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“Historical Criticism as Secular Allegorism: The Case of Spinoza.”

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Historical Criticism as Secular Allegorism
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Introduction

Biblical scholarship at the beginning of the twenty-first century includes an incredibly diverse array of methodologies under its ever-broadening canopy. A whole host of postmodern, feminist, liberationist, postcolonial, and many other adjectival neologisms modify the hermeneutics of biblical scholarship in the academy.¹ Notwithstanding such a disparate panoply of interpretive frameworks, historical biblical criticism continues its hegemony in modern biblical studies.² As with the modern academic discipline of history, modern biblical scholarship in general tends to operate under the false assumption that the methods used are comparable to the Baconian laboratory methodology of the hard sciences like chemistry and physics. L’esprit géométrique [the spirit of geometry] has won the day. Geometric reason and the discipline of mathematics, with its language of “proof,” remains the paradigmatic example of rationality to many Bible scholars, Catholic or otherwise.

With the advent of the university in the medieval period, Scripture was studied and taught as Sacred Doctrine—theological by its very nature. Explicitly theological interpretation continues to exist in the academy, but it does so as a minority
