the interpretive shift in biblical debates over slavery corresponded to a similar shift in constitutional debates over slavery" (18). Not that the slavery debates caused the constitutional arguments, but they corresponded, Watkins argues. From the 1830s, interpreters who tried to use scripture to oppose slavery admitted that the New Testament did not condemn slavery outright. But they claimed that Jesus and his apostles opposed slavery more subtly by teaching "principles" that would undermine "slavery with time" (26). A decade later, antislavery advocates made a similar move with the Constitution, admitting that the founders protected slavery but claiming they did so in hopes that future Americans would use the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to eliminate slavery (26). This reasoning supported the arguments of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and others. Douglass used this rationale to defend the Constitution in opposition to other abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison and others, who were ready to condemn it as a slaveholding document (292–294). Antislavery arguments from the Bible and the Constitution employed the past in similar ways, therefore. This occurred as Americans often drew parallel truths from the Bible and the nation's founding, as when Frederick Douglass praised John Brown for grounding his beliefs on the Bible and the Declaration of Independence (336).

Slavery and Sacred Texts draws on an impressive range of sources, especially the writings of Theodore Parker, William C. Nell, and Frederick Douglass, and gives more attention to antislavery than proslavery perspectives on sacred texts. Watkins tries to connect the rising historical sensibilities of antebellum America with today's quandaries over American history. This is the epilogue's focus, reflecting on the rising recognition that the Bible and the Constitution "remained timeless, and sacred, precisely because of their capacity to adapt to new conditions, including those of mid-nineteenth-century America" (346). The Civil War and debates over slavery brought this kind of historical awareness to many, but not to all. The nation remains divided on its interpretation of history and its implications for national politics. As Americans reassess their history in light of contemporary realities, they would do well to engage the evidence and analysis in Watkins's book.

James P. Byrd
Vanderbilt University
doi:10.1017/S0009640723002020

The Quest to Save the Old Testament: Mathematics, Hieroglyphics, and Providence in Enlightenment England. By **David Ney**. Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022. xii + 324 pp. $29.99 paperback.

This study by David Ney, associate professor of church history at Trinity School of Ministry (Ambridge, PA), comes framed by an informative foreword by Wesley Hill and a succinct but appropriately contextualizing afterword by Ephraim Radner. Ney's main focus is John Hutchinson (1674–1737), especially through his *Moses's Principia* (1724) covered in chapter three, and that of his principal followers, George Watson

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Berklee College Of Music, on 21 Feb 2025 at 16:48:44, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723001506

(1723?–1773), George Horne (1730–1792), and William Jones of Nayland (1726–1800), each earning their own chapters—4, 5, and 6, respectively. These "Hutchinsonians" sought to return British theology to orthodoxy following the "errors" of Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and his protégé Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), covered successively in chapters 1 and 2.

Specifically Hutchinson charged Newton with degrading the Old Testament through a science that selectively privileged the New Testament in support of a monolithic God. This occurred through what Ney calls "devolutionary history," namely, rooting God's providence in nature rather than the "figural" historical significance interpreted through the Old Testament. "When Newton looked to history," explains Ney, "he was embarrassed by an Old Testament text which appeared hopelessly entangled within a confused web of contradictory testimonies. This inclined him to believe that human history is toxic to divine truth. According to this devolutionary philosophy of history, propositions that have their origins in human testimony, and therefore in history, are inherently less certain than propositions derived directly from nature" (12). This emphatic shift made the New Testament appear as more amenable to the rational demands of Enlightenment science. Hutchinson's *Moses's Principia* challenged this demotion of the Old Testament by arguing against Newton's "occult" force of gravity and against his anti-trinitarianism. Ney relocates these Hutchinsonians' "quest to save the Old Testament" within the center of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British theology away from their Whiggish mischaracterization as a collection of fringe "Counter-Enlightenment buffoons" resistant to change *and* to science itself (2–3). While these Hutchinsonians should be considered opponents to Enlightenment rationalism's effort to divine the world "by means of rational deductions from first principles" (21), Ephraim Radner correctly praises Ney's careful and well documented effort at revealing the sophistication of their arguments and their well-intentioned "revaluation of the Old Testament's divine meaning as providentially ordered history" (276).

The devil is in the details, and while this review cannot note all of them, one of the more interesting of Hutchinson's problems was his reliance not upon Newton's numbers but upon arcane symbols, himself drawing upon the occultist traditions of hermeticism, alchemy, and kabbalah. In this Hutchinson became very much like Newton himself. Newton, in fact, was at heart a mystic, fascinated with the esoterica of Hermeticism as seen in his translation and commentary on the *Emerald Tablet*. For Hutchinson, the mythical Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes "the Thrice Great" as alchemist, astrologer, and magician) transmuted into Moses's trinitarian messenger of Theos, Logos, and Paraclete whose received texts served the similar function of relaying the secrets of creation to receptive adepts like himself. The difference was that Hutchinson and those that followed him did earnestly seek a restoration of biblical authority *omnes Scripturæ*, whereas Newtonian theology and its Enlightenment descendants were far more interested in rational argument with biblical support used primarily as a backseat companion when convenience and propriety seemed suitable. Newton was not interested in religious orthodoxy. We now know that Newton's alchemical works comprise more than a million words in manuscript, revealing that for all of Newton's claims to modernity, he carried considerable premodern baggage with him. As such, it would be inaccurate to cast the Newtonian/ Hutchinsonian controversy as "science vs. religion"—there was plenty of occultism to go around.

While the Hutchinsonians exerted major influences upon the nineteenth-century Oxford movement, they did so within a church increasingly focused on the New

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Berklee College Of Music, on 21 Feb 2025 at 16:48:44, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723001506

Testament despite their efforts at Old Testament restoration. Part of the historical trajectory not emphasized by Ney is the influence of an encroaching secularized worldview that placed *science*—since 1833 no longer under the loftier upper-storied title of Natural Philosophy—front and center in what counted in any erudite discussion. This rise of empiricism (what Ney calls "sensualism") realized Hutchinson's fears when on the Continent mathematician Laplace was asked by Napoleon where God was in his astronomical calculations he gave the apocryphal reply: "Sire, I have no need for that hypothesis." This was but a prelude to the devastating blow issued closer to home by Charles Darwin in 1859 with his *Origin of Species* that arguably replaced God's providence and guidance with natural selection, moving Nature ontologically toward a wholly earth-bound nature. Ney makes no mention of any of this because he is more focused on the aspects of these disputes upon church history, but they made a real difference and explain a lot about the social and cultural trajectories against which the Hutchinsonians battled. Thus, Ney's study can be viewed as an insightful examination of the place of Old and New Testament biblical exegesis within the contentious intersections of natural and revealed theology on the one hand and a secularized worldview on the other. This book is another nail in the coffin of the Draper/White science vs. religion warfare thesis, showing both magisteria to be inextricably intertwined.

In the end, *The Quest to Save the Old Testament* is more than a study in church history, it is an examination of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century intellectual life in England lived by scholars and high churchmen of the period. It should, therefore, interest a wide audience of church historians, historians of the Enlightenment, and historians of science. Well researched and compellingly argued, it should also be on the acquisitions list not just of theological libraries but of every academic library worthy of the name.

Michael A. Flannery
University of Alabama at Birmingham
doi:10.1017/S0009640723001506

A Vivifying Spirit: Quaker Practice & Reform in Antebellum America. By **Janet Moore Lindman.** University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2022. 284 pp. $119.95 cloth.

Janet Moore Lindman's volume is a careful and insightful investigation of what she calls "practical Quakerism"—a term meant to invoke both the "specific acts" associated with Friends' spirituality and how members pragmatically "construct[ed] a workable concept of Quakerism" during a period of profound change inside and outside of the Society (6). Her deft attention to the former offers a model for how to excavate individual and communal spirituality. Her judicious analysis of the latter was also successful. Though the events and forces she traces are well-worn territory ("schism, industrialization, western migration, print culture, and reform activism" [4]), Lindman does not allow any one of these themes to drive or define this period of transformation. Her narrative works at the micro- and macro levels, offering a full picture of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Berklee College Of Music, on 21 Feb 2025 at 16:48:44, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723001506