

To be commended is the volume's treatment of the significant Marian interventions by John Henry Newman to help Protestant Christians fill in the gaps of their understanding of Mary. The authors duly note that the primary aid Newman offered to our understanding of all the Marian prerogatives acknowledged by Catholic tradition is the realization advanced by the church in the second century that Mary is the Second Eve (55).

Although this is certainly an interesting volume and ecumenically accessible, I would recommend that this survey of Mariology be complemented by Michael O'Carroll's *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (2000).

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Les Pères de l'église et la théologie chrétienne. By Michel Fédou, S.J. Paris: Facultés Jésuites de Paris, 2013. Pp. 351. €25.

Unfolding against a background of unprecedented cultural and political upheaval, the rediscovery of the theological, spiritual, and literary legacy of the patristic period was one of the most significant developments in the history of twentieth-century Catholicism, marking the end of the protracted intellectual ascendancy of medieval Scholasticism, and paving the way to the institutional renewal by Vatican II. Fifty years after the council, however, the theological landscape has undergone an even more dramatic transformation: traditional European—or Eurocentric—theology has entered into conversation with the many “local” theologies emerging from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, while classical doctrinal formulations—no less than claims of traditional, natural law ethics—have become the target of criticism from sources as diverse as critical theorists, feminist and LGBT theologians, and proponents of different currents of postmodern thought.

In this intellectual context, Fédou, a Jesuit who teaches patristics and dogmatic theology at the Centre Sèvres in Paris, raises the question of the enduring relevance of patristic studies for the church of the early twenty-first century (10). F. acknowledges that today's academic sensitivities and ecclesial climate are very different from those that gave rise to the *Nouvelle théologie*. Nevertheless, he sets out to argue that patristic theology can still contribute to the theological endeavor in a way that is both meaningful and constructive. On the one hand, a better appreciation of the sources of the tradition can only deepen and strengthen our understanding of the faith; on the other hand, the formulation of new, culturally specific theologies in conversation with non-European cultures will benefit from an awareness of the contextual character of early Christian thought, which was developed in conversation with the legacy of Hellenistic philosophical thought.

F. distinguishes between the terms “patrology” and “patristics”: the former is associated with the philological study of the literary legacy of the first centuries of the church, in light of their cultural and historical context; the latter, first used by

Lutheran theologians in the seventeenth century, indicates “that branch of theological teaching that had to systematize the teaching of the Church Fathers” (21). In this perspective, patristics is fundamentally a speculative and constructive endeavor that retrieves the insights and doctrinal formulations of early Christian literature and puts them at the disposal of the systematic theologian (171). In addition, the vocation of the theologian is always an ecclesial vocation, as the theologian’s task is to preserve and pass on to future generations of Christians the cultural and intellectual heritage of the church.

In part I, F. adopts a chronological perspective and explores the contributions of patristic studies to different stages of the church’s twentieth-century history. He observes how a renewed interest in early Christian literature led to a greater appreciation for the historical evolution of christological and trinitarian dogma (89), and to a better understanding of the relationship between nature and grace in the debate on *natura pura* (56, 74). At a time when the church was coming to a belated acceptance of the merits of contemporary scriptural hermeneutics, the rediscovery of patristic exegesis led, somewhat paradoxically, to a new fascination with allegory and typology, as well as to an intensified debate about the legitimacy of multiple interpretations of Scripture (109). The study of Origen’s writings, with their emphasis on the Christocentric dimension of both the OT and NT, similarly encouraged Catholic theologians to reflect on the relationship between the scientific study of Scripture and its apologetic use in the defense of dogma (116, 127). As early Christian literature also became an object of study in a number of secular universities, patristic scholars had to consider the input of disciplines other than theology, such as philosophy, linguistics, or religious studies (96, 142).

In part II, F. explores the relevance of patristic theology from a thematic perspective, noting, for instance, that an exploration of the documents surrounding the Chalcedonian controversy led to an agreement between the Catholic Church and the Armenian and Antiochean Churches on the nature of the incarnation (279). A familiarity with early Christian sources will disabuse contemporary theologians of the belief that Church Fathers had no interest in social justice or displayed little understanding of other religions. John Chrysostom’s sermons on the duty of charity and Athanasius’s discussion of Judaism and paganism, for example, clearly indicate that these themes are not the discovery of enlightened twentieth-century thinkers (240, 290).

The chief merit of the volume, which will be of great interest to patristic scholars as well as to students of early Christian literature, is that it contextualizes the field of patristic studies within the broader discipline of theology, highlighting its relevance and indeed its crucial importance for the theological endeavor as a whole. As theologians are pushed toward an ever greater specialization in their subfields, F.’s comprehensive survey of the virtues of patristics reminds us that familiarity with the historical roots of the Christian tradition is a *sine qua non* for all practitioners of the discipline.

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