

Introduction

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STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. C

Including Papers
Presented at the Sixth British Patristics Conference,
Birmingham, 5–7 September 2016

Edited by
H.A.G. HOUGHTON, M.L. DAVIES and M. VINZENT



PEETERS

LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

2020

Introduction

H.A.G. HOUGHTON, University of Birmingham, UK

The Sixth British Patristics Conference was held at the University of Birmingham from Monday 5th to Wednesday 7th September 2016. It bore witness to the ever-increasing popularity of this conference and the international nature of the gathering.¹ As with the Fifth British Patristics Conference held in London in 2014, over one hundred delegates attended from across the world. Many of them were doctoral students, presenting their research in an academic context for the first time, alongside established scholars from the UK and further afield.

The programme combined almost eighty academic contributions, in three parallel sessions, along with a series of additional events. The plenary lecturers were Professor David Parker and Professor Frances Young from the University of Birmingham (the present and former holder of the University's Edward Cadbury Chair of Theology) and the Revd Dr Jennifer Strawbridge of the University of Oxford. Two 'Meet the Publishers' sessions were convened, with representatives from Oxford University Press, Liverpool University Press and Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark in attendance at the conference. There were visits to Birmingham's Barber Institute and the Cadbury Research Library, home of the world-renowned Mingana Collection of Middle-Eastern Manuscripts. In addition, participants at the conference in the Nicolson Building enjoyed free entry to the neighbouring Winterbourne Botanical Garden. A number of attendees later wrote of their positive experience of the event, with one commenting that 'The atmosphere was one of the most friendly, collegial, and generous of any conference I have attended.' Pictures and information from the conference are available online with the Twitter hashtag of #patristics2016.

The conference was held in conjunction with the COMPAUL Project, funded by a European Research Council Starting Grant awarded to Dr H.A.G. Houghton between 2011 and 2016 ("The Earliest Commentaries on Paul as Sources for the Biblical Text", funded under the European Union Seventh Framework Programme [FP7/2007–2013] under grant agreement 283302). This project involved the examination of early Christian commentaries on the New Testament and their biblical text, in order to determine the extent to which each represented the text originally used by the commentator. The numerous outputs from the project,

¹ The internationalisation of the British Patristics Conference was also noted (and exemplified!) by a report on the Birmingham conference by Lavinia Cerioni, published in *Bollettino di studi latini* 47.1 (2017) 278–9.

many of which have been made available in Open Access, are listed on its website.²

Further information about the project is also given in the preface to the volume *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition* (Piscataway NJ, 2016). Six of the papers at the Sixth British Patristics Conference presented findings of the COMPAUL project, and several of the other contributions took up the invitation to focus on the significance of the Pauline Epistles or biblical manuscripts more generally within the study of Patristics.

The present volume provides the text of thirty-seven of the papers delivered at Birmingham, selected from those submitted for consideration by a process of peer-review. The contents are presented in a broadly chronological order of topic, with two of the plenary lectures appearing first. Even though they only represent a subset of the academic papers given in Birmingham, these contributions demonstrate the breadth of the topics treated at the conference while their authors reflect the international affiliations of the participants. As a discipline, Patristics appears to be in good health both in the United Kingdom and further afield. It is worth noting that, following the inauguration of the British Patristics Conference in Edinburgh in 2005, it has been hosted by a different British university on each occasion. The Seventh Conference in Cardiff in 2018 continues this trend.

The organising committee of the conference, chaired by Hugh Houghton, consisted of Ann Conway-Jones, Catherine Smith, Susan Blackburn Griffith and Rosalind MacLachlan. Several others provided practical assistance during the conference, including Dora Panella, Ben Haupt and Carolin Müller. The Anglican Chaplain at the University, the Revd Dr Sharon Jones, led daily prayers at the conference. We should also mention the contribution of Ryan Adams at venuebirmingham and Tamsin Cross in the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion. The publication of this volume has taken longer than it should have done, for which I offer my apologies. I would like to express my thanks to Dr Megan L. Davies and Professor Markus Vinzent for enabling it to see the light of day, to the contributors for their patience, and to my colleagues on the organising committee and all the participants in the conference for the happy memories of a highly successful and enjoyable event.

Birmingham, May 2019

² <https://birmingham.ac.uk/compaul>