

**John A. Jillions, *Divine Guidance: Lessons for Today from the World of Early Christianity*, New York: Oxford University Press 2020, pp. 336. US 29,95. ISBN-10: 0190055731**

To break new grounds, different research have been merged in Jillions' book to conclusively agree about first-century attitudes toward divine guidance and how these might be understood in acceptable terms when dealing with modern research on religious studies and the controversial questions between divine guidance and delusion in 21st-century. How God's directive is perceived when claiming to be divinely led has positive or negative implications to the institution of religious groups. Today, just like in the past, people claim to be divinely led and they proceed to promote peace or create chaos.

The author, John A. Jillions, did his doctoral research at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki he received a PhD in New Testament in 2002. He was founding principal of the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge, associate professor of theology at Saint Paul University in Canada, and was chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America for seven years in New York. He is presently associate professor of religion and culture at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, where he is teaching "Faith and Critical Reason" at Fordham University.

Jillions's book is a work of reflection, with historical survey from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian, which presents the blueprint through which the concept of divine guidance in 21st-century can be analyzed or evaluated as acceptable or unacceptable, and regarded as perceived divine guidance or madness. The book contains 10 figures, with the content beginning with introduction which briefly narrated divine guidance in the 1st century and 21st century. More elaborate issues were discussed in the three other chapters. As it surveys the issues of divine guidance from ancient times to modern times, it chronologically transitioned the history and concept of the title through each of the three chapters with their subtitles. Eventually, the book ends with notes, bibliography (in MLA referencing style with sources from books, articles and online), and index.

Jillions made his point that while perceived divine guidance can lead some to destroy, it can lead many others to create beauty and practice mercy, justice, peace, and works of sacrificial charity. Just as the decision to

serve humanity with peace, mercy and charity can be attributed to following divine revelation, destructive decisions can also attribute to same claims. As Jillions showed, destructive decision is not only restricted to the followers of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, ISIS, or Boko Haram. To give examples, the author illustrated: In 1993, David Koresh and his followers completely believed that they were acting to divine revelatory directive, God's direct indication when they prepared the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, for a direful battle with the armed marshals of the US government; a further example was that of Jim Jones in 1978, who with his followers were led by divine revelation to commit mass suicide in Guyana jungle, and in 1995 guidance caused Shoko Asahara's religious sect to execute an act of terrorism, releasing sarin nerve gas in a crowded Tokyo subway station; another example, Buddhist monks in Myanmar and Hindu zealots in India incited violence to Muslims and Christians. In contrast to destructive divine guidance, Jillions also illustrated some works in the name of divine guidance that were peaceful and humane: Christianity has had a great influence, one of which is the abolition of slavery even in powerful nations such as the United States and Britain. According to Jillions, the abolition of slavery was very motivated by the Christian purpose, especially from William Wilberforce, who was convinced he had a divine vocation to work for the public so as to use his public office to fight the good fight of slave trade abolition that had lasted for decades. He remained in public life amidst continuous opposition; another example of being divinely led for humane works is that of Mother Teresa, a nun in India. While in a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling on September 10, 1946, Mother Teresa got a revelation from Jesus, asking her to abandon a quiet life of teaching for a life of caring for the poorest of the poor. She termed such revelation as a "call within a call".

On daily basis there is the part of the human life (spirituality) that is inspired in decision making whether for personal or public application. Personal and public decisions come when certain personal questions arise. Some of these questions that percolate through the spirit as identified by Jillions were: Where should I live? What job should I take? Whom should I marry? To personally add to those, some personal questions like: Which denomination should I be a faithful to? To what extent do I take people's excesses? Jillions also added that believing in God can also influence decisions concerning the society and politics: abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, capital punishment, foreign policy etc.

The New Testament records a good number of people making decisions with the perception of God directing them. Jillions gave examples from the book of Acts which he regarded as one of the most striking features of life in the early church: Acts 1:23-25; 8:26-40; 9:10-19; 10; in Acts 18: 9-10 RSV, the decision of Paul to leave his mission in Asia Minor and proceed to Greece was revealed to him in a vision. His decision to stand his ground in Corinth despite the tension and threats he faced there was a divine instruction he had directly gotten from God.

Skepticism about divine guidance has been an issue before now for biblical interpreters and scholars of religion. Long before the reformation, the church both East and West was also cautious. In late second-century Asia Minor, Montanus and two of his female followers in Phrygia who more or less were new Christian converts claimed to have been led by the Spirit with revelations they believed superseded both what the apostles have thought and their authority, and also the authority of the church order. Although their movement had mixed reception, yet was received well and tolerated in many places (9-10).

The author affirmed that current events repeatedly confirm what experts on terrorism have long agreed that the most dangerous and unpredictable terrorist groups are most likely to be religious. Although Mother Teresa would often speak about God's voice being accessible to all who create the inner space to hear. Yet, as revealed by the author, Mother Teresa's diaries also reveal years of darkness, carrying on her vocation without any encouraging words of divine guidance.

The author viewed that the United States is continuously increasing with a secular society and increasingly becoming religiously detached. Supporting his view, he recorded that only 53% of Americans still claim that religion is very important in their life. In contrast to the countries in Europe and North America, Greece has higher record of people who are traditionally religious, with 56% recognizing the importance of religion and its role in shaping their daily lives. He stated, when it comes to issues of might and right, Americans surprisingly seek for lead from heaven. Such dazzling act continues to stagger much of the world especially with the Europeans.

The author argued that the issues of divine guidance in the first century were major issues and earned the central topic of concern and debate, even to the point those who strongly weren't in the favor of anything like divine guidance could not help but to debate and address them. At the same time, he was of the believe that while there was a really wide range of views as

regards the extent to which God or gods or spiritual powers got involved in the daily decisions of individuals or influenced the everyday running and administration of states, the doubters were certainly in the minority.

Given the consideration of the author, modern biblical studies have to a large extent been shaped by Reformation and Enlightenment. Prior to these, modern biblical studies have created a lot more difficult avenue for later readers of the Bible to realize the necessity of questioning what have been regarded as divine guidance in the first century, and also to approach that world with sympathetic concept.

Divine guidance as an area of study has been treated with negligence by biblical scholars. The reasons to this disregard may have originated from the fact that, as James Dunn has proposed, biblical scholarship on the whole has been content to stand outside the community of discourse. Jillions considered the reason to be worthy of speculation.

Jillions realized the role and importance faith plays in Europe. He opined, if Europe not likely to recognize and appreciate divine guidance while making decisions and administering the affairs of their nations, Europeans, in millions, are still believers in faith which still plays a key role in their lives and has a much influence in their decision-making. To further demonstrate what he meant, he used Britain for instance: on Sundays the number of people who attend church are twice more than the number of people who go to watch football matches. In 2017, Sunday church attendance was summed to 37.5 million and the total number of football attendance was 15.5 million.

Jillions revealed that more is known about Corinth than about any other New Testament community. Therefore, it became a useful place to begin study of how Paul and his contemporaries (Gentiles and Jews) understood the role of divine guidance when making decisions.

Conclusively, throughout the book, Jillions kept asking these two basic questions: In what ways is divine guidance perceived? What criteria are proposed for distinguishing true from false guidance? He showed the form which represents the nature of human and divine interaction in the process of making decisions, in contrast to ordinary human decision. Given that divine guidance has been given credit for both good and evil acts, the research helps us come to terms and make sense of both the likes of terrorists like Osama bin Laden and saints like Mother Teresa. This controversial public and indeed personal topic of God-given insight and direction to individuals and groups has either been a blessing or disaster, depending on what nature it is used.

The book is recommended to specialists in biblical field, religious scholars and students in this field, and to all who believe in God or gods or spiritual powers: priests, pastors, prophets, imams, monks, the laity, and all forms of religious followers so that they can have a better understanding and make more sense of good and evil guidance.

The author of the book in the title points to a very important issue: what are lessons for Today from the World of Early Christianity? It is important that religious people be cautious and question the claims of divine guidance so they can discern true guidance from false guidance, and not to be misled.

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***Didymus the Blind's Commentary on Psalms 26:10-29:2 and 36:1-3*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell with Thomas W. Mackay and Gregg Schwendner, The Brigham Young University Papyri 1, Turnhout 2019, Brepols Publishers, pp. XV + 210**

Po długim okresie oczekiwania ukazało się w końcu krytyczne wydanie nieznanych dotąd fragmentów *Komentarza do Psalmów* Dydyma Ślepego obejmującego Psalm 20-44 (według LXX), odkrytego w 1941 roku w egipskim Tura (CPG 2550/1-5). Warto przypomnieć, że zdecydowanie większa część tego greckiego komentarza została opublikowana już w latach 1968-1970 w serii *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen* (t. 1-5). Recenzowane przez nas wydanie zawiera komentarz do podanych w tytule ustępów Księgi Psalmów, co odpowiada numerom 113-128 oraz 241-242 stronic papirusu, które w latach 1984-1985 stały się własnością Brigham Young University w Provo (USA). Można jeszcze dodać, że z materiału tego wcześniej ukazało się jedynie prowizoryczne wydanie i tłumaczenie fragmentów stronic 120, 120A i 120C, które było dziełem Thomasa Mackaya (StPatr 20 (1989) 40-49).

W skład omawianej publikacji wchodzi następujące elementy: przedmowy i podziękowania (s. V-X), spis treści (s. XI), wykaz skrótów (s. XII-XV), wprowadzenie (s. 1-19), tekst krytyczny dzieła (s. 21-55), tłumaczenie angielskie tekstu (s. 57-99), tzw. „Diplomatic Transcription”, czyli transkrypcja tekstu zapisanego w papirusie poprzedzająca etap jego