being able

114 It must be emphasized, however, that in Jones’ hermeneutic the Old Testament is not found to be necessary only to the extent it connects with contemporary experience. Jones’ hermeneutic finds a place for the Old Testament even in instances that the New Testament appears to be far more relevant. The interpreter that draws a comparison between his own experience and that of the early Christian believers is still required to interpret the experience of the believers in canonical context before he applies it to himself.
to reflect upon the course of their lives "and celebrate the mercies they have received."\textsuperscript{115} And indeed, this was the experience of the Israelites themselves: they discoursed together on the miracles God had wrought in Egypt, with the perils of the wilderness, their various encampments, the victories they had obtained, and the cities they had destroyed; and repeated the wondrous narrative to their children, listening around them.\textsuperscript{116}

We can well expect, says Jones, that Israel’s experience will one day become that of all the saints; the ability to reinterpret human experience providentially will be part of the blessedness of heavenly existence. In heaven the saints will look back upon the vicissitudes of this mortal life; and . . . will delight for endless ages, in comparing the trials they underwent, the dangers they escaped, and the mercies they received in this their pilgrimage; adding thereto the greater wonders of their walk through the valley of the shadow of death, their resurrection, ascension, and glorification, which are yet to come; all of which will furnish matter for such songs, and be celebrated with such sounds, as no ear hath yet heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive.\textsuperscript{117}

One of the songs, Jones observes, that the saints in heaven will sing is “the song of Moses the servant of God.”\textsuperscript{118} Hutchinson’s defense of Moses as progenitor of God’s very own natural philosophy is extravagant. But Jones’ defense of Moses may well be more extravagant still. For Jones, the Christian that picks up the book of Exodus and sings the song of Moses as her own has a foretaste of glory.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} The song of Moses found in Exodus Chapter 15 begins as follows: “I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation.”
Conclusion

Jones’ hermeneutic is governed by a thoroughgoing emblematicism: he extends Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretation of cosmological realities to the full range of natural and historical objects. This approach, I have argued, integrates the sensualist and biblicist aspects of Hutchinsonian thought and brings consistency to them. Whatever the object in question, its providential interpretation requires both that it be studied in its particularity, and that it be interpreted in light of Christian Scripture. Objects found within Scripture, such as divine names and attributes, must be interpreted canonically before they can be utilized in constructive theology. Similarly, objects found in the contemporary world are drawn into the world of Scripture by this same process. Jones’ thoroughgoing emblematicism, therefore, is what makes Scripture necessary for providential discernment. It is also what enables Jones to elevate the status of the Old Testament to that of equal partner within the Christian canon. In Jones’ hermeneutic there is no functional distinction between the role of the Old Testament and that of the New. The Old and New Testaments each have a discrete witness, and the location of them both within the larger context of the Christian canon strengthens their ability to make themselves necessary for providential discernment.

This being said, the Old and New Testaments do not, for Jones, passively relay providential meaning to Christians. As light is refracted through a prism, so too, Scripture alters the character of the providence that is discerned. As Jones studies the particulars he encounters in Scripture, they become the basis of a providential vision that shuns abstraction. As Jones puts it, “the logicians teach us, that they always dwell
upon generals, who wish to deceive us about particulars.”

Inasmuch as “the Enlightenment” was, as Peter Gay suggests, “a voyage into abstraction,” Jones can be interpreted as a counter-enlightenment thinker. But since Jones’ rejection of abstraction is his appropriation of the sensualism that accompanied the rise of the new empirical science, his work confirms that that the clash between Newtonian abstraction and Hutchinsonian particularity was a battle between competing eighteenth-century perspectives.

Jones’ refusal to embrace abstraction is most evident in the way that he, despite his anti-Revolutionary rhetoric, refuses to adopt a devolutionary philosophy of history. Jones can be sometimes heard complaining of the increased infidelity in his own society, but he does not make this assessment the basis of an overarching historical framework. Jones does not uphold the Anglican establishment because he claims to know the eschatological significance of that establishment, but because he is convinced that God’s providence always works through the established order. For Jones, providence therefore, does not function as it does for deists, in generalized and abstract

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120 Ibid, 12.
122 Taylor argues that the idea that the victory of the philosophes was inevitable is often fueled by the problematic assumptions that “Under certain conditions, human beings will just come to see that scientific thinking is valid, that instrumental rationality pays off, that religious beliefs involve unwarranted leaps, that facts and values are separate.” Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” Hastings Center Report 25, no. 2 (1995): 25.
123 The one place I have found where Jones adopts primitivist rhetoric is in his Letter to the Church of England where he mentions the hope of restoring the church “as nearly as might be, to the primitive pattern.” Jones bemoans the fact that “revolution hath succeeded Revolution; every one worse than the former.” Jones, A Letter to the Church, 1. Jones’ rhetorical emphasis is markedly different than his friend and ally, the last Non-juroring bishop, Thomas Cartwright, continually elevates the primitive standard, and he looks back longingly to the perfect unity of the primitive Church as an ideal that appears to have been hopelessly obscured and impossible to achieve. Cartwright’s rhetoric is far closer to that of the Tractarians than that of his contemporary allies. Thomas Cartwright, A letter to Jonas Boucher, April 1794, Non-juror Add. MS D. 30, Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK.
terms. Providence is not restricted to God’s establishment of a natural and moral framework within which creatures have the freedom to explore and create their own providential meaning.\textsuperscript{124} To the contrary, God’s providence functions on the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic level. Every object has a unique providential location, and humans are invited, through Scripture, to explore and uncover it to the extent that Scripture itself explores and uncovers it.

For Jones providential discernment is therefore a matter of relating the part to the whole rather than the whole to the part, and in this Jones’ approach betrays the influence of the new experimental science. For Jones, providential discernment is a science of induction. First, particulars are studied in their particularity. They are then related, as figures, to other Scriptural particulars, before finally being related to the whole—God’s providential order of the world. The providential significance of particulars is established through figural interpretation. Thus, if a child were to ask Jones what the providential meaning of a flower is, he would tell them that it is an emblem of the glory of man, which fades away.\textsuperscript{125} And if a fellow theologian were to ask him the same question he would offer the same answer. He might well divulge several interesting and profound reflections upon this relation that he would withhold from the child, but his reflection would always remain a reflection about flowers and about mortal men concerning their place in the divine order of the world.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Taylor speaks of an anthropocentric shift at the cusp of modernity, which granted credibility to the idea that we only owe God “the achievement of our own good.” Charles Taylor, \textit{A Secular Age} (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 222.

\textsuperscript{125} Jones, \textit{The Book}, 14-15.

\textsuperscript{126} Jones calls the flower “An Emblem of Mortal Man.” Stevens, \textit{The Theological}, vol. 11, 197. See also, Jones, \textit{Four Discourses}, 6-10, 29-33. For Jones, the providential significance of the flower is given in the emblematic relation between the flower and mortal man. The process through which Jones relates individual objects to the providential order should not be interpreted as a movement from particulars to
For Jones Scripture determines not merely the nature of providential
discernment, but its extent. Providential discernment is not a matter of speculating
concerning the great movements of history, or God’s eschatological vision, but of
coming to appreciate the embodied form of creaturely existence. Providential
discernment is embodied, protracted, and always limited. This is why Jones takes such
great interest in the catechesis of children. Providential discernment begins at birth as
the infant begins to learn to respond to the environment into which he has been placed.
As his intellect expands, the child will encounter the temptation to become a
“freethinker” and be swept up in the intellectual pride that leads to abstract and
ideological reasoning. But even as the child reaches adulthood and comes to the height
of his intellectual powers, he will not, if he is wise, move beyond his divinely instituted
ability to reflect upon the objects he encounters and the revelation he has been given in
order to do so.
CONCLUSION

“I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.”

_Psalm 131:1b_ (NIV)

“Providence,” says Katherine Sonderegger, “is a doctrine about God: God’s way with us creatures; God’s act towards and in the cosmos; God’s mastering and directing; God’s breaking down and healing, his killing and making alive.”¹ It is because providence is a doctrine about God and his work that providential discernment is necessary. The writers commonly known as “Hutchinsonians” examined in this study, George Watson, George Horne, and William Jones, all follow John Hutchinson in emphasizing that humans are dependent upon God’s initiative because they do not have native access to divine counsel. This circumspect acknowledgement, they insist, forces humans to concede that Scripture is indispensible for providential discernment.² Hutchinsonian philosophy and theology seek to convince Christians that wonderful and surprising knowledge of God’s work can be achieved when they engage this Scriptural basis.

Hutchinson had originally written his natural philosophical works because he worried that Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke, and their associates had claimed for themselves what only Scripture could provide: the ability to uncover the mysteries of God’s engagement with his world. Because Hutchinson, however, is only willing to regard Scripture as able to divulge the providential order of nature, his work implies that nature is subject to God’s beneficent government and history is not. As Watson, Horne, and Jones applied Hutchinson’s emblematic interpretive method to the entire scope of Scripture, however, they found themselves using it to uncover the providential signification of both natural and historical objects. This application elevated the epistemological status of historical and historically conditioned knowledge and led to the flowering of Hutchinsonian tropological exegesis.\(^3\) I also argue, however, that it played an important role in restraining speculative historical enquiry. To the extent that the Hutchinsonians believed that the emblematic interpretation of historical particulars was sufficient to account for their providential import, they had no need to impose conceptual frameworks onto history. The Hutchinsonian figural interpretation of history is not, to use Herder’s phrase, just “another philosophy of history.”\(^4\) It is an emphatic rejection of conceptual approaches to providential discernment, and as such, it denies that philosophies of history are necessary or beneficial.

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Scriptural Emblematicism and Providential Discernment

In calling upon Emblematicism the Hutchinsonians drew upon a well-established tradition. They applied this tradition to an eighteenth-century context that was captivated by empirical science. If empirical knowledge is fundamental to the acquisition of authentic natural philosophical knowledge, they reasoned, so too it must be necessary to identify the nature of God’s engagement with the world. By their consistent application of a sensualist epistemology to both physical and divine things, the Hutchinsonians oppose rationalists such as Clarke who believe that providential discernment can be achieved through deductive reasoning from first principles.

Although some commentators have described the Hutchinsonian sensualist epistemology as Lockean, I have de-emphasized this connection. First, there is no reason to appeal to Locke’s influence upon the Hutchinsonians since sensualism, the idea that all true knowledge must be derived from sensory experience, was basic to the Newtonian establishment. Second, there is a fundamental difference between Hutchinsonian sensualism and Lockean sensualism. For Locke, our knowledge must be acquired by means of engagement with sensual objects because there is no such thing

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as innate ideas.\(^8\) This rejection of innate ideas leads Locke to believe that individuals must create their own knowledge through personal reflection. The Hutchinsonians agree with Locke that there is no such thing as innate ideas.\(^9\) But for the Hutchinsonians, this fact makes humans dependent upon the ideas of others, and most importantly, upon Scripture. Thus, while Locke’s sensualism is the basis of his rejection of tradition, Hutchinsonian sensualism establishes the need for it: the things we encounter from our birth—our families, various public institutions, and creation itself—have been providentially ordered by God and they exercise their providential vocation prior to and independently of our encounters with them; they exert a powerful influence upon us before we can hope to influence them, for God has ordained that they would serve as our teachers and our guides.\(^10\) Thus, Jones complains that while the descendents of Locke wax eloquent about “the natural rights of man,” these exist “in a state of nature only: that is, of man considered as an unsocial independent savage.”\(^11\) The truth, however, is that this condition exists only in the abstract, for “as soon as man becomes a member of society . . . he is bound as a moral agent.”\(^12\) For the Hutchinsonians, humans


\(^12\) Ibid. See also, Jones, A Letter to John, 11, 14. Charles Taylor is only echoing Jones when he derides the representational epistemology of Descartes and Locke in the following terms: “The very idea of an individual who might become aware of himself, and then only subsequently, or at least independently, determine what importance others have for him and what he will accept as good, belongs to post-Cartesian, foundationalist fantasy.” Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” Hastings Center Report 25, no. 2 (1995): 32.
enter a world providentially established by God, which places demands upon them before they impose their demands upon it. The Hutchinsonians describe this world as “a commentary on the mind of God.” As sensualists they believe that the knowledge of the world is the basis of the knowledge of God and his will for his creatures. As biblicists they equally hold that those that think they can acquire knowledge of divine things without Scripture are guilty of hubris, and precariously follow the wayward leading of their own rationality away from the fold of God.

For the Hutchinsonians, however, it isn’t enough for humans simply to refer to Scripture to procure divine knowledge. Proof texting Scripture is not the proper path to providential discernment. This, in fact, is what enrages Jones about Thomas Paine’s (1737-1809) defense of the French Revolution. In 1 Samuel 8:7 God told the prophet Samuel that the Israelites desired to have a king because they had rejected God as their king, and Paine seized upon this verse to argue that human kingship is inconsistent with divine kingship. Jones insists, however, that, “To make our case in England parallel to this; and to show from the case of the Hebrews, that we ought not to have George the Third for our king ... some monstrous suppositions must be made.” The relation between what we find in Scripture and that which is familiar to us is obscure. It can only be grasped when both the Scriptural and contemporary objects are made subject to what the Church Fathers called “the mind of Scripture.” The basis of Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism, therefore, is the conviction that it is only as human

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13 Jones, A Course, 9-10.
14 Thomas Paine, Common Sense: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America (London, 1792), 16.
16 Ibid., 27.
knowledge of sensible particulars is filtered through Scripture that the location of these particulars within the providential order is distilled.

To practice emblematic interpretation is to acknowledge that providential significance is not readily apparent. To interpret an object as an emblem is to acknowledge that its significance is not contained exclusively within it, but rather depends upon another. The interpreter that treats either a biblical or a contemporary object as an emblem or figure equally acknowledges that her interpretation is “provisional and incomplete.” This can be somewhat underwhelming. Once people believe they can achieve providential discernment without Scripture, they will happily do so: in a world in which other interpreters boldly claim direct access to providence, the voices of figural interpreters are easily drowned out. And when individual interpreters, such as Horne, sometimes claim direct access to providence and sometimes admit only mediated access, the prominence of this mediated access in their own work tends to contract.

**Philosophy of History and Figural History**

Watson, Horne, and Jones all agree with Hutchinson that Scriptural emblematicism is essential for the providential interpretation of natural objects, and they are willing to extend Hutchinson’s Scriptural emblematicism to historical objects as well. This being said, Watson and Horne question whether it is necessary to

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17 As Auerbach puts it, “figural interpretation implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfills the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them.” Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, vol. 9 of *Theory and History of Literature*, edited by Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 58
consistently apply the emblematic method in this regard. Newton and Clarke’s use of mathematics and mathematical certainty to order historical particulars holds little appeal for them. They are, however, attracted by the assumption shared by Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson that the providential order of history can be identified by imposing a conceptual framework upon history in the form of a philosophy of history. My work confirms what Levine’s study of the controversy between the Ancients and Moderns has so masterfully demonstrated, namely, that eighteenth-century thought is marked by a deep uncertainty about the nature of both history and historically conditioned knowledge. Within Hutchinsonianism this uncertainty expresses itself in a conflict between opposing methods of providential discernment. Individual Hutchinsonians struggle to know whether they should apply a conceptual framework to history in the form of a philosophy of history, or adopt a figural approach to the interpretation of history.

Philosophy of history and figural interpretation of history are competing mechanisms of providential discernment. Philosophies of history impose axiomatic conceptual frameworks on subsequently identified historical particulars in order to identify the latter’s definitive location within the providential order, but figural interpretations of history insist both that providential discernment must begin with particulars, and that the providential location of these particulars is only partially discernable. Clarke and Hutchinson both feel no need to interpret historical objects figurally because they believe their philosophies of history give an adequate account of

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the workings of providence within the historical realm. Conversely, Jones is inhibited from developing a philosophy of history by his consistent application of the emblematic method to historical particulars. To acknowledge that figural views of history occupy the same epistemological space as philosophies of history, however, is not to say that they are the same thing.

In 1798 Immanuel Kant wrote a book called The Disputation of the Faculties. In this work Kant articulated the notion that there are three possible interpretations of history: “Either mankind,” he writes, “is in continual regression toward the worse, or in a constant progression toward the better in its moral destiny; or it remains forever at a standstill on its present level of moral worth among the parts of creation (which is tantamount to an everlasting circular motion around the same point).” Inasmuch as philosophies of history seek to understand “the study of the past and the past itself” through “the application of philosophical conceptions and analysis” Kant is correct that there are three basic options. And inasmuch as philosophical reflection involves the

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20 With Clarke the need to articulate a philosophy of history was the direct result of the fact that history was found to be impotent to render mathematical knowledge. Modern historiography has largely affirmed that the historian can apply conceptual frameworks to history that enable it to render certain knowledge. And even in Clarke’s day, some historians boasted that this method enabled the procurement of “scientific” knowledge. Thus, Vico insists that “Truth is sifted from falsehood in everything that has been preserved through long centuries by those vulgar traditions which, since they have been preserved for so long a time and by entire peoples; must have had a public ground of truth... The great fragments of antiquity, hitherto useless to science because they lay begrimed, broken, and scattered, shed great light when cleaned, pieced together, and restored Leon Pompa, Vico: A Study of the ‘New Science,’ 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 146.

21 Immanuel Kant, Der Streit der Facultäten (Königsberg, 1798), 134-35. Quoted in Frank Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 70.

22 I am of the opinion that Kant’s three options continue to have wide currency on the popular level. Philosophers, however, have largely moved away from Kant’s understanding of philosophy of history as the application of conceptual frameworks in order to provide an overarching narrative for the historical record. They still engage the question of the nature of history conceptually, but largely to investigate the identity of historical study and knowledge. Graham, “Philosophy,” 356. This transition in philosophy of history is a companion to the post-modern rejection of metanarratives. As Ankersmit puts it, the “shift from the modernist ‘grand récit’ to the post-modern ‘petit récit’ has its exact analogue in the historicist
imposition of conceptual analysis onto particulars, Kant’s categories are binding. Kant seems not to have considered, however, that there may, in fact, be a fourth option available: not having a philosophy of history.

I argue that the figural interpretation of history is not a philosophy of history. Although figural interpretations of history often resemble cyclical philosophies of history, cyclical interpretations impose conceptual frameworks onto historical particulars, and figural interpretations do not. Furthermore, since a cyclical philosophy of history is “tantamount to an everlasting circular motion,” each chronological point can be classified as either progressive or devolutionary. Once objects have been assigned to either category, their interpretation and status is fixed. Within figural interpretations of history, however, particulars are not given fixed positions within a conceptual framework.23 The identification of an object as being, for example, either the result of God’s favour or his judgement, does not change its basic identity.24 Jones thus acknowledges that God’s providence for his church operates the same way it did for the people of Israel. God “delivers it from the power of the world; he punishes it for disobedience, and humbles it to effect its reformation.”25 Jones even acknowledges that

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24 The ability that the figural interpretation of history has to draw even negative elements into a providential framework gives it a powerful ability to defend the doctrine of providence. See Chapter Six, note 70.

the study of “the several nations of Christendom” would lead to the conclusion that “providence has acted by the same rules."26

Jones, however, shows absolutely no interest in using these rules as the basis of a conceptual historical framework, and this for at least three reasons. First, he believes that the providential purpose of historical objects is to furnish instructions for Christian life and virtue, not to justify historical speculation. Second, his figural interpretation runs counter to the reductionism inherent in all philosophies of history. When a historical figure is compared to other figures within a figural historical framework, it acquires complexity and nuance. Once Clarke finds he has identified an historical object as subject to devolution, he has no further reason to consider it. Once Jones, on the other hand, identifies a particular object as subject to God’s judgement, the hard work of providential discernment has only just begun. Jones must still consider the object in light of the Scriptural witness to come to grasp its providential significance. Third, the figural interpretation of history complexifies the historical record to the extent that it is no longer tenable to impose a conceptual framework upon it. Because it conceives of history as a unified whole, it places figures across history without discrimination. For example, figures that might be characterized as figures of progress can be located in contexts that are considered devolutionary, and vice versa, and as a result the picture of history that emerges is unclear, neither devolutionary, nor progressive, nor cyclical.

The two prevailing approaches to the providential discernment of history in this study were the devolutionary philosophy of history, and the figural interpretation of history. The decision of particular thinkers, such as Newton, Clarke and Hutchinson, to

26 Ibid. 211-12.
endorse a devolutionary philosophy of history, was a decision to reject alternative philosophies of history.\textsuperscript{27} Before they decided which conceptual framework to impose on history, however, they had to decide whether to impose any framework at all. Jones’ decision to embrace a thoroughgoing Scriptural emblematicism just was such a decision. In the nineteenth century, however, Jones’ rejection of the conceptual approach to providential discernment was largely ignored. What for Horne was merely a measured preference for the New Testament became pronounced, and High churchmen accordingly became fearful that the “ugly, broad ditch” that separated the contemporary Church of England and the Apostolic Church was marked by uncompromising decline.\textsuperscript{28} Following Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson nineteenth-century High churchmen therefore concluded that the divine order of history could be illumined through the application of a philosophy of history to the historical record. And as a result, Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism disappeared from view.

\textsuperscript{27} Admittedly, it is probably unfair to characterize the philosophy of history of most thinkers, including Newton, Clarke, and Hutchinson, as \textit{strictly} devolutionary, progressive or cyclical. Nevertheless, to identify thinkers as having endorsed a particular philosophy of history is not to deny that other, potentially contradictory elements are present in their thought. Thus, as we saw in Chapter One, Newton had confidence in the progress of natural philosophical knowledge. This confidence, however, had little effect upon his engagement with the historical record, which he consistently regarded as subject to devolution. See Introduction, note 57; Chapter One, note 38.

The End of Hutchinsonian Scriptural Emblematicism

The early nineteenth century proved to be the high-water mark of Hutchinsonian influence. In 1800 there were several bishops with strong ties to the movement, and in the first decades of the century Hutchinsonian influence continued to grow, building upon the contributions of Horne and especially Jones. Jones told his student William Kirby (1759-1850) that he was surprised to find that his anti-revolutionary pamphlet *Letters to John Bull from his Brother Thomas* had been read “from the king to the cobbler.” In 1792 Jones founded, with William Stevens, the Society for the Reformation of Principles, which Nockles attributes with granting High churchmen “their own organization and agenda,” and in 1793 Jones and Stevens again combined to create the *British Critic.* The quiet Nayland parsonage became the centre of activity both for aging Hutchinsonians, including Stevens, Wetherell, John Parkhurst

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30 Churton comments that Jones “retained to his last years the lively spirit of a boy with more than a common share of manly wisdom,” and his most lasting contributions to the movement were made in old age. Edward Churton, *Memoir of Joshua Watson*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1861), 15-16.

31 Jones also told Kirby that the King and Queen had read it and that thirty thousand copies “went off at a single order.” John Freeman, *The Life of Rev. William Kirby*, M.A. (London, 1852), 37.


33 The story of how the Tractarians came to take control of the *British Critic* is an interesting one. Nockles draws attention to the way in which Pusey used Watson’s good name in order to gain control of the magazine before breaking off from old High church principles. Nockles, *The Oxford*, 277-82. Churton believed that the Tractarian takeover of the *British Critic* was its death. “It was abandoned,” Churton says, “after it had ceased to represent the principles which gave it birth, on the shoals of a later and more unhappy controversy.” Edward Churton, *Memoir of Joshua Watson*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1861), 1.29-30.
(1728-1797) and Samuel Glasse (1735-1812), and young students that Jones took under his wing, including Kirby and Joshua Watson (1771-1855).34

The self-effacing Stevens, who referred to himself simply as “Nobody,” went on to found the Club of Nobody’s Friends with Joshua Watson. The club mutated into the Hackney Phalanx under the leadership of Watson and the “bishop-maker,” Henry Handley Norris (1771-1850). The Phalanx came to exert an enormous influence on ecclesiastical appointments, and its philanthropic initiatives rivaled those of the more famous Evangelical Clapham Sect.35 The first decades of the nineteenth century, however, also witnessed the erosion of the Scriptural basis of the movement, and with this, its distinctiveness. What remained was Hutchinsonian establishmentarianism, and under Watson and Norris the movement morphed to become a wing of what can justly be called the High church Party.

This is not to say, however, that the influence of Hutchinsonian Scriptural study immediately ceased. The Rivington publishing house, the house that had helped found the British Critic, published Jones’ collected works in twelve volumes in 1801, 1810, and 1826. Jones’ Scriptural studies were also diffused to a wider readership through the publication of individual works. His Lectures, for example, were published at least eight times in London, as well as in Philadelphia, and Oxford.36 Horne’s collected works were

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35 During Liverpool’s long premiership Norris gained the title of “Bishop-maker.” “It was said that every see was offered to him, with the request that if he could not take it himself, he would be so good as to recommend someone else” “Review of T. Mozley’s Reminiscences,” The Literary Churchman and Church Fortnightly 28 (1882): 249. See Robert Andrews, Lay Activism and the High Church Movement of the Late Eighteenth Century (Leiden, Brill, 2015).
36 London (Hamilton, 1808, 1811, 1821, 1849; SPCK, 1850, 1854, 1863-64, 1890); Philadelphia (Harrison, 1818), Oxford (Parker, 1848).
published on four occasions in London and three in New York, and the demand for his commentary on the Psalms was remarkable: it was printed in full or in part on at least forty occasions in London, nine in New York, six in Edinburgh, three in Philadelphia, two in York, and one in Dublin, Oxford, Glasgow and Warsaw.

Through widespread publication Hutchinsonian Scriptural study became part of the religious fabric, not just of High churchmanship, but also the nation. A few editions of Horne’s commentary, notably Edward Irving’s 1845 edition, included new scholarly introductions, but most publishers came to treat the work as strictly devotional. Jones’ work on figuration equally came to be endorsed and applied instrumentally. For example, leading Evangelical Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850), found Jones useful as a theologian because of his powerful defense of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, and helpful as a biblical interpreter because of his work on figures and types. In Bickersteth’s work there is, however, no indication that Jones’ figural hermeneutic might serve as the basis of a providentialist vision.

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37 London (Johnson, 1809; Rivington, 1818, 1830; Longman, 1831); New York (Standord and Sworts, 1846, 1853; Onderdonk, 1848).
38 London (Robinson, 1802; Lackingham, 1804; Baynes, 1806; Johnson, 1808; Rivington, 1811, 1816, 1819, 1820, 1822, 1823, 1826, 1830; Lindley and Murray, 1812; Rivington/SPCK, 1812; Suttaby, 1815; Sharpe, 1820; Richardson, 1821; Tegg, 1824, 1836, 1839, 1840, 1842; Whittaker, 1825; Longman, 1831, 1835, 1843, 1856; Webster, 1835; Hatchard, 1836; Rickerby, 1836; SPCK, 1843, 1848; Robinson, 1845; Richardson, 1849; Nelson, 1851; Bohn, 1852; Nelson, 1860, 1871; Ward, 1900); New York (Ward, 1824; Irving, 1845; Carter, 1845, 1849, 1854, 1856, 1859, 1869; Onderdonk, 1846); Edinburgh (Lindley and Murray, 1812; Smith, 1813; Gilles, 1829; Blair and Bruce, 1829; Nelson and Brown, 1831, 1835); Philadelphia (Bradford and Inskeep, 1812; Towar, 1822, 1833); York (Wilson, 1812, 1829); Dublin (Napper, 1800); Oxford (Crowther, 1802); Glasgow (Chalmers, 1825); Warsaw (1839). Horne’s commentary continues to be in print.
39 The ability of Horne’s work to make itself useful to Christians that did not share the Hutchinsonian perspective, is perhaps what allowed it to eventually outstrip Jones’.
40 A characteristic example of this devotional approach is W. W. Robinson’s edition entitled, A Pocket Classic: Commentary on the Penitential Psalms, Psalms for Pardon of Sin, and Intercessory Prayer (London, 1845). Christians wanting to engage the Psalms academically turned instead to Thomas Hartwell Horne’s Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (London, 1818), which by the 1830s had become mandatory reading for Oxonian undergraduates.
It is, however, within the movement itself that the contraction of Hutchinsonian figural interpretation is most apparent. William Van Mildert (1765-1836), one of the original members of Nobody's Friends, rose to become one of the most important churchman of the first half of the nineteenth century. He is chiefly known as the champion of the ancien régime in the tumultuous years leading up to the parliamentary reforms of 1829-32, and as founder of the University of Durham (1832). Varley finds that Van Mildert’s sermons “stood squarely in the Hutchinsonian tradition” of Horne and Jones, but admits that Van Mildert’s “copious use” of Jones and Horne was not specifically for the defense of Hutchinsonian natural philosophy.42

Van Mildert sets out to defend figural interpretation in his Bampton Lectures. He articulates several rules for determining when figural interpretation is appropriate, and he insists that the “most flagrant abuse” of figural interpretation is “the violation of the literal sense itself.”43 He observes that,

> The best writers agree that before figurative or mystical interpretation be admitted, some urgent reason, even something like necessity, should be produced, either for receding from the literal meaning of the words, or for engrafting upon the words themselves.44

Van Mildert's emphasis on the importance of attending to the literal sense points to Horne's influence. Horne only employs figural interpretation when he finds that the literal sense is unable to render devotional import, but he nevertheless views figural and literal interpretation as largely consistent since both can be fruitfully employed

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44 Ibid., 239.
towards devotional ends. Van Mildert, however, insists that the literal sense must explicitly call for figural interpretation, and this leads him to define the relationship between figural and literal interpretation negatively: figural interpretation must be studied, not because of its explanatory power, or its ability to render tropological or devotional readings, but because it is an unruly beast that must be tamed and subdued. Van Mildert’s great fear was that revolutionaries and enthusiasts were threatening the religious establishment, and this fear dictated his response to Hutchinsonian figural interpretation. And as he rose to become the great defender of the establishment, the Scriptural basis of this defense, which he had inherited from Horne and Jones, was all but forgotten.

Van Mildert’s defense of High church principles in opposition to the enthusiasm of the masses set the stage for the Tractarian war against Evangelicalism.\(^{45}\) It was, however, with the Tractarians that Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism might well have flourished. Edward Pusey and John Keble, in particular, had a high regard for Horne and Jones as theologians and as biblical interpreters. Keble’s figural interpretation of Scripture, as expressed in Tract 89, *On the Mysticism attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church*, and that of Pusey, as expressed in his “Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament,” both bear strong marks of Hutchinsonian influence.\(^{46}\) Pusey, who was Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, follows Hutchinson

\(^{45}\) The important role that the Hutchinsonians played in the formation of nineteenth century High churchmanship is consistently emphasized in Nockles, *The Oxford*, 13, 16, 23, 45-47, 54-58, 65, 194, 270.

both in praising Hebrew as the “picture-language of the East” and in treating Hebrew words as emblems of light. The figural interpretation of the Old Testament Pusey endorses in his lectures, like that of Jones, is thoroughgoing. Pusey refuses to be constrained by the figural interpretations of the New Testament authors and he is willing to apply his method to every object he encounters.47

What distinguishes Pusey and Keble’s hermeneutic from that of Jones and Horne is Pusey and Keble’s extensive appeal to the Church Fathers.48 The extent of his appeal points to the fundamental difference between the Hutchinsonian and Tractarian approaches. Following eighteenth-century deist Thomas Woolston (1668-1733), Pusey and Keble endorse Patristic figural interpretation as a necessary component of the

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project to re-institute pristine Christianity. Pusey boasts, “Whatever I have received, I received on the authority of the Ancient Church.” The figural hermeneutic he received he received from the early Church, and the fact that it is the hermeneutic of the early Church is what compels him to endorse it. The extent to which the application of this hermeneutic is itself necessary to assist in his grand project, however, is unclear. And if Pusey’s extant sermons are any indication, the answer seems to be that it is not that necessary at all.

Pusey and his compatriots are pretty sure they know what early Christianity looked like, and they are pretty sure they knew how to re-establish it in their own context. Pusey’s figural hermeneutic, like that of Keble, was widely ignored,

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50 Edward Bouverie Pusey, A Letter to the Bishop-Elect of Oxford, 27 November 1845, in Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey, vol. 3, by Henry Parry Liddon (London, 1894), 44. The extent to which Pusey endorses Jones, therefore, is the extent to which he finds that Jones is at one with the Church Fathers. “Jones,” says Pusey’s biographer, is one of those found “in communion of thought and sympathy with the ancient church.” Quoted in Westhaver, “The Living,” 270. The mysticism that Keble sought to reintroduce to his context through the figural interpretation of Scripture is likewise that of the Church Fathers.

51 I have not been able to access all of Pusey’s extant sermons, but my preliminary survey suggests he preached from the Old Testament even less than Clarke did. Indeed, he had little reason to, since his primary object was to introduce New Testament Christianity into his own context. Pusey’s A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects has seventeen sermons on New Testament Texts and two on Old Testament Texts. The third volume of his Parochial Sermons includes nineteen sermons on New Testament texts, and but one on an Old Testament text. A mere six percent of the sermons included in these two volumes are on Old Testament texts. Edward Bouverie Pusey, A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects (Oxford, 1845); Parochial Sermons, vol. 3, Rev. ed. (Oxford, 1873).

52 As Turner puts it, the "Tractarians sought nothing less than to carry out in England a Second Reformation, first by resisting the political influence of evangelical Dissent on the established church, then by purging the establishment of Protestant innovations, especially recent evangelical ones, and finally by recovering ancient Catholic faith and practice. Like so many other religious and political revolutionaries, Newman and his fellow Tractarians embraced a rhetoric of tradition for the ends of radical change." Frank M. Turner, introduction to John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 2.
not because it was regarded as peculiar—though it was—but because it was deemed unnecessary for the reinstitution of Apostolic Christianity.53

Although Tractarianism has largely come to be interpreted through the lens of John Henry Newman’s Apologia Pro Vita Sua as the Catholic principle rising up to slay the dragons of liberalism, Newman’s self-serving revisionist analysis has obscured the nature of the movement within its original context.54 As Nockles has so keenly demonstrated, the Tractarian movement was not the reintroduction of High church principles into the Church of England, but was rather a development within a robust High church tradition.55 And as Turner has vigorously argued, the primary target of the Tracts of the Times was not liberalism, but Evangelicalism.56 I venture to add a third element to a growing body of revisionist scholarship. I argue that the Tractarian appeal to a philosophy of history to bring providential order to history compromised the status of the Old Testament in their thought.

The Tractarians do not, like Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan, repudiate the Old Testament. Indeed, as we have already seen, Pusey and Keble vociferously defend it.

53 Nockles observes that the work of the Tractarians sometimes appeared as if it was designed to offend. Nockles, The Oxford, 281. Within such a mindset the peculiarity of Pusey’s Lectures was regarded as a strength, and Pusey appears to have capitalized on this fact. He flaunts curious figural interpretations of passages because they highlight the extent to which his countrymen have veered off the ancient path. Westhaver acknowledges that Pusey’s lectures were almost completely ignored by his ecclesial allies and descendents. Westhaver, “The Living,” 280-81. Westhaver also points out that other Tractarian efforts to revive Patristic figural interpretation were regarded as “out of place” and became “potent weapons against Tractarianism.” Ibid., 282.

54 Turner, John Henry, 4-11. In his Apologia Newman pays tribute to Jones as having played an important role in preserving his belief in the Nicene definition of the Trinity. Newman, interestingly, says that he found he was able to draw proof texts for the doctrine from Jones’ work. Newman seems not to have grasped that Jones’ hermeneutic provides a path to the construction of Trinitarian doctrine that functions very differently than proof-texting. John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua & Six Sermons, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 135. See my discussion of Jones’ Trinitarian apologetic in Chapter Six.

55 Nockles, The Oxford, chapter one.

And yet, in the larger scheme of things it matters very little that they reject the deist valuation of the Old Testament as the corruption of natural religion. The fact that the Tractarians place the primitive ideal on the near side of the Old Testament rather than on the far side is merely a shift in rationale for the exclusion of the Old Testament. Clarke does not need the Old Testament because he believes he can access the primitive ideal that stands on the far side. The Tractarians, on the other hand, do not need the Old Testament because they believe they have immediate access to their primitive ideal, pristine Christianity.

The Tractarians were highly motivated in their quest to obtain historical knowledge. They pursued historical knowledge of the primitive Church as part of their quest to uncover the forms that had been obscured by history. Like the universal historians of old they sought historical knowledge because they wanted to grasp the nature of the Church’s obfuscation of the primitive ideal. But above all they sought historical knowledge because they wanted to understand God’s providential engagement with history. And John Henry Newman, for one, was confident he could conceptually order the data he encountered. As he sifted through complex webs of historical testimony he identified, on one hand, the vast hordes of heretics that threatened to overwhelm Christian truth, and the faithful remnant on the other. Yet his researches were hardly satisfying, because what he sought was to identify not merely the trajectory of history but his place within it. Newman needed to be able to

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58 Even Newman’s own sister, however, complained that he tended to “proof text” history by appealing only to those authorities that supported his views. Ibid., 173.
identify the winners, and above all, he needed to know he was on the winning side. And thus he came to his conclusion, which he later claimed was his first step towards Rome:

My stronghold was Antiquity; now where, in the middle of the fifth century, I found, as it seemed to me, Christendom of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries reflected. I saw my face in that mirror, and I was a Monophysite. The Church of the *Via Media* was in the position of the Oriental communion, Rome was, where she now is; and the Protestants were the Eutychians.59

Newman looked to history to order his thoughts about his place in history. This led him to adopt a position that can be regarded as the antithesis of the Hutchinsonian figural view of history. Instead of beginning with historical particulars and reinterpreting them as Scriptural figures, Newman began with a conceptual framework, which he imposes on particulars.

Yet it might be asked whether anything would have changed had Newman taken history to be a figure of Scripture. It is impossible to know, not merely because the question is speculative, but because Scripture could have drawn Newman to numerous different conclusions. It is safe to say, however, that the belief that history is a figure of Scripture would have complexified Newman’s analysis of his own historical identity. Newman might well, for example, have concluded that the Church of England was harlot Israel, the idolatrous house of Jeroboam that had been cut off from the righteous branch of Jesse. On this account, however, Newman would have been forced to integrate into his analysis the troubling reality that “Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.”60

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60 Jeremiah 3:10, New International Version.
As Turner observes, what mattered to Newman in his comparison between the Church of England and the Monophysites was the conceptual analogy that could be drawn using the overarching categories of heresy and orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{61} It mattered very little to him that Church of England theology could hardly be compared with Monophysitism. As figures of history the Monophysites and Anglicans were both easily fashioned into one-dimensional figures of heresy. Furthermore, it is because they were reinterpreted as figures of history that they were so easily dismissed as the “losers” in the historical drama. As figures of history Monophysites and Anglicans stand trapped and exposed within a devolutionary historical scheme. Their only purpose, like Clarke’s Jews and Papists, is to highlight the excellence of the true religion of the true Church.

**Figural History and Intellectual Humility**

High church Anglicans might want to insist that Newman’s willingness to see the historical record as sufficient to provide an overarching conceptual framework for a providential interpretation of history is an aberration of the original Tractarian vision. Nevertheless, the preference for philosophies of history over figural views of history that marks the modern era is not unrelated to the contracting of Scriptural authority witnessed since the eighteenth century. Figural interpreters of the bible turn to Scripture because they acknowledge that they cannot hope to discern the providential order of history. Figural interpretation, therefore, is characterized by an intellectual humility that makes Scriptural authority possible.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61} Turner, *John Henry*, 335.

\textsuperscript{62} The question, however, is not merely whether thinkers are willing to consult Scripture. As I have maintained, it is quite possible to consult Scripture as a proof-text to justify a favourite ideal. Figural
Hutchinson may have been off base in the way that he sought to resuscitate the Old Testament as a source book for natural philosophical knowledge. He was, however, right to discern that the intellectual project of the Newtonians was corrosive to Scriptural authority. The fact that Newton was willing to claim for himself the ability to conceptually order the entire scope of recorded history (not to mention the fact that he believed he had found the epoch of the Olympiad!) betrays an intellectual hubris that opposes submission to Scripture. Newton’s valuation of history as completely subject to corruption led him to believe that his role, as both scholar and reformer, was to impose a mathematical and conceptual analysis upon the historical record in order to reintroduce providence to history. Newton’s legacy therefore isn’t merely to be found among speculative ideologues such as Clarke. It is to be found among all well-meaning religious reformers that look with horror upon the devolution of history and claim to have identified the means of overcoming it.

In 1860 John Mathew Gutch (1776-1861) published *Watson Redivivus: Four Discourses, Written between the Years 1749 and 1756, by the Rev. George Watson, M.A.* In the introduction to the work Gutch gives an account of how he came to “rescue” the discourses “from obscurity.” Gutch relates that he had been reading Jones’ *Lectures upon the Figurative Language of Scripture* when he stumbled upon his tribute to Watson and Watson’s *Christ the Light of the World.63* Gutch proceeds to recount how he managed, through considerable effort, to obtain copies of four Watson discourses.

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63 The query Gutch sent to *Notes and Queries* begins as follows: "When men of such high reputation as the Rev. William Jones, of Nayland, speak in terms of commendation of any publication, we are naturally anxious to become acquainted with its contents." John Mathew Gutch, preface to *Watson Redivivus, Four Discourses Written Between the Years 1749 and 1756 by the Rev. George Watson, M.A.* (Oxford, 1760), ix.
Gutch believes that, although he had been prevented by his “advanced age” in rendering assistance to the Clergy in the administration of their schools and in “aiding them in visiting and reading to their poor and afflicted” he hopes that he has “found another method” of conferring some good upon the Christian community:” “the republication of these Discourses.”

Gutch describes the Christian community upon which he hopes to confer some good as having been beset by “angry discussions and divisions.” He claims, nevertheless, that he rejoices to see that,

there are many of its ministers inculcating and inviting a closer union between themselves and the laity, as a means of mitigating such unbecoming controversies, and expressing their deep regret at the introduction of those innovations which are so nearly allied to Romish practices, and causing so much schism among Christians.

Gutch was almost certainly personally acquainted with Newman. Newman had been the curate of his father, John Gutch (1746-1831), at St. Clement’s. John Matthew’s complaint against those that instigate “angry discussions and divisions,” against extreme forms of clericalism, and against the institution of “Romish practices” undoubtedly refers to Newman and the Tractarians. Gutch, unfortunately, does not specify how he believes Watson’s discourses will provide an antidote to these problems. He simply suggests that they are representative of a more moderate churchmanship that is able to bring the clergy and the laity together rather than drive them apart.

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64 Ibid., viii
65 Ibid., vii-viii.
66 He concludes his introduction by affirming that he does not hesitate “to commit these discourses to the judgment and criticism of a discerning public.” Ibid., xxiv.
Gutch is only one of a number of voices that feared that the radical reforming measures of the Tractarians were taking the Church of England away from its historic identity. The strong emphasis that the Hutchinsonians placed upon the providential basis of the church establishment stands in stark contrast to the way in which the Tractarians sought to overturn the establishment, and Gutch may well have endorsed Watson’s sermons as a call to Anglicans of all stripes to return to the traditional providential interpretation of Anglicanism. Gutch may well have also seen Watson as a moderate because he was able to integrate doctrines that were beginning to be used by Anglicans as the basis of party politics; Tractarian sacramentalism and Evangelical biblicism, for instance. It is equally probable, however, that Gutch saw Watson as able to gather Anglicans together, not because of any particular doctrine he upheld, but because his theological method ran counter to extreme forms of clericalism that regarded the interpretation of Scripture as the sole province of ordained ministers.

I maintain that Watson’s Scriptural emblematicism has the capacity to bring Christians together, because it asks Christians of all ages and intellectual capacities to begin at the same place. It asks them to begin with the concrete objects that form the basis of creaturely experience, and then interpret these concrete objects, as they are able, through a common lens. Hutchinsonian Scriptural emblematicism was the basis of

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67 Nockles remarks that the Scottish Hutchinsonians and Nonjurors “protested their independence from the Tractarians” in vain. Nockles, The Oxford, 308. And in England some of the most important criticisms of Tractarianism came from theologians with strong Hutchinsonian influences, such as Churton and Palmer. Nockles, The Oxford, 277-310.

68 Gibson finds that the Tractarians joined with radical reformers and Evangelicals in portraying the eighteenth-century Church of England as the figure of ecclesial devolution. William Gibson, The Church of England, 1688-1832: Unity and Accord (London: Routledge, 2001), 5.

a conservatism that asked people to begin not with the past, as they believed it was, or the future, as they hoped it would be, but with the present. And because it asked Christians to begin not with what was, or what might be, but with what is, it provided a non-ideological alternative to the ideologies that were doing battle for the soul of the Church of England.  

Over the past fifty years there has been a resurgence of interest in what has come to be called the theological interpretation of Scripture. One of the dominant trajectories of this movement has been the *ressourcement* of Patristic figural interpretation. This project mirrors that of Woolston and the Tractarians in two important ways. First, it tends to regard Patristic figural interpretation as having been obscured over time and, second, it seeks to reinstitute it as a primitive ideal. As long as figural interpretation is regarded according to this point of view, however, it can hardly take hold, and this for two reasons. First, figural interpretation is fueled by the supposition that the Old and New Testaments are to be interpreted as equal partners in the Christian canon. Ecclesial primitivism, on the other hand, inevitably comes to regard the New Testament as superior to the Old, and this disequilibrium is easily projected onto history as a philosophy of history. Ecclesial primitivism and figural interpretation therefore struggle to coexist. And if nineteenth-century High churchmanship is any

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70 Nockles, “Survivals,” 145. Since Marx the term ideology has been largely used to describe the way in which power structures control the thinking of individuals. This, however, was not its original meaning of the term. The term can be traced back to Destutt de Tracy. For de Tracy ideology was “positive and progressive.” De Tracy hoped that if humans could liberate their ideas from religious and metaphysical prejudices they would create an ideology that would be the basis of a utopic society. My usage of the term ideology corresponds to that of de Tracy inasmuch as I am using it to describe the tendency to establish conceptual frameworks that are then imposed on particulars. David McLellan, “Ideology,” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences*, ed. Byron Kaldis (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 458.


indication, the compatibility of ecclesial primitivism and figural interpretation does not only raise the question of Old Testament authority, but Scriptural authority in general. Second, advocates for the reinstitution of Patristic figural exegesis inadvertently take their place in the ideological battles of the age, as did Woolston and the Tractarians. To regard figural interpretation as merely one of many ideological alternatives, however, obscures the uniqueness of the figural vision. The figural interpreter of Scripture does not stand up and call others to embrace an ideal. She calls others to set aside their speculations and return, like little children, to reflect upon the objects that form the basis of human experience in light of the revelation of God’s Word.

Figural interpreters of history refuse to concede that the providential order of the historical realm is inaccessible. Indeed, they insist that wonderful and surprising knowledge of God’s providential ordering of history can be achieved through engagement with Scripture. Nevertheless, because they refuse to impose conceptual frameworks onto the historical record they can still say, “I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.”73 This is more than appropriate given that we live in an age in which philosophers concede that the basic questions surrounding the philosophy of history remain fundamentally unanswered.74 Perhaps the basic question concerning intellectual humility given this state of affairs, however, is not the question of the extent of human cognitive capabilities.75 Perhaps the basic

73 Psalm 131:1b, New International Version.
74 According to Little these include, “the nature of the reality of historical structures and entities,” “the nature of causal influence among historical events or structures,” the role of “the interpretation of the ‘lived experience’ of past actors” in historical understanding, and a valuation of “the overall confidence we can have about statements about the past.” Daniel Little, “Philosophy of History,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/history/, accessed 20 July, 2015.
75 The assumption that the virtue of intellectual humility is a matter of identifying the extent of human cognitive limitations continues to be widespread. Dow, for instance, endorses intellectual humility as “an
question is where to begin, because where you begin is also where you end up. If the Hutchinsonians were still with us they would therefore insist that providential discernment can only begin in one place: O Lord, “My times are in your hands.”

uncompromising honest appraisal of the capacities and limitations of our minds.” Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 70-71. One of the difficulties with this approach is that the idea that humans have the ability to discern exactly how far they can proceed before they pass the pale of human reason may well contradict the very notion of intellectual humility.

Psalm 31:15, New International Version.
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