



**September 28, 2021**

---

**IOTA Forum: David Bradshaw reviews *From the Ancient Near East to Christian Byzantium: Kings, Symbols, and Cities*, by Mario Baghos**

Modern cities are dominated by skyscrapers, fitting symbols of the domination of modern life by commerce and finance. It takes an effort to place oneself mentally in an ancient city, where the lived environment was dominated by temples and public life centered around the worship of the gods.

This work by Mario Baghos, Lecturer in Theology and Church History at St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College in Sydney, seeks to help us make that leap. Beginning with the cities of ancient Mesopotamia, it traces the role of sacred space and architecture through Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Israel, culminating in their distinctively Christian adaptation within the New Rome, Constantinople. Sacred space requires as its complement sacred agency, the action of the gods and their human (or human-divine) representatives within that sacred space.

Borrowing a term from Ioan Couliano, Baghos refers to this as “ecosystemic agency” to highlight its role in creating and sustaining the world. The book is thus an interlocking study of sacred space and agency within a range of ancient cultures, culminating in their radical transformation by Christianity.

Read David Bradshaw's full review [here](#).

---

**New IOTA Lectures Video: Rev. Dr. Alexis Torrance on Deification in Gregory Palamas**

In 2020-2021, IOTA held several online international colloquia on the historical and theological aspects of deification. Given the importance of the topic of deification, we are delighted to share the presentations given at these colloquia in the form of newly launched IOTA Lectures.



***Lecture highlights:***

The theology of St Gregory Palamas (1296–1357) is widely recognized as a watershed moment for the articulation of a strong and thoroughgoing doctrine of deification in Eastern Christianity.

This talk opens with a discussion of Palamas’ theology of deification as both creative yet simultaneously traditional, embedded as it is in a particular understanding and reception of the patristic sources, sources to which every side in the Hesychast Controversy laid claim.

The focus of the talk is the emergence of all the major contours of Palamas’ understanding of deification in the Triads, an early set of works consisting of nine treatises. These contours are traced via Palamas’ reaction to three tenets espoused by his theological opponent Barlaam which undermined for Palamas the content of Christian salvation as deification.

The talk then turns briefly to deification in some later texts by Palamas and the Palamites before concluding.

---

***All videos in the series:***

- **Dr. Norman Russell:** [Deification in Second and Third-Century Greek Church Fathers](#)
- **Dr. Adrian Pirtea:** [Deification in the Syriac Fathers](#)
- **Archbishop Alexander Golitzin:** [St. Symeon the New Theologian](#)
- **Rev. Dr. Alexis Torrance:** [St. Gregory Palamas and Palamism](#)
- **Rev. Dr. Andrew Louth:** [St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, St. Makarios of Corinth, and the \*Philokalia\*](#)

Subscribe to the IOTA YouTube Channel

---

## **Outcome of the August 2021 Leaders' Symposium**

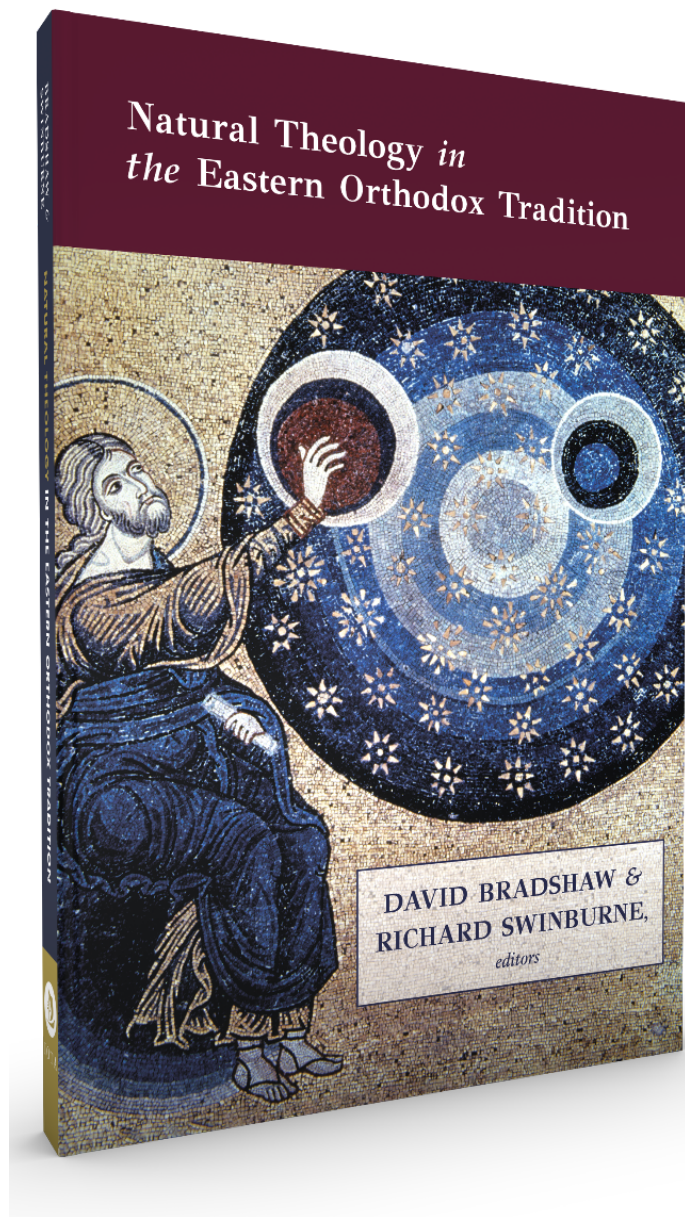
In August, IOTA held a meeting which included group Chairs, Advisory Council members, and select Stakeholders and Co-Laborers.

IOTA has grown by adding three new groups: Orthodoxy and Literature, Orthodoxy and the Visual Arts, and Oriental Orthodoxy. IOTA's new services include the Forum which publishes book, conference, and film reviews; IOTA Lectures on Deification; and IOTA Publications.

In addition to these activities, the discussion focused on the plans for the association's second mega-conference. The general theme of the mega-conference will be Orthodox Christian mission. While several sessions will engage this general theme, other sessions will maintain their own distinctive focus. In addition, the participants proposed to include plenary sessions on the following topics: 1) the pandemic; 2) the social doctrine of the Orthodox Church; 3) pan-Orthodox unity. Since the pandemic situation remains dynamic, the dates and location of the second mega-conference will be announced in 2022. Stay tuned!

---

***Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition Available in Paperback and Electronic Format***



- the first book to tell the history of natural theology in the Christian East
- considers the strength of the arguments for the existence of God
- assesses contemporary Christian Orthodox reactions to natural theology
- brings together essays by world-class philosophers and scholars

***IOTA scholars about the volume:***

“The idea that Orthodoxy has nothing to do with natural theology and the use of discursive reason is widespread. The present collected volume offers a careful survey of the patristic tradition and contemporary Orthodox theology, suggesting that a certain role is preserved for reason in discussing the existence of God. As the essays of the volume demonstrate, reason is part of the Incarnation, and as such is capable of knowing and participating in God.

Hence, natural theology is still a valuable means of doing Orthodox theology.” — **Pantelis Kalaitzidis**, Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece

[Purchase paperback or e-book](#)

[More about the volume](#)

[Download free sample](#)

---