



Prof. Blowers lecturing at St Andrew's



His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos welcomes Prof. Blowers

The Gospel according to the Fathers

The Visit of Professor Paul M. Blowers and the Round Table on St Maximus the Confessor at St Andrew's College

In the second half of July, for six full days St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College hosted the visit of Professor Paul M. Blowers, from Emmanuel Christian Seminary (Tennessee, USA), who offered two lecture series, *Spiritual Pedagogy in Saint Maximus the Confessor* (17-19 July 2013) and *Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology* (22-24 July 2013). Professor Blowers is an eminent academic of international reputation, with a background in the early Alexandrines, the Cappadocian Fathers and St Maximus the Confessor. Our College Dean, His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, warmly welcomed Professor Blowers, with whom he shared memories related to a series of celebrated patristic scholars of our times. The honoured guest and his wife, Mrs Sandy Blowers, were shown the same welcoming attitude, love and respect by the Faculty of St Andrew's and the community of Pantanassa Monastery, which they visited together with members of our staff.

During their two-week stay in Sydney, the guests experienced various aspects of the life of the Orthodox in the Antipodes, from the spiritual milieu of the Monastery to the joviality of the Faculty of St Andrew's, from the vibrant presence of clergymen of three Orthodox jurisdictions, namely, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Antioch and the Patriarchate of Serbia, to that of monastic and lay students belonging to a variety of traditions, Greek, Serbian, Romanian and Coptic, and last but not least the presence of our friends that belong to other Christian backgrounds. Significantly, the representatives of these Christian traditions who took part in the two courses found common grounds in the patristic wisdom advocated by Professor Blowers.

The two series of lectures offered by Professor Blowers covered aspects pertaining to the spiritual teaching of St Maximus the Confessor, the celebrated seventh century theologian, spiritual father and martyr, and likewise topics of the early Christian teaching on creation as a manifold gift of God. It seems to me that the common denominator of the two courses was the overall connectivity of tradition ('all things hold together,' the Professor kept saying) and the fact that in everything that they accomplished, whether by way of treatises, exegesis, homilies or poetry, the Late Antique and Byzantine Fathers remained mindful of the formative dimensions pertaining to the Christian teaching, aiming at spiritual transformation. This was in fact an aspect that recurred both in the lectures and the unfolding discussions.

The lectures of Professor Blowers add significantly to the developing study of patristic tradition at St Andrew's, which, together with the two units in which



From L to R: Dr Bronwen Neil FAHA, Professor Paul M. Blowers, Dr Adam Cooper, the Very Revd Dr Doru Costache

these lectures are included, currently displays eleven courses at various undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Of immediate interest is that these same lectures enriched both myself, as initiator of the event, and all those that left behind their own for the sake of what I call the 'Gospel according to the Fathers' - the message delivered in Sydney by our distinguished guest both with scholarly rigour and genuine Christian fervour. I thank Professor Paul Blowers for sharing with us his depth of knowledge, together with his Christian wisdom and love. I thank Mrs Sandy Blowers, for her kind friendship. I also thank my colleague, Anastasios Kalogerakis, who competently sorted out the conundrums pertaining to the practical organisation of an event of this magnitude. Of course, I thank all my colleagues at St Andrew's who showed interest in this patristic celebration, namely, Associate Professor Angelo Karantonis, Dr Guy Freeland, Dr Philip Kariatlis, Dimitri Kepreotes and Mario Baghos. I am especially grateful to the clergymen who attended the lectures, The Very Reverend Abbot Eusebios Pantanassiotis, The Very Reverend Archimandrite Kyrillos Zisis, The Reverend Father Leslie Kostoglou, The Reverend Father Constantine Varipatis, The Reverend Father Jean Mawal, and The Reverend Archdeacon Siluan Mrakic. I was impressed by the overwhelming number of attendees, both currently studying at St Andrew's and past students, who enrolled in these courses either toward credit or as auditors, among whom I am happy to mention the online participation of The Reverend Father Evangelos Thiani from Kenya.

The climax of Professor Blowers' visit at St Andrew's was undoubtedly the round table on St Maximus the Confessor, held on 27 July 2013. Moderated by the Academic Director of the College, Dr Philip Kariatlis, the workshop gathered around the Professor two well-known Australian scholars and dear friends of St Andrew's, Dr Bronwen Neil (Australian Catholic University, Brisbane) and Dr Adam Cooper (John Paul II Institute,



Abbot Eusebios guiding our overseas guests through Pantanassa Monastery

Melbourne), and myself. What served as a pretext for this gathering was the upcoming release of a monumental collective volume, the *Oxford Handbook to Maximus the Confessor*, to which all four presenters have contributed chapters on a variety of topics.

The speakers addressed the current trends and themes in Maximian studies, highlighting new aspects of the saint's teaching. An interesting dialogue between Paul Blowers and Adam Cooper followed the four presentations, which was in turn continued by an intense conversation between the panellists and the audience. Symptomatic for the level of interest in tradition in our region, the event was moderately attended, mainly by the staff of St Andrew's and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, and by students and graduates of the College. I am grateful to all of them for supporting with such enthusiasm this initiative of the patristics arm of our College's Department of Theology.

My gratitude goes also to three friends of St Andrew's, Dr Cullan Joyce, lecturer in philosophy at the Catholic Theological College (MCD University of Divinity, Melbourne), and two doctoral candidates, Ian Michie (Macquarie University) and Andrew Mellas (University of Sydney), who honoured us with their interest and presence. Last but not least, I am thankful to Professor Blowers, Dr Neil and Dr Cooper for accepting my invitation to join this patristic festival, which should be considered as the seventh day of this marvellous series of events.

I am happy to announce that His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, Founder and Dean of the College, in fact the very Heart of St Andrew's, already gave to Professor Blowers the blessing to return next year in September as a keynote speaker for our 2014 Patristic Symposium. I look forward to the eighth day of this event.

*Protopresbyter (Dr) Doru Costache
Senior Lecturer in Patristic Studies
St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College*