reconstruction of history. While there have been some earlier attempts at reading history retrospectively, Vinzent's work is perhaps the first major breakthrough in reading history this way. In so doing, he has given especially historians of the early church an approach that has the potential to upend hundreds of years' worth of patristic scholarship—perhaps even a millennium! Despite its sometimes-pedantic style—evidenced by unnecessarily long sentences—the work is a worthy read. I highly recommend it, especially to historiographers of the early church.

Jeremiah Mutie
Southern California Seminary
doi:10.1017/S0009640720000116

Christian Reading: Language, Ethics, and the Order of Things. By **Blossom Stefaniw**. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. x + 249 pp. $95.00 hardcover.

Christian Reading: Language, Ethics, and the Order of Things is an ambitious title for a book about the Tura Papyri—an understudied collection of nearly two thousand papyrus pages found in Tura in 1941, dispersed into antiquities markets, mostly re-collected in the 1950s, and edited over the course of twenty years, starting in the 1960s. Twenty additional pages turned up in 1982, and there may well be more still adrift. The papyri dates to the sixth century and includes works by Origen and—most important for this study—lessons on the Psalms and Ecclesiastes by Didymus the Blind. Can these lessons tell us everything about Christian reading? Of course not. Frances Young's *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997) on biblical exegesis remains foundational for explaining Alexandrian and Antiochene reading practices and how they produced Christian culture. Blossom Stefaniw, however, has a different goal, a goal worthy of its title. If Young focused on hermeneutic strategies, Stefaniw examines how reading produced knowledge. What were Christians actually learning when they read? The content of a book, and even the hermeneutics deployed, get at only a fraction of the bodily and intellectual habits acquired through engaging scripture. In order to understand the story of David and Goliath, readers need to know the narrative, but they also need to know, for example, grammar, physics, geography, logic, and how they were related to the characters. Therefore, the larger question becomes: How were biblical texts part of the production of general knowledge?

Stefaniw's first chapter spins a historical-fiction narrative about the Tura document. It opens with a boy who "was just learning to read and write when the blindness came." That boy, Didymus, lived in a world of "darkness," inside of which "there was endless space, which words had shaped into rooms" (6). Didymus's words would eventually be copied and moved from Alexandria to Tura by the Roman aristocrat-turned-ascetic Arsenius. Copies of the lessons would eventually be hidden in a cave—surviving empires, burnt buildings, and wars—where they were found by a team of locals and British forces, written up by Octave Guéraud, organized into bound critical editions, and eventually studied by a Tolkien-loving girl named Blossom who made it as a

professional reader. This engrossing animation of history—which becomes a touchstone for the rest of the book's analysis—transitions miraculously into a footnoted retelling of the Tura document and provides the guiding theses of the book: "Didymus was a grammarian"; he taught "*from* the Bible," but not all of his teaching was "*about* the Bible" or explicitly about "religious formation" (42).

Chapter 2, the origin of the book, argues that Didymus "exhibits all the symptoms of being a grammarian" and thus "can and should be diagnosed as a grammarian" (79). Readers might be startled by this claim, but Stefaniw emphasizes that being a grammarian does not exclude being a theologian or offering religious instruction. Grammarians initiated students into habits of reading and ways of creating coherence. Didymus was not penetrating the surface of the world in order to reveal a hidden order, as philosophers did. Rather, he trained students in "patrimony" (general knowledge of everything that matters) through texts. Stefaniw explains: "The 'object' of grammatical training is not knowledge of a certain text, but habituation to a particular mode of engagement with the textual patrimony" (76). Following Dionysius Thrax's definition of *grammatikē*, Didymus forged relationships with scriptural texts that were previously made with Homer or Hesiod, and in so doing created a "new metabolism," a new way to break down and reassemble "history and time and subjectivity" (79).

Chapters 3 and 4 provide some context for the book's theses. Contrary to accounts of Christians retreating from the world to study scripture, Stefaniw argues that Didymus lowered the "threshold between his students and the gentlemanly mainstream of privileged society" (180). Christians did not "appropriate" classical learning; they shared in the only practices available to those living in the late Roman Empire. Drawing on C. M. Chin's work, which argues that grammar "entextualized" the Roman Empire by attaching knowledge to scripture (100), Stefaniw emphasizes the range of material grammarians cover and their role in producing empire: "Studying grammar entails studying the whole world, or everything that can be represented with sentences, because there is an imagined link between the individual letter or word or phrase on the page and every other item of knowledge" (99). For example, Dionysius has to discuss the nature of evil to explain the nature of the article (*to, ho, ē*). The grammarian's job was to teach students what they needed to know to read a text, "to orient her students to the order of things, the cosmic order, the social order, and the inner order constituting their physical, mental, and emotional world" (146–147). In order to demonstrate how Didymus approached this task, Stefaniw provides extended translations of Didymus's lessons in chapters 2–4—a gift for those not likely to read the German translation or original Greek.

Chapter 5 concludes the study with familiar points about human production of knowledge (drawing on Foucault, Kuhn, etc.) and how those insights help us understand Didymus and the history of the Tura Papyri. Knowledge in late antiquity—and for Didymus particularly—is less about the "accumulation of information" and more about "the cultivation of a certain mental disposition and the ability to apply it" (198). Knowledge on this view becomes part of a larger project of participating in an "*oikonomia*" and a "cosmos" through *mimēsis*, or fitting "into a world the text maps out" (191).

Reading does far more than provide information. It creates worlds and sustains empires; it produces organizing stories full of sensations, affective tugs, and new possibilities of living; it habituates common sense. Stefaniw challenges readers to think capaciously about how texts teach and what readers learn by engaging with them. Her study

paves a trail for future study of other early Christians as grammarians. In sum, an orienting narrative, original translations of understudied texts, and thoughtful engagement with theory make this book required reading for anyone interested in ancient Christian reading practices. Its prose will make that requirement a joy.

Michael Motia
University of Massachusetts Boston
doi:10.1017/S0009640720000128

The Letters of Bishop Basil of Caesarea: Instruments of Communion. By **Fr. Silouan Fotineas.** Early Christian Studies 19. Macquarie Park: Sydney College of Divinity Press, 2018. xi + 382 pp. A$60.00 hardcover.

In setting out the impetus for this investigation, Fr. Silouan writes: "The letters of Basil remain largely unutilised with respect to their contribution to ecclesiology. . . . In response to this neglect, this book will attempt, first to bring to the surface the contents of these letters and their notion of ecclesial communion, and second, to show how for Basil the very act of letter-writing was itself an instrument of communion. . . . The argument will show how Basil used his letters to facilitate communion in the Nicene church." (7–8, 9)

This book falls into three discrete parts. The first (introductory) part deals with fourth-century letter writing in general and then more specifically with Basil's great testimony of letter writing, recapitulating the progress of scholarly research on the transmission of his *epistolarium*. The second part (37–179) is a survey of the character, life, and ministry of St. Basil himself. It comes across as the author's endeavor to assimilate the person of Basil into his own life and thought—with a view to the issues of communion and episcopal ministry in the church above all. Only then (183–349) do we begin the analysis of Basil's letters to see how he used them in his struggle to restore to the communion of the Nicene church all the local churches of the Eastern Roman Empire that were bending and buckling under the emperors' coercive Arianizing policies (245). Fr. Silouan synthesizes his findings in the last forty pages (318–349), wherein surely is his most substantial contribution to Basil studies.

The author is an Australian priest-monk of the Greek Orthodox Church who has pursued theological studies in the secular university world, as such possibilities are available in Australia, and in a circle given to a more or less secular academic approach to early Christian studies—all while not letting go of his faith and piety. Consequently, the argument of the book is a blend—sometimes a strained tension—of approaches. Two examples should serve to illustrate my meaning. Despite his profound respect and deep listening to St. Basil, Fr. Silouan appeases an impartial, "value-free" historicization and refers, not to Arianism in its various shades (from Homoianism to Anomoianism) that stalked the church between 325 and 381, but to a vague, noncommittal "non-Nicenism." It jars a little. Similarly, he nods to modern linguistic ideology by referring to the Holy Spirit as an "it" rather than "He" (the Force perhaps?). The pronoun "it," however, retains nonpersonal connotations in English, and if there is