NEWS AND EVENTS 2007

Grants

The Australian Research Council has awarded a $534,000 five-year Australian Research Fellowship to Rev. Dr. Geoffrey D. Dunn for his research project “The Clash of Sacred and Secular Authority in the Letters of Innocent I.” At the end of the project it is anticipated that the first edition of Innocent’s letters since 1721, an English translation volume, and a biography of this early fifth-century Bishop of Rome will be produced. Of particular interest will be the degree to which Innocent’s religious authority asserted itself in political matters, a topic, in its broad terms, of particular relevance to contemporary events, and the degree to which Innocent claimed authority over other bishops. Given Innocent’s interactions with John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo and the Pelagian controversy, John of Jerusalem, Jerome, as well as with the emperor Honorius during Alaric’s capture of Rome in 410, the results of this project will be of great interest to scholars of late antiquity and early Christianity.

Pauline Allen, Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil have been awarded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project Grants, $320,000 for three years (2006-2008) to study the topic of poverty and welfare in Late Antiquity. Poverty and the provision of welfare are key concerns in Australia today. Many of the problems we face – refugee influxes, inflated housing costs, increased competition between charities for limited resources – are paralleled in late antiquity. This is a critical time in history that has unique things to say to Australian society today. A focussed study of this turning-point in history provides a novel perspective from which to assess the implications of current Australian trends, in which welfare is increasingly being devolved upon non-government organisations. It also enlarges the foundation for a dialogue on these issues, assisting in creating better solutions at both a government and non-government level.

Building on previous ARC-funded research, this project will test the model of the relationship between poverty and leadership at a time of social change recently proposed by the influential Peter Brown (2002) by focusing on three pivotal figures in a defined period across a significant geographic spread: John Chrysostom (Byzantium), Augustine (North Africa), and Leo I (Italy). The results will be published in articles and three monographs, and will lay the foundation for a fourth monograph.

Publications

On October 5, “I Sowed Fruits into Hearts” (Odes Sol. 17:13). Festschrift for Professor Michael Lattke, edited by Pauline Allen, Majella Franzmann, and Rick Strelan, Early Christian Studies 11, was launched at the University of Queensland. This collection of essays summarises the scholarly work of Michael Lattke across two hemispheres. Offered to him on his retirement from the University of Queensland, this volume reflects the breadth of erudition for which he has acquired his international reputation. The Odes of Solomon are well represented here and so too is the Gospel of John. However, this book ranges further — to other New Testament writings, Intertestamental works, Nag Hammadi, Gnostic, and Syriac studies, and the field of Patristics.

Geoffrey D. Dunn's Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome: Questions of Papal Primacy in the Early Church, Early Christian Studies 11, published by St. Paul's in 2007, marks the final result from the Australian Research Council's funding between 2000 and 2002 for the project "The Bishop as Letter-Writer: Pastoral Care and Civic Administration in Christian Antiquity". It follows 13 articles devoted to Cyprian's relationship with other bishops, women, and the poor. This volume investigates Cyprian's relationship with the five bishops of Rome (Fabian, Cornelius, Lucius I, Stephen I, and Sixtus II) who occupied the see during the ten years of his episcopate in Carthage. It deals with the question of whether or not the Roman bishops asserted and whether or not Cyprian recognised any jurisdictional primacy in the Roman church.
The argument is that when one examines what Cyprian did in practice (through his letters) rather than just what he might or might not have thought in theory (through De unitate, which too often is interpreted from too modern a perspective), it is clear that he regarded Rome as a significant, prestigious and influential church but not one to which Carthage and the North African churches had to submit their synodal decisions for ratification.

Silke Trzcionka’s book, Magic and the Supernatural in fourth-century Syria, was published by Routledge. With new research using both archaeological and literary sources and blending classical, Jewish and Christian traditions from both regions, she examines a myriad of magical activities such as:
- Curses, spells and amulets
- Accusations relating to chariot races, love, livelihood and career
- Methods involved in protection, healing, possession and exorcism

With consideration for economic, political, religious and social factors, rituals of magic are defined through their social context as indivisible from the many factors which framed and influenced their use. Trzcionka applies theoretical models offered by sociological and anthropological studies, such as ideas on envy, limited good, honour and shame, to gain an illuminating contemporary insight into the various tenets of the period. A belief system emerges that intricately intertwines the supernatural and tangible worlds, and in which magic pervades and defines social reality.

**Research Visits**

Dr Mary Cunningham of University of Nottingham visited the Centre on 24 September 2007. On that occasion she presented a paper titled "Some problems and themes in eighth-century Greek homilies on the Mother of God".

**Other News**

*In memoriam Dr Robert Charles (Peter) Hill*

It is with deep regret that the members of the Centre for Early Christian Studies record the death of Dr Hill. Born in Auckland in 1931, Dr Hill was a member of the Christian Brothers for many years, serving in its leadership team in Rome for six years, and until his retirement he taught at ACU’s predecessor colleges in Sydney. Educated in Sydney and Rome, he was a distinguished biblical scholar, but his greatest renown was his prodigious talent as a translator of Patristic biblical commentaries on the Old Testament. Nearly thirty volumes of his translations have been published, and at the time of his death another two were in the press. Dr Hill was one of the founders of the Centre for Early Christian Studies at ACU, and for the past three years was one of its Honorary Fellows.

Despite his high academic profile and the fact that he did not suffer fools gladly, Dr Hill gave generously of his time and knowledge on many levels. He was an outstanding catechist, for decades teaching weekly classes for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in Sydney. In recognition of this work in 2003 he was awarded the papal cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by Pope John Paul II. A loyal
son of the church, he was active in his parish of Glenbrook in the Blue Mountains, where he prepared the
text of Lenten programs each year for use by parishioners, and provided in-service for lectors at Mass.

In the face of months of suffering before his death Dr Hill exhibited inspiring courage and good humour. He
is survived by his wife, Marie.

A state reception was held in Sydney on 29 November to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of
the Centre for Early Christian Studies by ACU Senate under the direction of Professor Pauline Allen. The
Centre comprises some 17 lecturers and researchers from ACU across various campuses, working in the
fields of New Testament studies, early Christianity and Late Antiquity up to the eighth century.

Host of the evening, The Hon. Graeme West, Minister for Racing and Gaming, quoting from the New
Testament, spoke of the importance and relevance of our appreciation of early church history for
understanding current events. Dr Brian Croke, Director of NSW Catholic Education Commission, reiterated
these points from the point of view of Catholic educators, and referred to Pope Benedict XVI’s recent series
of addresses on the importance of studying the early church fathers, the New Testament, Latin and Greek,
for contemporary theology. Dr Croke praised the prolific publication output of the Centre which has earned
it a leading international profile and secured continuous government funding.

In particular he drew attention to the singular contribution made by Prof Pauline Allen to the study of this
discipline both nationally and internationally.

The event was attended by ACU’s chancellor Br. Julian McDonald, PVC Academic Professor Gabrielle
McMullen and PVC Research Professor Peter Wilson, other ACU staff, as well as members of Senate,
representatives of various churches and academics from a number of Australian universities and
theologates. View photos here.

In September 2007 Pauline Allen and Wendy Mayer attended at the invitation of the organisers an expert
seminar at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, organised by the Centre for Catholic Social Thought. The seminar,
“The Church Fathers and Catholic Social Thought”, stems from a project being conducted at the Catholic University in
Leuven by Johan Verstraeten and Johan Leemans with the assistance of Brian Matz exploring the utility of Greek
Patristic sources for social ethics for contemporary Catholic Social Thought. Pauline Allen contributed a paper at the conclusion of the two-day seminar in
which she summed up the results of mutual discussion about social teaching from the perspective of the
discipline of Patristics. Wendy Mayer contributed a paper on the Patristic audiences in a panel intended to
help contextualise the respective audiences of Patristic and Catholic social teaching for the seminar
participants.

The annual meeting of the Centre for Early Christian Studies (2-3 February 2007) was attended by 18
members of the Centre, from Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Japan. We were fortunate to have Prof
Peter Wilson (PVC Research) present on the first morning to address us on the Federal government’s
forthcoming Research Quality Framework exercise. Prof Kazuhiko Demura, former visiting scholar at the
Centre, travelled from Okayama University to update us on plans for the next meeting of the West Pacific
Rim Patristics Society, which will be held at Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai in 2009. Our current
visiting scholar, Prof Shigeki Tsuchihashi, was also present.

Prof. Pauline Allen, Director, was pleased to announce the promotions of three members (Raymond
Canning to professor, Lawrence Cross to associate professor and Jamie McLaren to reader and associate
professor), as well as the award of a five-year ARC research fellowship to Geoffrey Dunn. Other business matters raised at the meeting included a proposal for a new specialisation in Early Christianity in the MA Theology, and the teaching of existing Theology units in Ecclesiastical History. A large number of recent publications were officially launched by Prof Wilson, including two new volumes in the Early Christian Monographs series, and the fourth volume of proceedings of the Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church series, published in 2006. Photos of the meeting can be found here.

Geoffrey Dunn has been replaced on the ARC Poverty project by Edward Morgan. Edward has just received his doctorate from Cambridge for his dissertation "The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo".

Wendy Mayer recently completed a fellowship in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks (Sept 2006-May 2007) to work on a joint monograph with Pauline Allen, in which they will compile all of the evidence relating to the Christian churches and worship sites of Antioch from the fourth to seventh centuries.