

also is unacknowledged as a fundamentally modern theatrical technique (where a passive audience watches Stanislavskian/Strasbergian actors create a realistic world played on a proscenium).³ Lieber only briefly mentions the Greek notion that actors were “hypocrites” (*hypokrite*). This, too, would have been a tremendous idea to unpack, to better consider whether late antique people perceived performers as truth-tellers, or charlatans, or mystics, or something else entirely.

Regardless of these omissions, Lieber’s book inaugurates a new era in the study of late antique hymnography. She has gotten the conversation started, taking Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan hymns out of their confessional and textual silos and enlivening our understanding of what the “fully-engaging experiences, inseparable from . . . performance” (348) of this liturgical poetry might have been. Scholars: let’s follow the trail Lieber has blazed.

Lauren Mancia

Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York

Robert Wiśniewski, *Christian Divination in Late Antiquity*. Translated by Damian Jasiński. Social Worlds of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2020. 288 pp. ISBN: 9789462988705 (hardcover), ISBN: 9789048541010 (ebook). €129,00, €128,99.

Robert Wiśniewski’s *Christian Divination in Late Antiquity* is a compelling analysis of the methods by which late antique Christians sought to know the future in the fourth through the sixth centuries. Following an introduction and a chapter on the historical and legal contexts for the emergence of Christian divinatory practices, each of the remaining six chapters is devoted to a distinct type of prognostication: prophecy, bibliomancy, how-to manuals, lots, interrogation of demoniacs, and incubation. Each chapter lays out evidence to support Wiśniewski’s two major theses. First, he gives the lie to the dominant view “that Christian divinatory practices were based on the commonly known and readily accessible pagan models” (251). Christian foretelling was not simply a reshuffling of pagan usage; one did not grow directly from the other. Second, Wiśniewski examines the “remarkably close

3. See, for instance, Isaac Butler, *The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2022).

relationship between divination and holy places, people and objects . . . [which were] seen as vectors of the divine power that guided” Christian clairvoyance (251). Before the 350s, the numinous environment in which Christian divination flourished did not yet exist.

Prophecy is the focus of chapter 2. Wiśniewski argues that, for the most part, prophecy disappeared from Christian practice by the late second century but reemerged in the fourth century as a feature of devotion to the cult of the saints. There is no evidence of continuity linking the Christian to the Jewish and pagan prophetic traditions. Christian prophecy eschewed some of the immoderate trappings of pagan forms of holy divining such as ecstatic trances. A critical aspect of prophetic foreknowing was that humans could not solicit visions: they occurred only when God initiated them. In addition to forecasting, people relied on prophecy for mundane advice or succor. At times, biblical passages were treated typologically; that is, Old Testament occurrences were thought to portend the future of analogous late antique events.

Chapter 3, entitled “Take Up and Read,” is a discussion of divining by means of turning at random to a page in a holy book (usually the Bible) and taking as revelatory the information on that page. The scriptures lit upon generally provided advice, or they were aids in interpreting current or future happenings. Although a form of bibliomancy was performed by Jews using the Torah and by pagans with Homeric texts and the *Aeneid*, book divination (so to speak) was not a direct inheritance from the Jewish tradition nor a revision of pagan divinatory rites. Rather, it was new to the arsenal of Christian prognosis. Ecclesiastics were leery of the practice of chance consultation of sacred texts, but, as Augustine (himself a bibliomancer) observed, randomizing techniques were better than consulting demons.

“Books and Bones” (chapter 4) and “Lots” (chapter 5) explain forms of divination based on how-to manuals and sortition. Several divinatory manuals circulated in the late antique world, chief among which were the *Sortes Sanctorum*, *Sortes Monacenses*, and *The Gospel of the Lots of Mary*. The manuals varied in their degree of complexity and the extent to which they were overtly Christian. A novice could easily manipulate some predictive procedures; others that were dependent on facility with numbers, dice, bones, and Christian symbology required a specialist (perhaps a cleric). The same was true for lots; their operation depended on a range of techniques, some of which necessitated a ritual expert. Both forms of foreseeing were borderline orthodox inasmuch as the source of power behind their efficacy was not clear. However, there was little official condemnation of divinatory books or

drawing lots because both were used as much to garner advice regarding health and farming as to learn the future, and because their effectiveness depended on proximity to a church, shrine, or sacred person or object. Divination books and lots have pre-Christian antecedents, but Wiśniewski argues that there was no straightforward continuity between pagan and Christian practices. The former died out in the third century, and there is no evidence of Christian lots until the sixth century, although the author maintains that it is likely they were in use as early as the mid-fourth century.

In chapter 6, Wiśniewski looks at a Christian divinatory technique that involved consulting demoniacs (*energumens*). Demons, who could be forced to reveal future events if they were tortured, spoke through their human victims. Wiśniewski deftly explores the overlapping, imprecise, inconsistent, and dynamic nature of terminology for late antique fortunetellers, such as *pythones*, *engastrimythos*, *ventriloqui*, necromancer, and *arrepticus*. All of these seers shared similarities, but there were nuanced differences as well. True to the author's thesis, divining through demoniacs was distinctively Christian and specifically carried out in *martyria* where *energumens* loitered. Supplicants were comfortable in close proximity to demons because the holy surroundings created a safe space where demons were kept in check. We have little clear evidence as to how the interrogations took place and spotty knowledge of how widespread the practice was.

The topic of chapter 7 is incubation, which was less a method of accessing the occult than a procedure for miraculous healing. Sacred dreaming took place at saints' shrines where the numinous atmosphere was potent, and demons dared not tread. Christian incubation was not institutionalized like the pagan practice was, but there is archeological evidence of spaces provided for sleepers in particular sanctuaries. Although there is little indication of sacred dreaming in the West, numerous incubation miracles were recorded in Constantinople in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Christian Divination is well researched with regard to both primary and secondary sources, and it is unreservedly interesting. The author brings to bear a wealth of material from a variety of genres, including letters, imperial legislation, hagiography, histories, councils, and more. He creatively pieces together scant sources of "dispersed character" and time periods and puts them in conversation with each other "to develop a broader, cohesive picture of the phenomenon in question" (17). His vivid depictions of divinatory techniques and paraphernalia are graphic and enliven his arguments. For example, in chapter 3, Wiśniewski makes tangible the materiality of the Bible

as an artifact. In chapter 4, he provides extended detail on precisely how fortunetelling worked using sheep knuckle bones. Chapter 5 describes cleromancy practiced by way of “oracular tickets,” those being scraps of papyrus on which were written two possible answers to questions petitioners might ask, and how these tickets were rolled up and thrown like dice.

Most of the book’s delicious detail pertains to the Greek speaking East, toward which the study is sharply slanted. When examining the Latin West, Wiśniewski relies largely on translations of a few writers, notably Augustine, Martin of Tours, and Gregory of Tours, while ignoring some of Gregory’s contemporaries, such as Martin of Braga, whose works are as illustrative of divination as are Gregory’s. The light investigation of the late antique West is reflected in the bibliography as well as in the body of the text. Wiśniewski would have benefited by engaging the benchmark scholarship of Bernadette Filotas, Valerie Flint, John Gager, and Richard Kieckhefer, all of whom argue for the continuity of mantic techniques in the Latin West and stress how porous the boundaries between Christian divination and persisting pagan magical ritual were. Chapter 7 suffers from the omission of Steven Kruger’s *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, which maps out a systematic theology of Christian dreaming that Augustine and Gregory the Great adopted from classical writers and which highlights the vigilance necessary to discriminate between *visum* and the *revelatio* and between the most rarefied dreams and diabolic oneiromancy.

There are a few elements of *Christian Divination* that could have been more fleshed out. The first involves the tricky connotations of the word *divination*. Wiśniewski explains that he is using the word to describe clairvoyance as well as “mysteries of the present day and events that already belonged to the past” (II). This broad, somewhat idiosyncratic, definition is reasonable enough; however, there are sections of the book, such as the chapter on incubation, where divination’s predictive quality is virtually obscured. Wiśniewski would have done well to acknowledge more forcefully how charged and metamorphic the concept of divination was in Late Antiquity. The word conjures magic both in the minds of the modern readers and in the discourse of late antique written witnesses. Wiśniewski is careful to demonstrate that clerical anxiety and fear of demons were concerns that drove discussions of divination, but he does not adequately square divination’s tenacious overtones of demonic magic per se. In both Eastern and Western texts, divination was frequently listed with and accreted to other forms of serious, insidious magical practices.

The second aspect of Wiśniewski's argument that dogs his analysis is the impulse to separate the "real world" (91) from the purely literary in descriptions of late antique divination. The project is doomed because we can glimpse the historical only through the prism of the artifact (that is the text), and *real* is a puzzling term. The words in and uses of texts not only reflect but also take on a kind of reality regardless of whether they correspond exactly to what we can ascertain about behaviors on the ground. Texts are genuine actors; they are constructions that both interpret and generate reality. It is not possible, or desirable, to create two teams, reality and literature, and assign behaviors and incidents to one or the other. For example, in looking at whether Christian saints took over the role of Egyptian oracles, Wiśniewski queries "whether this takeover happened in the real world or only in monastic literature" (61). When discussing lists of questions submitted to monks for consultation, he asks, "Are we dealing with real events and authentic consultations or with literary images?" (63). In so doing, Wiśniewski risks being caught in the trap of deciding what is possible or impossible, real or unreal, based on modern conceptions of actuality.

Despite some soft spots in Wiśniewski's conceptualization, *Christian Divination* is an important contribution to the literature on "late antique religiosity as a complex process" (252). The prose is lively (due in part to a high caliber translator), and the original theses are supported by a wealth of detail on the intellectual and material culture of Late Antiquity. I enthusiastically recommend this book to scholars and students of late antique social life.

Martha Rampton (emerita)
Pacific University Oregon

Jennifer A. Quigley, *Divine Accounting: Theo-Economics in Early Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. 188 pp. ISBN: 9780300253160 (hardcover), ISBN: 9780300258165 (ebook). \$85.

In this cogent book, Jennifer Quigley argues that theology and economics in the ancient Greco-Roman world were not separate but intertwined. This position stands in contrast to the approach of most classicists, economic historians, and archaeologists, who have not considered a religious studies framework in their examinations of relevant material evidence, and most biblical studies scholars, who have not "fully accounted for the divine in its