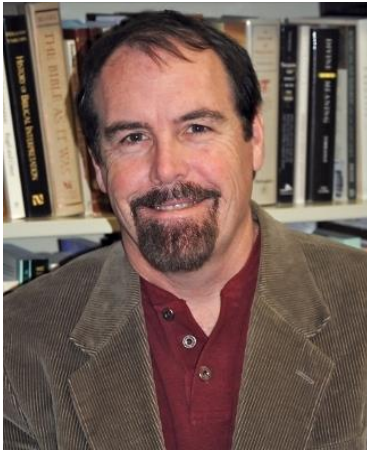


Keynote Speakers



Professor Paul M. Blowers

Dean E. Walker Professor of Church History
Emmanuel Christian Seminary, Johnson City, Tennessee
(USA)

MA & PhD (University of Notre Dame)
MDiv (Emmanuel Christian Seminary)
BA magna cum laude (Milligan College)

Dr Bronwen Neil, FAHA

Assistant Director of the Centre for Early Christian Studies
(Australian Catholic University, QLD)
Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities
Burke Senior Lecturer in Ecclesiastical Latin,
Australian Catholic University (QLD)

PhD (ACU)
MA (Durham University)
BA Latin Hons I (University of Queensland)
BA Linguistics (University of Queensland)



Other Presenters

Joseph Azize, Chris Baghos, Mario Baghos, Andrew Burgess, Rebecca Burgess, John D'Alton, Bernard Doherty, Naoki Kamimura, Philip Kariatlis, Graham Lovell, Stefan Mastilovic, Andrew Mellas, Justin Pigott, Garry W. Trompf, Daniel VanderKolk, Kevin Wagner

Conveners

Doru Costache and Adam G. Cooper

PRESENTERS AND ABSTRACTS

Paul M. Blowers

Mystics and Mountains: Comparing Origen's Exegesis of the Transfiguration and Gregory of Nyssa's Exposition of the Sinai Theophany

Abstract

Origen's interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ on Mt Tabor proved to be crucially important for his larger Christology and understanding of the economy of salvation, while Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the Sinai Theophany in Exodus was a key link in his apophatic theology and his understanding of human participation in the mystery of the triune God. This lecture will compare the two as models of "anagogical" and "mystical" exegesis in which the biblical text is envisioned as providing its own spiritual topography and strategy of elevation, with the living Logos himself as guide to sublime intimacy with God.

Bronwen Neil, FAHA

Signs of *Theosis* in Synesius of Cyrene

Abstract

The germ of the idea of deification through contemplation of the divine (*theosis*) is found in Plato, who wrote of a divine spark in each human being that longs to return to the stars, whence it came. This idea was considerably developed by neo-Platonists, both Christian and non-Christian, in the third and fourth centuries. Synesius of Cyrene was a neo-Platonist long before he was made bishop of Ptolemais in the early 400s. Trained in Alexandria by Hypatia, the famous woman philosopher, Synesius found deification, becoming like God (or 'The God'), a useful concept in his tracts *On Dreams* and *On Dio*, both written before his ordination. I consider the origins and development of this concept in Synesius' neo-Platonist forebears, Plotinus and Porphyry, and its usage in Synesius' works. A comparison with the concept in the works of the Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa will then be made.

Revd Dr Joseph Azize

Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Notre Dame (Sydney NSW)

Ignatius of Antioch: Logic and Methodology

Abstract

Ignatius of Antioch is one of the most important of the Church Fathers, and possibly the single most significant patristic source for the history of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Recent studies have tended to discount the value of Ignatius not only in this respect, but also as a theologian or as a source of theological insight. One scholar even characterises him as having a “disturbed temperament.” In this study, I present an overview of modern scholarship, then subject it to logical and methodological analysis, using as a model D. H. Fischer’s critique of Historians’ Fallacies. The result of this analysis is to allow us to approach Ignatius and the seven authentic letters with confidence as a reliable witness to the development of the early Church and its theology and spirituality, not least of all being the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Further, Ignatius himself is seen to be a profound and capable thinker with a mystical cast of mind.

Chris Baghos

Postgraduate student, University of Sydney (Sydney NSW)

Master of Arts student, St Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

The Articulation of Christian Identity within the *Trial* of St Maximus the Confessor and its Patristic Antecedents

Abstract

This paper explores the problem of ethnicity and Christian identity as it comes to the fore in the *Trial* of St Maximus the Confessor. It attempts to illustrate how the distinction between true Christians and false Christians, articulated by the author of the *Macarian Homilies*, is featured within the *Trial*. Relevant passages from the latter will also be compared to some of the Confessor’s writings, namely his *Commentary on the Our Father* and *Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, in order to make sense of the response which he made to his accusers in relation to his estimation of the Greeks and Romans. Ultimately, the aim of this paper is to contribute a patristic dimension to the current understanding of the complexities entailed by ethnicity and Christian identity in the early Christian centuries.

Mario Baghos

Associate Lecturer, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

PhD candidate, University of Sydney (Sydney NSW)

The Conflicting Portrayals of Origen in the Byzantine Tradition

Abstract

The portrayal of Origen represents a conundrum for the Byzantine tradition. The spiritualising, Platonic tendencies in his writings were exaggerated by some of his admirers, leading to a repudiation of his person and works by such prominent figures as St Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria; repudiations that anticipated his condemnation as a heretic by the fifth ecumenical council. Nevertheless, Origen's condemnation by the Byzantine establishment was inconsistent with the views of those saints, including Sts Pamphilus and Gregory Thaumaturgus, venerated by the same establishment, who considered him a holy person and whose use of Origen was reiterated – albeit with more discernment – by the Cappadocian Fathers. This presentation will address the representation of Origen in the above-mentioned and related figures (including Eusebius of Caesarea and Rufinus of Aquileia), in order to demonstrate that, once the circumstances for the negative approaches towards him are contextualised, one cannot deny the consistency between the faith and life of this great Alexandrine in his commitment to Christ.

Revd Dr Andrew Burgess

Dean and Lecturer, Bishopdale Theological College (Nelson, New Zealand)

The Saviour Who is Judge: Thinking with and Beyond St Gregory of Nyssa on the Union of the Eternal Son with Human Nature in Jesus Christ and His Single Identity and Work as the Saviour and the Judge

Abstract

This paper will draw upon St Gregory in two key ways: firstly in recognising that the identity of Jesus of Nazareth as 'Judge' is an attribute of His supreme authority as the eternally begotten Son of the Father – very God incarnate; and second in acknowledging St Gregory's insistence upon the full human nature (body and soul) of the incarnate Son. This fundamental insight will be elaborated beyond St Gregory's own words to explore how this full union of God and humanity in the Christ is expressed in His being and work as both Judge and Saviour. The unity of Christ's person as Judge and Saviour is therefore elaborated in reflection upon His work as the One who is fully God and fully human. This is the basis upon which we understand His being as both Saviour and Judge and the nature of His singular work as this Lord and no other. Exploring these matters yields a deeper understanding of Christian union with God in Christ (such as St Gregory emphasises), and advances our understanding of both judgement and salvation, and particularly their unity – something western theologians are often unable to hold together. Finally a connection to the thought of the twentieth century theologian Karl Barth is offered, along with a passing critique of modern theologies which do not hold judgement and grace together.

Rebecca Burgess

Lecturer, Bishopdale Theological College (Nelson, New Zealand)

PhD candidate, Otago University (Dunedin, New Zealand)

The Law as God's Self-Revelation in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Psalm 119

Abstract

Hilary of Poitiers' commentary on Ps119 is an example of a thoroughly Christian reading of the Old Testament. Hilary, like all of the Church Fathers saw that the Old Testament spoke of Christ who is the good news: for him, all of God's acts in the OT were a shadow of the heavenly truth of God and direct us towards the faith of the gospel. In his commentary he describes the Law of God in its broadest sense, inclusive of the Mosaic Law, but also described in the history of the Exodus, creation, and the prophecies, in fact in *every* word of God. For Hilary, the Law preached the coming of the Lord in a body and humanity's true place in God. This paper will examine Hilary's view of the Law as God's self-revelation in Psalm 119 based on the radical statement that the Law preached the incarnation. I will endeavour to show the basis on which Hilary thinks the Law reveals God in Christ through the work of the Spirit and how for him this revelation is not simply a noetic vision but involves humanity's reconciliation and participation in God's Son.

Dr Adam Cooper

Senior Lecturer, John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family (Melbourne VIC)

Basil's Hospitals: The Church as Place of Healing and Divine Philanthropy

Abstract

Early Christian thinkers often manifested an ambivalent attitude towards the medical and healing arts. The institutionalisation of early Christian healthcare not only established a revolutionary new social force. It transformed Christian theorising about healthcare. Far from simply offering a welfare service to the sick and poor as an adjunct to more central 'spiritual' concerns, the early Christian hospital functioned as an ecclesial microcosm, embodying a new interpretation of the Church and the world. By de-stigmatising illness and re-interpreting disease in the light of Christian anthropology and the doctrine of redemption, healthcare was affirmed as a kind of participation in divine philanthropia. The medical arts and institutional care for the poor henceforward became paradigmatic centres of ecclesial charity, fellowship, and ministry.

Protopresbyter Dr Doru Costache

Senior Lecturer, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

Natural Contemplation: From Alexandria to Cappadocia and Back Again via Evagrius' Portrait of the Gnostic

Abstract

In his *The Gnostic*, Evagrius offers both a portrayal of the one seeking perfection, the advanced monk, and a brief synopsis of his Alexandrine and Cappadocian sources. Of interest here is that the depiction of the perfect, or the gnostic, as a contemplative is accompanied by several references to representatives of both traditions, whose relevant insights are disclosed at the end of the treatise. Whilst not focused on digging up all of these sources, the paper aims to illustrate the convergence of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian traditions in matters pertaining to natural contemplation. To this end, before looking at the portrait of Evagrius' gnostic it will explore similar depictions in both traditions. In so doing, this paper will highlight the significance of the Evagrian gnostic as a point of intersection for the two traditions.

Revd John D'Alton

PhD candidate, Monash University (Melbourne VIC)

Two Views of Women in Aphrahat and Ephrem?

Abstract

Aphrahat has at times been criticised as having a low view of women, while his near-contemporary Ephrem is celebrated for elevating them, yet a deeper analysis of their writings reveals a far more nuanced perspective. Aphrahat writes in the context of challenging monks to maintain their chastity, and his statements about women as the cause of sin must be seen in that light. His other statements about holy women show that he in fact has a high view of women's spiritual attainment and role. Aphrahat also needs to be read in the light of his extensive use of rhetoric, the then current church debates about sexuality and singleness, and the general cultural context. When these issues are taken into account Aphrahat is in fact revealed as affirming women alongside men. This paper explores the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem and their complex perspectives on women, holiness, sexuality and monasticism.

Dr Bernard Doherty

Macquarie University alumni (Sydney NSW)

St Mark's National Theological Centre with Charles Sturt University (Canberra ACT)

The First Rural Christians: Popular Religion in Early Christian Phrygia

Abstract

In standard histories of the early Church the regions of Alexandria and Cappadocia loom large as two of the great intellectual powerhouses in developments in the history of doctrine. However, for every Cappadocian Father or Alexandrian Patriarch there were hundreds of unsung Christians who worshipped in the same churches, suffered through the same persecutions, took up positions (and sometimes cudgels) in the same doctrinal debates, and died with the same future hope of resurrection and eternal life. These everyday Christians may not have left learned treatises of theology like Saint Basil, impressed with feats of ascetic endurance like Saint Antony or humbled emperors like Saint Athanasius; but they have left a religious legacy which, while often difficult to unravel, offers us a glimpse into the Christian faith as it was practiced and expressed among the everyday people of antiquity. This paper seeks to unravel some much-neglected aspects of the culture and beliefs of a fascinating group of rural Christians who inhabited the towns and villages of Phrygia in West Central Anatolia from the second through to the fourth century C.E. While the literary record has been almost completely silent on these Phrygian Christians aspects of their lives and livelihoods remain hewn in numerous stone epitaphs which bear visual and verbal testimony to a thriving early Christian community.

Dr Naoki Kamimura

Research fellow, Tokyo Gakugei University (Tokyo, Japan)

Spiritual Itinerary of the Soul to God in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine

Abstract

In book eight of *Confessions* Augustine explains how he had become familiar with the story of Antony, decided to imitate him, and read a passage from Romans. But the conversion included still a Platonic element. Augustine described the conversion scene in the villa at Cassiciacum partly in expressions that Plotinus had chosen to explain the ascent of the soul to the divine. This itinerary is not interpreted to be the spatial and temporal movement. For Plotinus, it is realised by opening the interior eye of the mind. It is interesting to note that the flight of the soul to God occurs in both Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. Although Augustine's use of Eastern patristic literature and relations with Greek patristic writers have been examined, his relationship to them may seem ambiguous. In this paper, I shall first summarise the characteristics of their—Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine's—descriptions of the soul's journey to God, from the viewpoint of how they employ the Plotinian language. Then I shall focus on the similarities and differences of these passages, thereby considering the possibility that Augustine was in some way affected by Gregory's treatment of the spiritual itinerary.

Dr Philip Kariatlis

Academic Director and Senior Lecturer, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

An Early Patristic Vision of Theological Method for Today: Insights from St Gregory the Theologian

Abstract

In a well-known passage from his First Theological Oration, St Gregory the Theologian wrote: "Discussion of theology is not for everyone... neither are all its aspects open to inquiry" rather it ought to be reserved for those "who have been tested... and more importantly have undergone or at the very least, are undergoing purification of body and soul." Unlike the modern practice of the theological enterprise today, which has often been reduced to being no more than an intellectual inquiry, this early father of the Church lay emphasis on theology's uniquely 'mystical' or 'existential' nature. This paper will attempt to uncover some of the most characteristic aspects of this saint's vision of theology and its method. Essentially, it will show that theology was first and foremost considered to be a graced 'encounter' with God into which one was initiated through prayer. In presenting St Gregory's vision of theology, the paper hopes to make a contribution on modern understandings of 'method' in systematic theology which have tended to overlook theology's existential and theophanic nature. It is hoped that such insights will provide a helpful way forward for theology to regain its relevance in society today.

Dr Graham Lovell

Macquarie University alumni (Sydney NSW)

From Origen to Gregory of Neocaesarea and Beyond

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show that there is a clear path in terms of theological development from Origen to Gregory of Neocaesarea, and that Gregory's doctrine profoundly influenced later Cappadocian theology, particularly that taught by Basil and his brother Gregory of Nyssa. The paper will consist of a historical narrative of the life of Gregory of Neocaesarea, starting from his "non-catholic" Christian beginnings, and working through his conversion to "catholic" Christianity under Origen's influence. It will cover the summary of his understanding of the divinity, as outlined in his *Address of Thanksgiving* when he was about to depart Origen's circle, and the relationship of this to the form of the *Statement of Faith* he introduced into the church of Neocaesarea when he became its bishop in ca. 251. Finally it will show the influence of his teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit on the two Cappadocian brothers and glancing at other aspects of his influence upon them. The paper aims to inspire a more nuanced appreciation of the significance of the life and teachings of Gregory of Neocaesarea on the development of Christian theology.

Stefan Mastilovic

Bachelor of Theology (Honours) student, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

Patristic Authority in the Discourses of St Symeon the New Theologian

Abstract

In his discourses or catechisms, offered in the abbatial tradition of the Stoudion monastery, St Symeon addressed, among other themes, the topic of patristic authority. Confronted both by the intellectualism of contemporary Byzantine scholars and the superficial understanding of authority in the monastic milieu, St Symeon openly debated the nature of patristic authority. Basically, what he advocated was the need to recover a genuinely apostolic and patristic understanding of authority as charismatic and prophetic, and as being inherently connected with the experience of holiness and/or deification. Moreover, St Symeon pointed out that the association of faith, the virtuous imitation of Christ and the saints, a sense of orthodoxy, and the indwelling of God, all pertaining to the profile of patristic authority, is a combination that cannot be historically circumscribed. In fact, he maintained that his own spiritual father plentifully illustrated those qualities and that therefore the latter was not only a real father of the Church, but even a saint. This paper undertakes to explore the argument of St Symeon in favour of patristic authority as a permanent occurrence within the Church. It will begin by exploring the various contemporary interpretations of the 'patristic age', followed by a discussion of St Symeon's 'canonisation' of his spiritual father and the historical circumstances surrounding it, and finally it will offer an analysis of St Symeon's portrayal of a true spiritual father. In so doing, I hope to bring a corrective to the current understanding of patristic authority as limited to the early Christian centuries.

Andrew Mellas

PhD candidate, University of Sydney (Sydney NSW)

"Words Tinctured with Passion": St Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum Cantorum* and the Emergence of Affective Mysticism in Byzantine Hymnography

Abstract

St Gregory of Nyssa's allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs Christianised the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* and spiritualised the erotic textuality of the canticle. Nevertheless, far from eschewing all emotion, Nyssen's hermeneutics paved the way for a transfiguration of the passions as a concept and the emergence of an affective mysticism in Byzantine hymnography. Unlocking the text's spiritual sense, Gregory analogously read the lovers' impassioned utterances as embodying a passion transcending earthly corporeality and touching divine eros. As allegory delves into the spiritual meaning of the Shulammitte and her lover, human passion is anagogically immersed in divine passion and the mystical knowledge of the eschaton. The textualisation of human passion in the canticle dramatises an ever-intensifying desire for the Divine, which can be felt when the yearning soul approaches and traverses the dazzling darkness of the great mystery. This paper will investigate the significance of Gregory's *In Canticum Cantorum*—and the notion of impassible passion therein—for the history of emotions in Byzantium by examining its influence on Lenten hymnography. We will explore the nuptial metaphor in the *Akathist Hymn* and the *kanon* accompanying it in the *Triodion*, and the transformation of passion in an *epektasis* of desire in St Romanos the Melodist's *kontakion* on the harlot.

Justin Pigott

PhD candidate, Australian Catholic University (Brisbane QLD)

The Episcopal Assassination of Gregory of Nazianzus: Alexandrian Sabotage or an Inside Job?

Abstract

Culpability for Gregory's demise as president of the First Council of Constantinople in 381 is traditionally placed at the feet of an Alexandrian party keen to undermine the stability of the upstart see of Constantinople. This characterisation of Alexandrian attitudes fits neatly alongside the accepted interpretation of the council's second canon as representing a reprimand of Alexandrian interference at Constantinople. However, this paper suggests that Alexandrian culpability has been over-stressed and that Gregory's resignation benefited rather than destabilised the church at Constantinople. Thus, we do not have to look to Alexandrian jealousy for motivation for Gregory's removal. His suggestion of Paulinus as Meletius' replacement at Antioch, his constant abstention from proceedings, and the immovability of his theological standpoint saw the Theologian become an obstacle to the council's success. By considering these factors, this paper suggests that canon 2, rather than serving as a rebuke against Alexandrian interference at Constantinople, was in fact a veiled justification of their part in ensuring Gregory's resignation.

Professor Garry W. Trompf, FAHA

Emeritus Professor, University of Sydney (Sydney NSW)

Lecturer in Church History, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney NSW)

A Foretaste of Eusebian Panegyricism in Festal Letter X of Dionysius (The Great) of Alexandria

Abstract

Apparently combining a sense of personal reprieve from his troubles with a collective relief after the Decian persecution, Dionysius the Great's tenth festal epistle (pre-Easter 262) sounds distinctly panegyric notes over the victory and peace of the emperor Gallienus. The author of this paper asks whether we have signs in this letter of a publicized narration of recent imperial affairs culminating in the successes of a worthy, even holy emperor. If so, what does this tell us, first, about the situation of the Church at the time (the 260s), and, second, what might it indicate about the structuring of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which (at least in its later editions, and with other supplements) finishes with the defeats of unworthy imperial contenders and the victories of Constantine as the churches' new protector.

Daniel VanderKolk

Bachelor of Arts student in Greek and Latin at Hillsdale College (Hillsdale MI USA)

BA Oakland University (Rochester MI USA)

The Late Antique Christian-Pagan Synthesis within St Basil the Great's *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*

Abstract

St Basil of Caesarea authored *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* in the later half of the fourth century. His thinking and literary output illustrated the transitional nature of Late Antiquity. In his lifetime particularly, the glory of Ancient Greek and Roman culture with all of its natural knowledge, was acquiring another dimension in light of the ascendancy of Christianity. St Basil received an excellent secular education in the liberal arts and excelled especially in rhetoric. He also led an exemplary ascetical life according to Christian tradition. *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* is a defense of the use of pagan, principally Greek letters by Christians. This paper will both analyse the rhetorical structure of Basil's treatise, as well as explore the wider intellectual phenomenon of cultural synthesis of which this treatise is a part.

Kevin Wagner

Lecturer, University of Notre Dame (Sydney NSW)

PhD candidate, John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family (Melbourne VIC)

The Second Person of the Trinity in the *Hymns* of Synesius of Cyrene and Gregory of Nazianzen's *Poemata Arcana*

Abstract

The early fifth century bishop, Synesius of Cyrene, was formed in the Neo-Platonic school of Hypatia of Alexandria. His writings disclose the fact that he struggled to integrate his Greek *paideia* and the Christian faith of his childhood. Most crucially we may note his infrequent use of the name of Jesus in his written corpus. Here we will examine his nine extant hymns – which are the most theological of his writings – in order to determine the orthodoxy of his Christology. To this end, we will undertake a comparison between Synesius' *Hymns* and Gregory Nazianzen's *Poemata Arcana*, which is justified according to the criteria established by Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev. The juxtaposing of the Christologies of these two bishops, as expressed in poetic form, offers a unique insight into Synesius' acceptance of the Person after whom Christianity is named.

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