This is a useful book, clearly written and full of helpful information. In the end, however, it is more a competent enumeration of results than a thesis of any kind. The categorisation of the various arguments used by an array of writers in discussion of the food laws as rational, allegorical and revelatory is helpful, though the first two refer to different things: one to a way of thinking; the other to a mode of interpretation. Sometimes Rosenblum pays too little attention to the context of the texts that he is discussing. So, for instance, is the writer of the *Letter of Aristeas* engaged in an externally oriented apologetic when he writes his elaborate section on the food laws (the section, after all, forms part of an extended discussion between the Jewish translators of the Septuagint and Ptolemy Philadelphus, the Egyptian king), or is it addressed to Jews, who struggled with the specificity and apparent arbitrariness of these laws? And similar questions could be addressed to Philo and other Jewish Hellenistic sources. Why the Rabbis seemed less interested in rational arguments justifying the food laws than their Hellenistic forebears could perhaps have been discussed more than is the case, not least against the background of questions of audience and context. The section on the later Christian writers could have benefited from more research. For instance, Rosenblum does not note that Clement of Alexandria knew some of the works of Philo (in fact he is the first Christian author to mention Philo); or that arguments aimed against the physical implementation of the food laws were not exclusively allegorical (here, *inter alia*, perhaps reference to Justin's presentation of the debate between him and Trypho on the subject of Genesis ix.3–4 at *Dialogue* 20 could have been made). A greater array of authors could have been discussed and, as with the Jewish sections of the book, issues to do with the context and audience of the texts under discussion could have been addressed. The absence of some of the more rebarbative pagan arguments against the food laws is a striking feature of Christian engagement with this subject and need not be explained simply by reference to the fact that Christians shared a reverence for Scripture not evidenced among pagans.

Other matters could be raised but in the end Jordan Rosenblum is to be thanked for a book which, potentially at least, opens up a range of interesting questions.

PETERHOUSE, JAMES CARLETON PAGET
CAMBRIDGE

Ancient Christian ecopoetics. Cosmologies, saints, things. By Virginia Burrus. (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion.) Pp.vii + 288 incl. 14 figs. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. £54. 978 0 8122 5079 4

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I suspect that few of us might consider the Church Fathers to be promising candidates to whom Christians could turn for spiritual resources during an environmental crisis that threatens the health of our planet. After all, the earliest of them looked forward to the return of the Lord and the complete transformation of this cosmos in the not too distant future, and most of the later ones viewed the world through a Platonist lens that valued the eternal and immaterial over the

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temporal and material. Yet few historians of ancient Christian thought are as insightful as Virginia Burrus when it comes to reading the Fathers in ways that we (and perhaps they) might not expect, finding theological wisdom in early Christian literature other than the usual theological treatises, and connecting the theoretical and spiritual concerns of the present with those of the past. In this case, she turns to early Christianity 'to think the ecological thought' and to weave 'a creaturely poiesis' that 'is productive and performative rather than referential, representation, or propositional' and that encourages us to imagine new forms of life at this critical moment (p. 5). As such, the book presents the reader, not with an argument (although there are plenty of historically rigorous arguments), but with an invitation to join the early Christians in seeing and hearing the creation in new, less anthropocentric ways.

As the subtitle indicates, the book divides into three parts, which, as the author explains, can be read independently or in any order. Each part consists of fragments that range from historical-theological argument to poetic reflection and that readers of different interests can access as they will. Part I ('Beginning again with *Khora*: Traces of a Dark Cosmology') follows the figure of *khora* from its first appearance in Plato's *Timaeus* into Philo, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine and the rabbinic *Genesis Rabbah*; it finds that a mysterious, even eerie material presence or possibility always exists alongside the God who presumably creates *ex nihilo*. Burrus interacts with the philosophy of John Sallis as she considers how to think about God in relation to *khora*. Part II ('Queering Creation: Hagiography without Humans') turns to queer theory, disability theory and animal studies, among other conversation partners, as Burrus reflects on how saints' *Lives* often construct their subjects as part of a natural landscape, even bestial in their embodied flux. Among the late ancient holy people she ponders are Plotinus, Antony, Mary of Egypt, Syncletica and Simeon the Stylite. Part III ('Things and Practices: Arts of Coexistence') brings the new materialism and thing theory to a study of Christian interaction with material objects like relics, icons and church buildings. Hymns and sermons of Basil, Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius suggest the praise and wonder that Christians sought to perform. An epilogue, inspired by a statement of Darwin on the importance of worms to the world's history, thinks with worms about cosmology, materiality, narrative, liturgy and the future. It is one of the best parts of the book, in which Burrus comes closest – thanks to the worm's role in eternal punishment – to considering at length eschatology, that is, where early Christians saw themselves and their earth going.

The book encourages the reader to think about scale, as it moves beautifully to the tiny worm from the vast *khora*, from which emerges the entire cosmos, and through every level in between. The ancient Christians somehow could see the fullness of divinity in tiny fragments of bone or wood, and yet they could scarcely have imagined the extremes of scale with which modern human beings can interact (and not merely imagine), from surveying the farthest reaches of our galaxy to examining single strands of our DNA. How do we navigate the disjuncture between the immensity of the climate crisis we face and the discouragingly small efforts of the individual human being? The early Christians, Burrus suggests, would have us start by listening to God's song of 'love of all things' and then living that love (p. 231).

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Lest the ecclesiastical historians who read this JOURNAL feel that they and their questions have been left behind, I can assure them that they will understand better Plato and Athanasius, Simeon and Syncletica, relics and basilica mosaics after they have read *Ancient Christian ecopoetics*. Book by book and essay by essay, historians of late ancient Christianity have been patiently restoring the material to 'the age of spirituality', when austere Christians allegedly turned away from the corporeality and idolatry of 'paganism'. In the 1980s they started with what lies closest at hand, the body, but since then they have added material objects of all kinds, visual images, buildings, food, odours, inscribed words, parchment and papyri – in short, the material world itself. But what did it all mean? To scale up from our micro studies to a comprehensive vision is a challenge that few historians can accept and one that can never be fully met, but in this book Virginia Burrus weaves an ecopoetics that is persuasively ancient Christian even as it speaks to our most current fears and hopes.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY DAVID BRAKKE

Studies on Jews and Christians in the first and second centuries. By Peter J. Tomson. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 418.) Pp. xxx + 828. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019.

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Peter Tomson boasts an expertise both in early Christian studies and Rabbinic Judaism. This collection of essays, all of which bar one have been published before, and emerge from thirty-five years of intense scholarly work, touch upon a set of important issues relating to the increasingly complex question of Jewish-Christian relations in the first and second centuries. The book divides itself into four parts: halakah and Jewish self-definition; the teachings of Jesus and evolving Jewish and Christian tradition; Paul and his place in Judaism; and historiography and the import of early Christian sources. The essays assume that Christian and Jewish sources are mutually illuminating – indeed all Christian texts of the first century and a half of Christian history are distinctively Jewish in their character ('As long as any Christian text does not set itself off from Judaism, it can be approached as being of Jewish or Judaeo-Christian background or sympathetic to such': p. 415). One of the consequences of this view is that we should assume that Christian texts can illuminate Jewish texts as well as the other way round. This assumption becomes especially clear in Tomson's claim, present in a number of these essays, that the period from about 50 CE onwards was one marked by a rising level of Jewish nationalism in Jerusalem and Palestine, a point which receives support not just from Josephus and some rabbinic sources but from Paul's letters and from the Acts of the Apostles. Along the same lines, Paul becomes a witness to Jewish Pharisaism; Matthew and *Didache* to developments within the same, to take but two examples from these essays. Related to this assumption is Tomson's view, somewhat at odds with a growing consensus among some rabbinic scholars, that the Mishnah, Tosefta, Midrashim and Talmudim, in particular the first two, can, if used carefully, give us an insight into pre-70 Judaism as well as its post-70 manifestation, and reflect the thoughts of a group of individuals who wielded a reasonable amount of influence upon

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