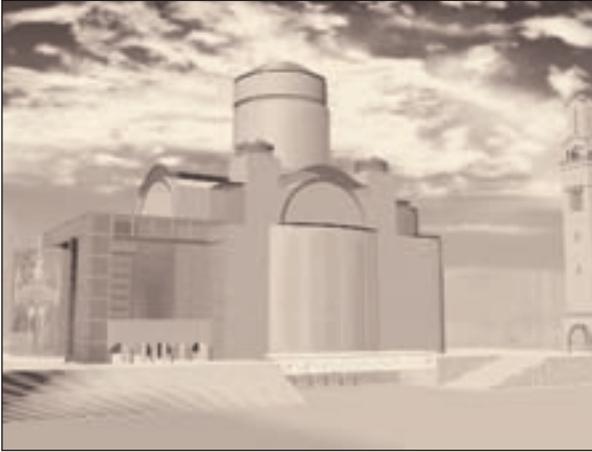


SACRED SPACE



Augustin Ioan

With a Preface by
Archbishop Chrysostomos

**CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES**

SACRED SPACE

by
Augustin Ioan

Translated by
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With a Preface by
Archbishop Chrysostomos



Etna, California
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PREFACE

by Archbishop Chrysostomos

I had the pleasure of teaching with Augustin Ioan when I was a Fulbright Scholar in Romania and, during the autumn term 2001, a visiting professor at the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest. Professor Ioan is a distinguished architect and architectural theorist—indeed a polyhistor, in the estimation of many of his fellow *savants*—and has taught, lectured, and studied in his native Romania, in Western Europe and Great Britain, and in the United States—where, in fact, he studied under the auspices of the Fulbright program. During my stay in Bucharest, working with this gifted scholar on a new and innovative graduate program in ecclesiastical architecture, I discovered the Romanian version of the present English text of his reflections on sacred space. I immediately recommended it to the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, not only because it touches on issues pertinent to Eastern Orthodox theology, but because it also brings to bear on these issues philosophical, anthropological, and theoretical perspectives of importance to a general scholarly audience and to the fields of Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox history, art, and archaeology, which are areas in which the Center has sponsored research and published numerous books.

I will allow Professor Ioan's brilliant and sometimes complex insights into the nature and theory of sacred space to speak for themselves. The inexorable logic and expansive materials and citations in his book provide both breadth and heuristic guidelines for the perspicacious reader and challenges to the diligent student. If a manuduction into the richness of the specific material contained in this book is indeed unnecessary, I do, nonetheless, wish to make several observations about the importance of this study for Orthodox scholars and, of course, for the broader scholarly audience. With regard to the former, there is an important general paradigm

that Professor Ioan follows in developing his thesis, and that model is one which commends itself to the pursuit of presenting the unique theology of the Eastern Church in contemporary terms and philosophical imagery which faithfully capture an intellectual ethos as elusive as the very notion of sacred space itself. The “hierophanies” of the sacred in Orthodox spirituality—to preempt a word used by the famous Romanian historian of religion, Mircea Eliade—are not unlike those that one confronts in conceptualizing the idea of sacred space; and in speaking of these, it has been all too common for scholars to retreat into flatulent language that inspires awe but not comprehension, or to dishallow the sacred by accommodating it to language and concepts that are inadequate in content and scope. The ineluctable result of this seduction by pretentiousness, on the one hand, and simplistic minimalism, on the other, is that Orthodoxy, which in many ways speaks, in its eloquently apophatic voice, of what is and what is not, emerges as what it is not—indeed, as a mere caricature of what it is.

By employing and adapting to his subject the constructs, images, and terminology of existential philosophy, Professor Ioan successfully serves the *specific goal* of his book: that of presenting, discussing, and analyzing the idea of sacred space. At a *broader level*, his philosophical model and the categories in which he develops and articulates his arguments and hypotheses apply directly and perfectly to Orthodox theological exposition. *Aliud et idem*, spiritual phenomena, like the attributes of sacred space, exist in the subtle interplay between two separate but interactive realities and in the reconciliation of opposites and antipodes that ultimately, in this interaction and reconciliation, rise above, or somehow elude, both opposition and resolution. Spiritual phenomena yield their richness and wisdom easily and, as it were, with avidity in the hermeneutic medium of existentialist philosophy.

It was precisely this last observation that the late Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky, whom many Orthodox scholars have dubbed the “dean” of twentieth-century Orthodox theologians, so

luculently put forth at a symposium which he convened at Princeton University in 1975, and at which I was privileged to speak. This gathering had as its goal the exploration of the nexus between existentialist philosophy and the metaphysics of the early Church Fathers. In his own contributions to the discussions, Father Florovsky successfully argued that such concepts as liturgical time and the “present future” of Christian eschatology, as well as Christian anthropology and cosmology in general, are easily understood in the “new language” of existentialism without compromising or distorting the “ancient truths” which they contain and express. In his discussion of the sacred and sacred space, which in fact encompasses many of the theological, anthropological, and cosmological issues cited by Father Florovsky, Professor Ioan demonstrably asseverates—albeit, again, perhaps more by implication and extension than intention—the former’s conviction with regard to the utility and precision of existentialism as a proper hermeneutic for contemporary Orthodox thought. This is, in and of itself, a momentous contribution to the study of Orthodox theology.

With regard to the broader scholarly audience and interests not necessarily specific to Orthodox theological studies, the present book is a literal thesaurus of philosophical, anthropological, psychological, and historical references to the holy, to holy places, and to the epistemological and æsthetic dimensions of what we know—and perhaps do *not* know, or cannot express as knowledge *per se*—about the sacred and sacred space. With a brilliant and lucid sort of geo-spiritual telethesia, Professor Ioan develops a vocabulary and a system wherein we can approach the ostensibly impalpable nexus between the empirical and the spiritual—the sacred and the profane—and the manner in which what is elusive is captured within, yet not contained or restricted by, the concrete.

It is one of the enigmas, not only of philosophy and theology, but of the very structures in which we concretize the theoretical (deriving laws from legal theory, isolating discrete physical events from quantum phenomena, *etc.*), that, in drawing bound-

aries within the boundless—defining space within infinity—with ever-increasing exactitude, we often forego precision in expressing, or giving adequate conceptual form to, the relationship between that which is bounded and that which is unbounded and the point at which these two things, understood and analyzed apart, converge and form a phenomenon separate in form and nature from its constituent elements: the world and cosmology, at once intercurrent and independent, remain distinct domains.

In this book we find, again, the language and concepts, as well as the paradigms and philosophical and epistemological categories, that open up to us a new dimension of thought—the realm of that middle ground in which we study the ineffable effably and contextualize what is noetic, bringing into reach what lies beyond the normal parameters of our cognitive and dianoetic reach. Therein lies its ultimate value. It is not only a trenchantly insightful treatise on sacred space, with implications, as I have argued, for Orthodox theological studies; beyond this, its methodological approach addresses the universal need for a model in which to study all of those issues of an ontological and existential kind that intersect with matters of importance in the theological realm. The philosophical coruscation of Professor Ioan's observations touches on scholarship far beyond the scope of his present topic. As such, this is not simply a book about a certain subject; it is also a discourse on discoursiveness itself and an exercise in intellectual investigation which, as I pointed out earlier, transcends its own purpose and scope in its greater heuristic utility, both conceptually and methodologically.

A.C.
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Sacred Art/Architecture

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Sacred Space
Augustin Ioan

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*From the Preface by
Archbishop Chrysostomos*

Front cover sketch: prize-winning entry (2002), by Professor Ioan, for the proposed Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection and St. Andrew the Apostle, Orthodox Church of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.