

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY
OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Faculty of Arts



SSEC newsletter

ISSUE 94 — AUGUST 2021



Philippi

From the President's desk:



The first half of this year for SSEC has been an enormous success in spite of Covid 19. The Annual Conference was the first time since the beginning of the pandemic that we were able to meet face to face with our SSEC Visiting Fellow, Dr Michael Theophilos who was able to fly in from Melbourne. We were also able via Zoom to include Professor Larry Welborn from Fordham University, New York as one of our speakers! All the speakers introduced us to various aspects of early Christianity which was very helpful in our understanding of this important period of history. A great thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who made the conference a great success. If we are looking for a silver lining to the pandemic it has been the use of Zoom to continue our seminars. The seminars have been a resounding success as we have been able to continue these with attendees being able to join in the seminars from elsewhere in Australia and even overseas! Please stay tuned for the next upcoming series of seminars which will be via Zoom. If you have trouble with Zoom please get in contact with me and I will try and help. (don.barker@mq.edu.au)

With kind regards,

Don Barker

FROM the SECRETARY (Karyn Young)

SSEC supports students who are involved in the history of early Christianity, including The Tyndale Scholarship, small travel grants, the various SSEC prizes and the Patricia Geidans Prize. The New Testament and Early Christianity Seminar Group, convened by Don Barker (don.barker@mq.edu.au), provides a forum for discussion among current post-graduates and higher degree graduates.

SSEC has a very important role to play in investigating the history of early Christianity with its non-sectarian, historical approach, allowing a freedom to investigate this particular area of ancient history with academic rigour. Many SSEC members who were and are pursuing research in to the history of Early Christianity have been supported by SSEC and have won international recognition.

SSEC is indebted to Lesley Mascall for the newsletter, and to members of the committee who handle much of the business of SSEC, and assist with the conference and seminars.

Thank you to Gareth Wearne, and Louise Gosbell for managing the SSEC Facebook site, and to Gareth Wearne, especially Lyn Kidson, Margaret Mowczko and Louise Gosbell for work on the the website.

On behalf of SSEC, I would like to thank all the speakers who so willingly present outstanding papers at our seminars and conferences on a completely voluntary basis.

As always, a big thank you to our wonderful and loyal SSEC Members. Your support through membership and donations allows SSEC to make a valuable contribution to the study of the history of early Christianity.

SSEC Newsletter

SSEC Newsletter is published twice yearly for the Society of the Study of Early Christianity.

“The focus of the Society is on history: the study of Early Christianity in its Jewish and Graeco-Roman setting.”

August 2021 edition: Number 94

Editors: Lesley Mascall
Alanna Nobbs

Contributions: SSEC Members

Next newsletter is planned for
March 2022 —
deadline for contributions is
4 February 2022.

**Opinions expressed in all articles
reflect the views of the author.
The Society takes no stand in such
matters.**

For further information about the Society for the Study of Early Christianity, to update your contact details, or to subscribe to the SSEC Newsletter —

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(in emergency only)

Website: <https://mq-ssec.org/>



[Click here](#) for SSEC
Facebook link.

Upcoming **SSEC** events - for details, see Calendar of Events on the last page

For your diaries: next year's **SSEC** ANNUAL DAY CONFERENCE will be on Saturday, 1st May, 2022, at Robert Menzies College — with Philippi as the theme. If you have any ideas for a snappy title please email them to Karyn at ssec@mq.edu.au

★ Call for papers by **20 November 2021**.

Please supply firm Topic, Bio, Hi-res portrait photo and abstract for consideration of the SSEC conference sub-committee.

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|-------|---------------------|-------|--|------|
| Cost: | SSEC members | \$130 | Pensioner (age) | \$95 |
| | Alumni | \$140 | Full-time students | \$55 |
| | Non- members | \$145 | Individual lectures, per lecture | \$25 |
| | | | SSEC concession rate, per lecture | \$20 |

All 2021 conference talks were filmed, and most are accessible through “trybooking” for \$15 per talk. Just click here: <https://www.trybooking.com/BEZGD>.

If you attended the conference you can have access to these at no charge, by contacting karyn.young@mq.edu.au.

SSEC AGM 2020

As the SSEC AGM held via Zoom on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2021 the following were voted in:

President: Don Barker

Vice-President: Alanna Nobbs

Secretary/Treasurer: Karyn Young

Committee Members:

Bruce Barnes, Stephen Burford, Peter Eyland, Chris Forbes, Lyn Kidson, Paul Mckecknie, Lesley Mascall, Margaret Mowczko, Ryan Strickler, Gareth Wearne, Malcolm Choat ex officio.

Many thanks to these and to the earlier retirees from the committee — Samuel Cook, Lydia Gore-Jones, Leigh Hess, Paul March, Bronwen Neil, Sue Price, Gillian Spalding-Stracey – for your invaluable contribution to the Society.

SSEC PEOPLE, and other items of interest

There have been many changes with staff. For details please consult the [staff list](#).

The Ancient History Discipline head is Professor Ray Laurence.

The head of Department of History and Archaeology is Professor Malcolm Choat.

SSEC events — draft programme, pending easing of lock down, is printed on the back page.

Non-SSEC events



Presbyters in the Early Church **Online Seminars, September 15-17th 2021, 9-10 AM (GMT+2)**

"Presbyters" (πρεσβύτεροι) were evidently significant leaders in the Early Church, and their presence is widely attested from the earliest times. There is, however, no consensus about the identity of presbyters, their relationship to other leaders (e.g. ἐπίσκοποι ἑκδόχοι), and their functions within the Christian communities. Moreover, even the presence of the word πρεσβύτερος (often in the plural form) has sometimes been obscured by being translated as "priests" (e.g. Douay-Rheims), a term also used, for example, to translate the Latin sacerdos, which in the first centuries only referred to the "bishop".

In this interdisciplinary study, we focus on the term πρεσβύτερος (πρ) / presbyter in the early Christian sources of the first and second centuries, including its background and horizons in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the early Jewish and Greco-Roman sources. We have invited experts on the primary sources to consider the identity of the presbyters and how they functioned within a community. These specialists are drawn from diverse confessional and national backgrounds, and bring expertise in the distinct but related fields of Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, Second Temple Judaism, New Testament, Classics, and Patristics. By examining the primary texts themselves, rather than importing later ideas, we hope to discover more about the nature of presbyters in the Early Church.

The three online seminars will serve as a "preview" of the book *Presbyters in the Early Church: The First Two Centuries* edited by Bart Koet, Edwina Murphy and Murray Smith, to be published in 2022.

The sessions are organized by the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology in collaboration with the Netherlands Center for the Study of Early Christianity (NCSEC).

Program

15 September, 9-10 AM (GMT+2)

Zaqenim in the Prophets, Dr. **Archibald van Wieringen**, Tilburg School of Catholic Theology
Chair: **Murray Smith** MA, Christ College, Sydney

16 September, 9-10 AM (GMT+2)

Presbyteroi in the Septuagint, Dr. **Susan Docherty**, Newman University, Birmingham
Chair: Dr. **Bart Koet**, Tilburg School of Catholic Theology

17 September, 9-10 AM (GMT+2)

Elders in Greco-Roman Sources, Dr. **Lyn Kidson**, Alphacrucis College, Sydney
Chair: Dr. **Edwina Murphy**, Morling College, Sydney

The sessions are hosted by Dr. **Arnold Smeets**, Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.

Practical Information

- * Admission is free. Please register here www.tilburg.nl/presbyters. Participants will receive an email with the zoomlink on September 14, 2021.
- * Please feel free to send this invitation to other interested scholars.
- * 9 AM GMT+2 in Amsterdam is 8 AM in London, 10 AM in Joensuu, 5 PM in Sydney, 2 AM in Chicago.

Announcement In February and May of this year, the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology facilitated a series of online seminars on deacons in the Early Church. The recordings of these seminars can be accessed at this link www.tilburg.nl/NCSEC/Activities.



SSEC has previously co-operated with the Sir Asher Joel Foundation which supported the archaeology of early Israel.

SSEC awards

PATRICIA GEIDANS PRIZE FOR 2020

This prize is awarded for the best thesis in the Master of Research programme in the broad area of Early Christian and Jewish Studies. The prize was awarded this year to Eveline Handby.

Patricia Geidans OAM received her Australia Day honours in 2009. She was a founding member of the Society, for many years SSEC's Secretary and attended many of the SSEC functions. Pat generously left a bequest to the society which will be put towards offering a future post-doctoral fellowship in the history of early Christianity.

The ALANNA NOBBS PRIZE

This prize is awarded for the best thesis by a woman student in the Master of Research programme — presented by Australasian Women in Ancient World Studies.

In 2021 it has been awarded to Stephanie McCarthy-Reece.

SSEC SCHOLARSHIPS

The Macquarie/Tyndale Cambridge Travelling Scholarship is kindly funded by some SSEC members who designate donations for this purpose.

Because of Covid travel restrictions the Tyndale Scholarship is not offered in 2022. Details on applying for this and other Ancient History scholarships will be on Ancient history website when travel is possible.

Previous winners of the Tyndale Scholarship are:

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|---|--|
| 2009: Bernard Doherty and Gerald Donker | 2015: James Unwin |
| 2010: Murray Smith | 2016: Lydia Gore-Jones and Rory Shiner |
| 2011: Shin Min Seok | 2017: Benjamin Overcash |
| 2012: Bradley Bitner | 2018: Marty Feltham |
| 2013: Julien Ogereau | 2019: David Evans |
| 2014: Lyn Kidson | 2020: Charles Thorne |
| 2021: Gillian Spalding-Stracey | |

SSEC POSTGRADUATE TRAVELLING GRANTS.

Each year SSEC offers up to 4 travelling grants to members who are also postgraduates enrolled in higher degree work in Ancient History at Macquarie. These are awarded competitively and are worth up to \$500. Please apply to the secretary outlining your proposed travel, how it helps your thesis completion and how the money is to be spent. It may not, by University rules, be spent on air travel but can be used for conference registration or accommodation, for internal travel, etc. All refunds are given after the presentation of receipts. Winners are asked please to provide a short report for the following SSEC newsletter.

At present this is subject to travel being allowed.

Non SSEC awards:

Congratulations to Dr. Lyn Kidson, who was awarded the Macquarie Gale British School in Rome scholarship for 2021, for her project: "Coins of the New Testament world: the intersection between early Christianity, imperial ideology, visual communication, and the Roman economy". She summarised her project thus: "There is at present a reconsideration of the role of imagery on Roman coins and what can be learnt about their significance for their users. I will be designing a model so that the imagery and inscriptions on Roman provincial coinage can be brought into dialogue with the New Testament. My question is how do the NT writers interact with this imperial ideology, especially in their allusions to imperial imagery that was consistently used on coins? This project has significance for reading the NT and other writers of the early imperial period such as Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, and Dio Chrysostom." She hopes to go to Rome when travel resumes.

Ancient History Affiliates:

Macquarie Ancient History Association (MAHA)

For enquiries 9850 9965, 9850 8833, or

email: ancienthistory@mq.edu.au

or website: www.ancienthistory.com.au/news.php

Australian Centre for Egyptology

email: egypt@mq.edu.au

website: egyptology.mq.edu.au

Macquarie Ancient Languages School (MALS) offers a wide range of courses in Classical & Koine Greek, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Classical Hebrew, Akkadian, Sanskrit and others, including Hieratic and Aramaic. This is currently offered online.

The program, timetable and application form will be available on the Ancient History website at <http://www.anchist.mq.edu.au/mals.html> To add your name to the MALS mailing list, email: mals@mq.edu.au

Continuing Education Programme - Cost \$160 per unit.

Dates for sessions, and the full list of units on offer are available on the department's website. [click here](#). Late enrolments are currently being accepted.

One student remarked "This course provides a wonderful opportunity to learn about the various aspects of ancient Greece, and gives access to top class teaching without the stress of exams".

**Paul, Embezzlement, and the Corinthian Christ Group:
An Examination of the Charges against Paul in Light of Similar Groups in Antiquity.**

The Painful Visit to Corinth

In 2 Cor 2:1, Paul makes a passing reference to a recent, painful visit he had made to Corinth. He is intentionally vague in his description of what happened while he was there, but it seems clear that what prompted the visit was a negative response to our 1 Corinthians. The overall letter of 1 Corinthians had a broad agenda. It was sent to deal with numerous matters that were threatening the community, ranging from questions over Paul's credentials as an apostle (1–4), to immorality and other matters of marriage (5–7), confusion over continued attendance at festivals (8–10), disorder at the regular gathering (11–14), and finally to confusion over the resurrection (15). These are dealt with at length throughout the bulk of the letter. Then, right at the very end, just before the closing greetings, Paul takes a moment to bring clarity over a final matter of the offering.

In 1 Cor 16:1–4, Paul gives some final instructions as to what to do with regard to the Jerusalem offering. The brevity with which he deals with it would suggest that it was a question from the Corinthians (as indicated by the *peri de*), but one made in passing, a simple request for clarification over the practicalities of the collection. Unbeknownst to Paul, however, his brief instruction would be the catalyst for a serious breakdown between himself and some of the Corinthians.

Paul sent our 1 Corinthians to Corinth and then sent Timothy afterward to follow it up. Timothy then returned to Paul with troubling news: the letter was not effective, and now new issues had emerged. First, those who previously opposed Paul (1 Cor 4:18–21) continued to do so but were now emboldened in their arrogance. Previous doubts about his ability as a teacher remained, but now even his credentials as an apostle were under question. Second, new teachers had come to Corinth, the self-styled “super-apostles”, who were undermining Paul's authority in the community. Third, perhaps fuelled by the intruders, questions had been raised about Paul's handling of the offering, particularly in light of his refusal to accept their support while he was in Corinth (1 Cor 9:1–18). Some of the Corinthians, it seems, thought that he was keeping back a bit of the money for himself (2 Cor 11:7–10; 12:16). As a result of these suspicions, some of the influential members had openly refused to participate in the offering.

This disturbing news from Timothy prompted an emergency visit by Paul (2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). Welborn has offered a brief but insightful reconstruction of the key events of this visit. Upon Paul's arrival, the Corinthians called a meeting to address the concerns that prompted Paul's visit. During the proceeding, an individual from within the assembly, whom Paul refers to later as a “wrongdoer” (2 Cor 7:12), stood up and publicly attacked Paul (2 Cor 2:5; 7:12), accusing him of embezzlement (2 Cor 12:16–18; 13:1–2)—almost certainly charging him with keeping some or perhaps all of the offering for himself. If this accusation was true, that Paul was in fact embezzling the money, it would be considered a severe violation in any such group.

The Charge of Embezzlement

The administration of an ancient group's finances was of paramount concern, as it still is today. When we examine the charters of associations as well as the Essene communities, we see that they had quite a bit to say with regard to proper management of the community funds. The Damascus Document, citing Lev 25:14, forbids defrauding one's neighbour and insists that members be open and honest about every detail of a transaction. To withhold any knowledge of a fault in that which he is dealing is cheating (4Q271.3.1.5). Elsewhere it commands that

anyone who lies knowingly in a matter of money must be expelled from the common meal and suffer reduced rations (CDA 14.20; similarly, 1QS.6.25; 7.5–9). Associations were also concerned with matters of internal financial management. Regulations address in great detail numerous financial issues, including instructions about membership fees and penalties for those who failed to pay; others are concerned with the amount required for the provision of the sacrifice as well as instructions for those who fail to contribute (e.g., *IG II*² 1339; 1361; *GRA I* 14). These same regulations also give instruction for what to do with those accused of maladministration. One inscription stands out for examination given our context:

Let the chosen administrator collect what is owing to the association according to the testament and all the other things assigned to him by the supervisor. Let him hand over to the monthly official the amount prescribed in the law and also the amount collected for the sacrifices that was not spent, and anything else the association decides. Let him hand over the remainder at the meeting. Now if he should not pay any of that which is prescribed or the excess funds should be handed over to the meeting, let him owe to the association twice the amount he did not give. Also, let the supervisor record in the association's record books the amount not paid as being owed double. And he shall be excluded from the association until he pays, and the right of execution shall be with men chosen for seizure, according to the law. And if he does not pay the monthly officials, the ruling shall be against him in accordance with what is written in the law. (*IG XII,3* 330)

Looking at the meeting in Corinth, Paul had previously given clear instructions so that everything about the collection would be above board. He says, in 1 Cor 16:2–4, that the Corinthians should bring to the weekly meeting something to contribute to the offering and then select some of their own members to escort the offering to Jerusalem. Then, when Paul arrived, he would write letters of recommendation for the men and, if they desired, escort them as well. All of this is in keeping with what would be expected in a similar group. Some of the Corinthians, however, had assumed the money would not make it to Jerusalem; that Paul would instead pocket it for himself. From what we have seen, this was a very serious charge. Embezzlement would not be tolerated in any group and such a charge, if proven, would invite serious consequence.

A False Accusation

At this point in the meeting, we must speculate that Paul did not remain silent. He would have been confident of his innocence and would have surely offered the following explanation of his behaviour, which he articulates in his subsequent letter. He had lowered himself to preach to them for free (2 Cor 11:7); the Macedonians had supported him while he was in Corinth (2 Cor 11:8–9); he does this (ironically, it seems) to *remove* suspicion of fraudulent motives (2 Cor 11:10–12); he does it to be a blessing, not a burden (2 Cor 11:20; 12:13–14); he does it because the true role of an apostle is to give out, not receive (2 Cor 12:14–15). Whether or not he stated all these points in the hearing is impossible to know; at the very least, he would have made something of a case along these lines. Importantly for our discussion, however, is Paul's presumption of innocence. From his perspective, this was clearly a false accusation. Worse, it was a false accusation against the head of the group. Once again, this was a serious matter.

According to the Damascus Document, whoever spreads slander (similarly for gossip about another) about a neighbour is to be banned from the meal for one year (4Q266 10.2.14). It is worse, however, for a complaint against the fathers: this resulted in permanent banishment (4Q270 7.1.13; similarly, 1QS 7.1–4). Regulations from associations often outlined a variety of offences that a member might commit. These included verbal or physical abuse of a member, fighting, raucous talk about members' families and genealogies, or accusations against members. Fines were different whether the abused was a regular member or president, with an increase in the fine for abusing the president (e.g., *PCairDem* 30606; *CIL XIV* 2112).

Returning to the meeting in Corinth. Paul has been accused of embezzlement, a very serious charge. He has offered an apparently weak defence of himself, but a defence, nonetheless: he is completely innocent in the matter. If he is in fact proven innocent, then the tables are turned on the accuser: he is a false accuser and has just slandered the head of the group. But the situation was even more troubling than a false accusation—it was not corroborated by witnesses.

A Lack of Witnesses

According to Welborn, at some point during the proceeding, Paul noted the absence of a corroborating witness. He thus invoked the Deuteronomic statute that every matter must be established by two or three witnesses (2 Cor 13:1). The rest of the group, however, remained silent, neither verifying the claims nor coming to Paul's defence.

The need for witnesses was particularly important in the Essene community, the basis for which being Deut 19:15. This strict Deuteronomic requirement for two or three witnesses carried through into Judaism as well as early Christianity (Matt 18:16). According to the Damascus Document, if someone sees a man violating the law, the witness must tell him to his face in the presence of the Overseer, who will make a written note of it. If it occurs again in the presence of a witness, the offender must be expelled from the community. If two witnesses see it and disagree on the details, the accused will only be banned from the meal. However, if the two witnesses are reliable and agree to what they saw, his fate is sealed (CDA 9.16–22).

With regard to Paul's situation, Welborn notes, the requirement for multiple witnesses "was meant to protect the accused from a single malicious witness intent on doing harm." He argues that Paul was cognizant of this purpose and used it in a way that was consistent with that purpose. That is, it is clearly Paul "who is seeking protection under the Deuteronomic rule from pernicious accusation by a malicious witness." Consequently, in the absence of sufficient witnesses, the accusation remained unverified; this was enough to suspend the verdict, but the matter remained open.

The Fallout

Paul's accuser, in other words, had crossed a significant line. He had levelled a very serious but unverified, false accusation against the head of the community—and this in front of his friends (his children!). No contemporary group would tolerate such behaviour from its members and, it seems, the Christ groups were no exception. Paul departed Corinth for Ephesus, but in a final, parting shot at the Corinthians, he warned them that he would return and deal with the wrongdoer (2 Cor 2:1; 13:2). Upon arrival at Ephesus, however, he chose instead to write the "letter of tears" (2 Cor 2:1–4; 7:8), which he sent with Titus to address the situation. What happened when Titus delivered the letter is impossible to know for certain, but from Paul's report in 2 Cor 2:5–11, the Corinthians punished the wrongdoer.

This begs the final question: what became of the offender? Welborn proposes that the punishment was a censure, with perhaps a fine. This would fit well with the punishments we see in the associations. Others suggest the offender was likely banned from participation in congregational activities, particularly the eucharist (see Thrall and Furnish). Given the severity of the incident, this would also be fitting. Whatever the outcome though, Paul deemed the punishment sufficient and encouraged the Corinthians to restore the wrongdoer.



Opinions expressed in all articles reflect the views of the authors. The Society takes no stand in such matters.

SSEC CALENDAR OF EVENTS AS AT 1st AUGUST 2021

| DATE AND TIME | EVENT |
|---|---|
| Tuesday 17th August 7pm - via Zoom | Speaker: John Guerra Topic: <i>Lucius Junius Gallio: Laissez-faire Proconsul and Unwitting Collaborator (Acts 18)</i> |
| Wednesday 1st September 7pm - via Zoom | Speaker: Lisa Agaiby Topic: <i>The Manuscript Project at the Monastery of St Paul the Hermit at the Red Sea Egypt</i> |
| Wednesday 6th October 7pm – via Zoom | Speaker: Edwina Murphy Topic: <i>Cyprian of Carthage and the OT Canon of Scripture</i> |
| Tuesday 26th October 6pm - via Zoom | Annual General Meeting |
| Tuesday 2nd November - 7pm Please register your interest with the Secretary. If it can be on campus, we will let you know. | Christmas Function Speaker: Chris Forbes Topic: <i>to be advised</i> |

For further details, please visit the SSEC Website: <https://mq-ssec.org/>
 (member password is AugustusRocks2021) or contact us as follows:
T: +61 (2) 9850 8844, **E:** SSEC@mq.edu.au (email is preferred)