Dr Philip Burton BA, PhD

Reader in Latin and Early Christian Studies

Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology (/schools/historycultures/departments/caha/index.aspx)

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About

I have a long-standing fascination with three areas – language and linguistics, the early history of Christianity, and the civilization of the Graeco-Roman world. In my work at Birmingham, I'm fortunate enough to be able to pursue these fascinations and to share them with others. In an age when religious fundamentalisms are often seen as one of the great challenges facing humanity, it is a privilege and responsibility to help people understand ancient religious texts sensitively and with respect to their original context.

Qualifications

- BA
- PhD (Cantab)

Biography

Philip Burton is a specialist on the relationship between early Christianity and the wider world of Graeco-Roman literature and thought. In his first book, *The Old Latin Gospels* (OUP, 2000), he examined the textual history and language of the earliest Latin translations of the Four Gospels, exploring particularly their translation technique and their value as a source for post-classical, non-literary Latin. His most recent book, *Language in the Confessions of Augustine* (OUP, 2007), brings together insights from linguistics and ancient theories of language. Since 2002 he has been involved in two AHRC-funded projects to produce a definitive edition of the Old Latin manuscript traditions and early citations John (visit **www.birmingham.ac.uk/itsee (http://www.itsee.bham.ac.uk/)** for more information). He has also published on the Gothic version of the Bible and its value as a linguistic document. He is currently working also on the reception of classical antiquity and early Christianity in modern culture.

Teaching

I teach across a range of subjects around the general theme of the languages, literature, and thought of the ancient world. Recent modules include 'Christianity from Jewish Sect to Roman State Religion', 'Magic, Religion, and Philosophy in the Ancient World,' 'Greek and Roman Epic', and 'Tolkien: Midlands, Mediterranean, Middle-Earth'. I supervise undergraduate dissertations across a range of subjects, from Greek and Latin literature to the reception of the ancient world. I would like to supervise more on linguistics, if you're interested

Postgraduate supervision

- Greek and Latin linguistics
- Early Christianity
- Classical literature, especially later Latin
- Reception of classical antiquity

Research

- The Old Latin Bible; how the Bible was translated into Latin, what practical issues confronted the translators and how they addressed them, and how we can use surviving manuscripts and quotations in ancient writers to reconstruct these early versions;
- The development of Christian Latin discourse; how Christian writers used the language of the Latin Bible and the wider range of stylistic possibilities in Latin to create a range of more or less distinctly Christian idiolects;
- Ancient and modern descriptions of Latin; how Latin speakers described and conceptualized their language, what defined the limits of acceptable and unacceptable language, and how far these descriptions map onto modern linguistic categories;
- Reception of classical antiquity and early Christianity; the ways in which modern novelists, poets, translators, and others have reinvented the ancient world and ancient Christianity as a means of talking about matters of contemporary concern to themselves.

Publications

- Language in the Confessions of Augustine. OUP, 2007
- The Confession of Augustine (translation). Everyman, 2001

- The Old Latin Gospels. A study of their texts and language. OUP, 2000
- 'Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Eagle of the Ninth*: A Festival of Britain?' in *Greece and Rome* 58.1, 2011
- 'Revisiting the Christian Latin Sondersprache Hypothesis,' in H. Houghton and D. Parker (edd). Texts and Studies, 2008
- The Values of a Classical Education. Satirical Elements in the Claudius novels of Robert Graves. Journal of English Studies, 1995

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