“The Enlightenment University and the Creation of the Academic Bible: Michael Legaspi’s The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies.”

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The Enlightenment University and the Creation of the Academic Bible: Michael Legaspi's *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*

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"[H]istorical criticism is the form of biblical studies that corresponds to the classical liberal political ideal. It is the realization of the Enlightenment project in the realm of biblical scholarship."

—Jon Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*

BIBLICAL SCHOLARS rarely concern themselves with the history of their discipline. In part this is because the discipline of modern biblical studies has for so long styled itself on the hard sciences, and participates in what Pascal termed *l'esprit géométrique*, the spirit of geometry, whereby mathematics serves as the paradigm for true rationality. John Barton explains well historical criticism's original ostensible intent; it "was meant to be value-neutral, or disinterested. It tried, so far as possible, to approach the text without prejudice, and to ask not what it meant 'for me', but simply what it meant." In 1988, Pope Benedict XVI—then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger—delivered his now famous lecture, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis," wherein he issued a clarion call for a "Kritik der Kritik," a criticism of criticism; a self-criticism of historical critical

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