

**Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter*,
Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012, 329 pp,
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Larry Helyer, professor emeritus of biblical studies at Taylor University, has accustomed us with thorough introductions to large subjects. He has written an introduction to second temple Jewish literature, a biblical theology of Jesus, Paul, and John; and now, in *The Life and Witness of Peter*, he concentrates upon the great “rock” among the apostles, the prominent figure of St. Peter.

The book falls into three main sections: 1) a biographical sketch drawn from the Gospels, Acts, and Paul’s letters; 2) introductions and theological explorations of 1 and 2 Peter; 3) an account of early non-canonical traditions about Peter and his legendary legacy in church history. This review will give a selective summary and assessment.

Helyer shows that, following Peter’s encounter with Jesus on the occasion of the miraculous fishing, the future apostle went from respect to reverence. The name Peter given by Jesus to Simon reveals his character and announces his leadership role in the Church. Peter speaks for the twelve at his famous confession, which affirms Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and as the divine Son of God, though at that point, he barely understood either title. Jesus’ response designates Peter as the key rock of the early church, but not as the first pope. His authority to “bind and loose” means “he announces the terms of admittance into the new covenant community and establishes the limits of acceptable behavior within that fellowship” (45). Jesus’ transfiguration validates Peter’s confession and anticipates his own vindication. But for Peter, the road to resurrection would be distressing and fraught with failure. That he is the first apostle to see his risen Lord indicates his forgiveness; and Jesus’ commission to feed his sheep (Jn 21) confirms his restoration. He is also foretold that he would glorify God by his martyr death, but in a way entirely different than he envisioned in his

Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter*

early zeal (Jn 13, 37). Because 1 Peter is addressed to suffering Christians, “the shadow of the cross shapes its Christological reflections” (128). Helyer treats five Christological titles: 1) Jesus is the spotless **Lamb of God**, who fulfills, transcends and terminates the OT. 2) He is the **Suffering Servant** and substitutionary sacrifice for sin, who illustrates the middle path between violent opposition and passive submission. 3) Jesus is the foundation **Stone** that unites the Church but makes those who do not obey the Word to stumble. 4) He is the messianic **Shepherd-king**, whose rule reflects God’s own leadership and defines the role of Christian priests. 5) These themes are united in Jesus as God’s promised **Christ**, who provides both the pattern and power for believers to persevere through suffering.

2 Peter is a parenetic and polemical letter with “the feel of a last testament” (1,12.15) and an “apocalyptic substratum” (206-7). Against scholarly consensus, Helyer argues that Peter is the author of this “second letter” (3,1) destined to the same exiled Anatolian believers addressed in 1 Peter. Peter’s prophetic warnings to deviant teachers rest on biblical stories which prefigure the climactic and destructive divine judgment that awaits them. Although 2,3 allows the possibility of annihilation, Helyer, in accord with Jesus and John, prefers the eternal punishment interpretation, with punishment rather dimly defined as exclusion from God’s presence. The fact that God’s will that all people should come to repentance goes apparently unfulfilled does not need be explained by “distinguishing between ‘desiring’ and ‘decreeing’ as two aspects of God’s will” (263). Helyer rightly allows this mysterious paradox to humble us. The new heaven and earth retains some continuity with the present cosmos, which, accordingly, will not be destroyed but renewed. However, it comes *after* the day of the Lord, when everything done in the earth will be revealed (rather than “burned up”). Thus a forceful warning remains for immoral teachers: judgment involves full disclosure!

The final three chapters present Peter’s legacy in history and tradition. The author resorts to primary sources, which supply stories about Peter’s ministry and martyrdom in Rome. In the non-canonical works attributed to Peter or containing legends about him, Helyer finds “a discernible trajectory (...) away from reliance on Gospel tradition toward more adventuresome embellishment and creativity” (300). The final, brief chapter reflects on Peter’s position with believers as a fellow pilgrim, pastor and a practical theologian of the cross. His balance between separatism and assimilation

has proven difficult to maintain, so we must let him continually challenge us.

Although Helyer's purpose is not to break new exegetical ground, he does offer some fresh, insightful interpretations. For example, in Acts, he sees Peter using his "keys" to unlock the doors and admit people into the kingdom in three crucial situations: the Jewish Pentecost; the Samaritan Pentecost, when he crossed a hostile ethnic-religious barrier; and, most importantly, the Gentile Pentecost, when the "massive wall" (78) separating Jews and Gentiles was abolished. Also, in Peter's instruction to suffering slaves, Helyer detects veiled allusions to the life of Joseph, whose diligence and submission won human and divine favour (Gen 39, 21; 1 Pet 2, 12.20) and whose suffering served a redemptive purpose (Gen 50, 20; 1 Pet 2, 24).

Helyer's discussion of 1 Peter 3, 18-22 demonstrates his ability to cope with difficult, hot debated texts, point to relevant literature and draw out theological and pastoral implications without getting lost in exegetical thickets. This affirmation of "the central saving acts of redemption" aims to remind believers of the redemptive potential of unjust suffering and of their shared destiny with the vindicated and victorious Christ. Though persecuted and powerless, they can rest assured of salvation, like those in the ark. Though reviled and rejected, they must maintain a righteous witness, like Noah. Helyer reminds his readers that although the Western Church is no longer a vulnerable minority, for whom retaliation is not a viable option, bearing unjust suffering with faith and without revenge testifies powerfully to a hostile world! Insights like these, spread throughout the book, reveal the author's pastoral stance.

For the Eastern Orthodox reader it is nice to see the author's familiarity with the doctrine of deification when trying to explain what "participation in the divine nature" means in 2 Pet 1, 4. Helyer dismisses the Mormon doctrine of deification which affirms the metamorphosis of the believer into a divine being and expounds in its main coordinates the Orthodox Soteriology of which deification is the final stage. Helyer considers that "participation in the divine nature" is "Peter's equivalent" to Paul's concept union with Christ and John's theology of mutual indwelling. He also finds similarities in the Western (Protestant and Roman-Catholic) doctrines that see salvation as an endless progress towards God (232-234).

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Helyer's work, combining biography, theology and history, succeeds in making a fine contribution to clarifying the life, teaching and legacy of the "prince of apostles" in order that we might "join Peter and follow Christ on the Via Dolorosa that leads to the Via Gloria" (305). An excellent motivation for reading the book!

Rev. Ph.D. Adrian MURG

Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology. Gods. Heroes. Myths, Coord. Zoe Petre, Alexandra Lițu, Cătălin Pavel, Corinthian Publishing, Bucharest, 2011, 383 p.

The Greco-Roman culture and religion greatly influenced the whole Europe, representing the soil in which the seed of Christianity has grown. Although this religious tradition gave way to Christianity, especially starting with Constantine the Great, some elements of the old mythologies remained in the collective subconscious, were Christened and merged with the new teachings. A good time to reactivate the ancient Greco-Roman traditions was the Renaissance, when, elements belonging to these religious traditions were brought to light again. The Renaissance ideal was represented by the Greco-Roman antiquity with all its accomplishments.

Any dictionary represents a necessary element in any scientific approach, being the starting point of the research, helping the researcher to clarify certain concepts and finding some prime references. The Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology is a very useful tool for all those who are dedicated to the study of The Greco-Roman religion or want to clarify some notions about these religious traditions or mythological characters who inhabited the Greek and Roman world, especially gods and heroes.

The dictionary is the result of the work of several specialists in the Greek and Roman culture and religion, as any action of this kind is a team research. Currently, the sphere of documentation of one religion is so vast that no longer allows the coverage of the entire area just by one religious specialist. This dictionary represents the work of several authors: Valentin Botea, Alina Pascale, Florin Mișuț-Bohiltea, Răduca Tănăsescu, Cristian Oțelariu, Alexandra Țârle, under the direction of Zoe Petre, Alexandra Lițu and Cătălin Pavel. Each term is explained and the author is mentioned.

A characteristic of the dictionary lies in the fact that there are several subdivisions when explaining the terms, so that each term should be

Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology. Gods. Heroes. Myths

explained as minutely as possible. Among these subdivisions, we can mention those related to *Etymology*, which show the origin of the term, ie a first explanation, the subdivision *Mythology*, ie the actual explanation of the term, usually a mythological character: god, hero or being remaining human in the history of Greco-Roman culture, followed by the subdivision *Discussions*. The *Iconography* subdivision contains references to representations of statuary, painting, pottery or other types of the Roman and Greek culture, remaining famous to present day and being preserved in various museums around the world. These representations broaden the strictly religious concept by capturing aspects of Greco-Roman culture and civilization. The *Cult* section contains references to various aspects of worship regarding the dead. The *Posteriority* section is a completely unique one because it shows how the mythological character or the narrative presented or described and explained remained in the history of world culture since many aspects of Greco-Roman mythology were preserved in literary, musical pieces or were revived by the Renaissance humanism. The explanation of each term ends with a short bibliography adapted to that theme.

We recommend using the Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology, particularly useful for the understanding of religious traditions present in the European and world culture, but also as a starting point in the development of any scientific documentation on topics that fall within this sphere of concerns.

Deac. Ph.D. Caius CUȚARU

Milošević S. Nenad, *Divine Liturgy – center of the Orthodox cult: Indissoluble link of the divine sacraments whit the Divine Eucharist*, translated by rev. Ioan Ică sr., Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 2012, 237 p. ISBN: 978-973-7859-85-3

This book was written by Serbian theologian Nenad S. Milošević as a doctoral dissertation and coordinated by Ioannis Foundoulis. His search and his thorough study of Byzantine liturgical manuscripts, the patristic sources and contemporary literature, succeeded to unite the ideas of tradition with its historical and pastoral interpretation, but not only as a purely archaeological dimension, but also as an opening to a practical understanding, based on ancient Byzantine tradition. The author establishes his scope and theological approach in an inseparable link of the Eucharist with the other Sacraments, moreover, he argues that it is par excellence sacrament of Christ; its meaning is the manifestation and realization of Church, so that all the other mysteries converge to the great Sacrament, or the only Sacrament, that is the Sacrament of Christ (p. 9-11). On the fracture of liturgy from the other sacraments contributed the medieval scholastic influence, coming on the western branch of Christianity and adopted by the eastern, but once with the reorientation to the eastern area patristic sources, the Eucharist becomes once again, as yesteryear, the centre and the Sacrament of the Church par excellence (p. 13).

The author starts his argumentation approach from two Greek theologians N. Matsoukas and P. Trembelas that are presenting, in the modern theology, the historical testimonies which refers to celebrating the sacraments in the Holy Eucharist. This early stage determines the author to start a systematic historical research which contains an inventory of all Codex in which speaks about its theme issue. The paper will be strewn with ordinances references of these codices, which will highlight the causes that led to the separation between the celebration of sacraments of the Eucharist, but also to return to the Christ or a possible current approach in terms of Sacraments celebration.

Milošević S. Nenad, *Divine Liturgy – center of the Orthodox cult...*

Divided into four parts, the book resumes the thread in the first three parts of the most important sacraments, namely Baptism, the Wedding and Holy Oil, so they bring to our attention first authentic evidence, found in the fifth century referring to celebration of the three sacraments in the Eucharist (p. 25) and the author reviews the main arguments based on the writings of the Holy Fathers. The conclusion of the study shows that ever since the apostolic period Baptism, Marriage and Chrismation were closely interlinked and were seen as one sacrament of Christian initiation. The separation began to be observed from the twelfth century and culminated in the fourteenth century, the phenomenon crossing to the present time. To this phenomenon refers the book and presents the theological need to link the sacraments to Eucharist by affirmation of two interdependent factors: one ecclesiological and the other mystagogical. The first refers to the Body of Christ – The Church, and The Church identifies with Eucharist. The second factor relates to the meaning of the sacrament and the didactic purpose of the liturgical ritual. The author makes observations also to the current way of celebrating Wedding. He observes that the Wedding is no longer seen as participation to the whole body of the Church, but became a private event which is strictly related to family. Sacrament of Holy Unction is analyzed under the same coordinates, pastoral and ecclesiological issues, the way this sacrament is celebrated and perceived is highlighted here. Milošević notes that the complicated ritual developing from the XIII century which assume the services of seven priests and the over emphasis of forgiveness led to complete separation from the Divine Liturgy (p. 180-181).

In the last part of the study are presented other Sacraments that some of them are still celebrated within the liturgy (ordinations, consecration of the Holy Mir, church and monks which until XV century were strictly linked to Liturgy). The Sanctification of Water and the burial were also liturgy linked, but were quickly separated from it. So this book is faithful to the past and points to the theological responsibility of the present. In the light of Tradition it is discovered the basis and the meaning of the Eucharist and the recourse by Milošević to Tradition is nothing else than a *view fixed to critical memory of the Church*, as Lossky says, from whom we receive vital spirit of Church youthfulness. This book it's an exercise of return to tradition and a call to relive in our days the inheritance from the past, not as a takeover of dead letters (words), but as a pneumatic anamnesis responsible of the present.

Alexandru Dan ADAM

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The description of the theoretical framework of the theme

- accuracy in description and presentation;
- present interest and relevance of the bibliography used in connection with the theme;
- relevance of the information regarding the theme;

The aim of the study

- accuracy of expression;
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The objectives of the study

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- relevance and operational degree according to the stated aim;
- relevance regarding the stated theme;

The advanced hypothesis and the considered variables

- accuracy of expression;
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- correlation between hypothesis and variables;

The description of the research methodology

- accuracy of building up research techniques;
- accuracy in applying the research techniques;
- relevance of the used methodology according to the theme, aim and objectives;

The presentation of the resultus of the investigation

- relevance of the results according to the theme, aim and objectives;

- quality of the results and their presentation according to the stated aim;
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- relevance of interpretation according to the hypothesis, aim and objectives ;
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- accuracy, originality and extent of interpretation;

Suggestions

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The last name of the author(s) should be written in SmallCaps, the title of the book, article, periodical, volume in italic.

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