

The book highlights the biases of ID, affirms the evolutionary model and developments in this regard and underscores the place and value of faith and religion.

Drobner, H R 2007 – *The fathers of the church: A comprehensive introduction*

Publisher: Hendrickson. 1vi + 632 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof G A Duncan (University of Pretoria)

By compiling this work, Drobner has done Church History a great service. In it he introduces readers to the life and work of the most significant writers of the early church and the early medieval church. In so doing, he offers a fairly comprehensive history of the growth and development of Christianity in the first seven centuries CE. As an overview, it presents the work of the most prominent authors and covers important works and themes. This allows him to locate the early fathers in their political, social, ecclesiastical and cultural contexts, using the latest available scholarship. It also focuses on movements, creeds and councils of the period. This, however, results in rather an incomplete survey of the contexts themselves which are necessary for a full understanding of the history of Christianity.

The prefatory material considers sources and bibliographies in an extensive list of headings. An introductory chapter, which explains the subject matter of Patrology as a theological discipline, follows. He does so by examining the title of Father given to significant churchmen who were the intellectual and spiritual teachers, leaders and philosophers of early Christianity, and he relates it to Church Father and Doctor of the Church which have to be distinguished from Church writer (of a later period) according to the traditional criteria of orthodox doctrine, holy life, recognition by the Church and location in the Early church period. Drobner continues his examination of concepts by discussing the nuances in meaning of patrology, patristics and their relation to literary studies in general, although currently they are used interchangeably. Sections on literature from the apostolic and Post apostolic periods, the period of persecution, of growing imperial power and influence, the transition from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages (fifth to mid-eighth century), and the literature of the Eastern Church then follow.

This work is a substantial revision of an earlier work published in German in 1994. The scholarship has been completely updated, as has the supporting material. Material has been added on Tertullian, Basil the Great, Eusebius of Caesarea and the innovative section of literature from the Eastern Church. These include detailed lists of works on general bibliographies, editions of the primary texts, translations, reference works, introductions and surveys, theology, encyclopaedias, journal articles, studies, collections of essays, biography and cultural contextual material. The book includes a number of helpful timelines to explain the timescales involved and the relationship of the Fathers to one another, a supplementary bibliography and indices of subjects and ancient sources. Although, on first appearance, it appears to be a work for the specialist, it will be of great value to students beginning their studies in early Church History, as well as to theologians and pastors. Although it is a substantial work, it is attractively presented and offers great encouragement to engage in further deeper study of the fathers of the Church.
