

Shorter Notices

Theological Studies
2015, Vol. 76(2) 383–403
© Theological Studies, Inc. 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0040563915574992
tsj.sagepub.com


Scripture: A Guide for the Perplexed. By William Lamb. Bloomsbury Guides for the Perplexed. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. viii + 209. \$29.95.

Bloomsbury's *Guides* provide commentaries on a wide range of thinkers including Pope Benedict XVI, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Lamb's volume offers "an exploration of the *theological* interpretation of scripture" (vi) rather than a general introduction to biblical criticism. His essay consciously derives from his broad and deep knowledge of Scripture studies as well as from participation in two prayer communities in Cambridge: "those engaged in the theological interpretation of Scripture are called to participate in the Trinitarian life of God" (176) through devotional reading of Scripture or Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. L.'s efforts at integration bear fruit in his concise and accurate summary of scholars' reflections over the centuries that illuminate readers' minds, serving to deepen personal and communal spirituality.

After cataloging difficulties encountered in the biblical text (internal contradictions, scientific evidence at variance with the narrative, and opposing viewpoints throughout the ages), L. describes elements of continuity and discontinuity in the history of biblical interpretation in relation to developments in historiography and literary theory. L. moves on to recount approaches by 20th- and 21st-century theologians as they engage these continuities and discontinuities, and wrestle with the "irreducible strangeness" (23) of Scripture. Next, he surveys the debates born from different perspectives on Scripture, especially regarding church authority. Lastly, he coordinates these various approaches and demonstrates how reading the Bible can be both a critical and spiritual exercise. Especially useful are his "nine patterns of construal" that capture "an imaginative judgment about divine disclosure in and through the scriptures" (102).

L. masterfully succeeds in clearing up many conundrums of the "perplexed" in a book both charitably penned and enjoyable to read.

William J. Sneek, S.J.
Loyola University Maryland