



The Nature of Biblical Criticism

John Barton

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Biblical criticism faces increasing hostility on two fronts: from biblical conservatives, who claim it is inherently positivistic and religiously skeptical, and from postmodernists, who see it as driven by the falsities of objectivity and neutrality. In this magisterial overview of the key factors and developments in biblical studies, John Barton demonstrates that these evaluations of biblical criticism fail to do justice to the work that has been done by critical scholars over many generations. Traditional biblical criticism has had as its central concern a semantic interest: a desire to establish the "plain sense" of the biblical text, which in itself requires sensitivity to many literary aspects of texts. Therefore, he argues, biblical criticism already includes many of the methodological approaches now being recommended as alternatives to it and, further, the agenda of biblical studies is far less fragmented than often thought.

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