

Peter of Damascus

Byzantine Monk and Spiritual Theologian

There are countless under-studied or ignored authors from the Byzantine Empire awaiting scholarly attention. In the area of Byzantine spirituality the twelfth century as a whole has received little consideration, primarily owing to the perceived lack of any significant or noteworthy author. While the tenth-century mystic Symeon the New Theologian and the fourteenth-century hesychast Gregory Palamas have been the focus of much academic industry, little serious attention is paid to figures from the intervening centuries. Recognizing that literature on monasticism and empire in the twelfth century is extensive, this book hopes to fill the void that appears to have marked the study of spirituality of the same period by taking as its subject the twelfth-century monk and spiritual theologian Peter of Damascus. Although he is the second most voluminous writer included in the *Philokalia*, Peter is one of the least studied of the philokalic authors. The main study devoted to him, now seventy years old, by Jean Gouillard was incomplete and, on some points, erroneous. As well, Gouillard's reading of the Petrine philokalic texts through an Evagrian or Maximian lens gives the reader an inadequate and inaccurate picture of Peter's spiritual theology. *Peter of Damascus: Byzantine Monk and Spiritual Theologian* seeks to renew interest in a figure who was an important contributor to the larger field of Byzantine monasticism and spirituality. Using unedited manuscripts, prosopographical evidence, and published sources, this study attempts not only to recover the shape of Peter's life and work but also to elucidate his spirituality through a detailed examination of both *The Admonition to His Own Soul* and *The Spiritual Alphabet*, demonstrating the ways in which that spirituality remained accessible to both monastics and non-monastics.

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PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

Acknowledgements

This book has been published with the help of grants from Biola University's Torrey Honors Institute, School of Arts and Sciences and Institute for Spiritual Formation.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Peters, Greg, 1971–

Peter of Damascus : Byzantine monk and spiritual theologian / Greg Peters.

(Studies and texts, ISSN 00825328 ; 175)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-88844-175-1

1. Peter, of Damascus, Saint, fl. 12th cent. 2. Monks – Byzantine Empire – Biography. 3. Christian saints – Byzantine Empire – Biography. 4. Spirituality – Orthodox Eastern Church – History of doctrines – Middle Ages, 600–1500. I. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies II. Title. III. Series: Studies and texts (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies) ; 175

BX395.P445P48 2011

281.9092

C2011-904923-6

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Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C4

www.pims.ca

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*To my wife, Christina,
for unconditional love and support*

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Abbreviations

- BMFD* *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, ed. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, 5 vols. (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000).
- ODB* *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A.P. Kazhdan, Alice-Marie Talbot, Anthony Cutler, Timothy E. Gregory and Nancy P. Ševčenko, 3 vols. (Crestwood, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- PG* *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1857–1866).
- Phil.* *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*, ed. and trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1981, 1984), vols. 2 and 3.
- PL* *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1844–1864).

Acknowledgments

To research and write on an obscure figure like Peter of Damascus has proved both rewarding and challenging. The rewards came with uncovering new and previously undiscovered connections between Peter and twelfth-century Byzantium, identifying new texts and pieces of information related to him, as well as with the joy of spending so much time concentrating exclusively on his spiritual theology. The challenges came in trying to stay connected with the larger discipline of Byzantine studies, when a lack of peers with whom I could share my discoveries made it difficult for me to keep the forest in view for the trees. However, I have enjoyed the work, and if my efforts serve to stimulate interest in Peter among Byzantinists as well as scholars and students of Christian spirituality, then it will have been time well spent. For understanding both the opportunities and the challenges presented by the project, I wish to thank especially T. Allan Smith, CSB, of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, both for overseeing my first foray into the thought of Peter of Damascus and for his support over the past eight years while I have continued researching and writing on this neglected Byzantine spiritual theologian.

As all authors acknowledge, the writing of a book is impossible without the support of many people. I would like to thank my sons, Brendan and Nathanael, for bringing so much joy to the end of each day of researching and writing. Knowing that they would be at home each evening waiting for me helped to get me through many days when I would rather have forsaken the project. I would also like to thank Flo Ebeling and the entire Biola University Interlibrary Loan staff for the constant and diligent procuring of books. Thanks are also due to Professor Robert Sinkewicz at the University of Toronto for help with citing and locating Greek manuscripts, and to Professor Amy Obrist at Biola for assistance in translating Russian texts. The larger part of this study was written while on research leave from Biola University. For this I thank the administration of Biola University for funding this leave and for my colleagues and students in the Torrey Honors Institute, who make teaching and working

at Biola University such a joy. Appreciation is also extended to my research assistant Stephanie Greer for her help in many areas of the project, and to Monica Hopson for her work on the index. Finally, my greatest supporter over the past eighteen years has been my wife, Christina. Without her there never would have been a doctoral thesis on Peter of Damascus, much less a book. I dedicate this book to her in loving affection.