

**Introduction of His Eminence, The Most Reverend Alexander (Golitzin), Archbishop of Dallas and the South and Ruling Bishop of the Bulgarian Diocese of the Orthodox Church of America  
Kindness of Dr. Gary Vachicouras, The Head of the Study of Classical Antiquity at the Hardt Foundation, Geneva/Switzerland.**

Thank you, Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt, Director of *The Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel* for giving me the floor.

Allow me first to commend you for having initiated the series of webinars in the middle of the pandemic, a pandemic which has had an impact on our lives on our personal health and spiritual well-being and by losing our loved ones.

I am grateful to you, dear Petra, for having been given the honor to present this evening's speaker His Eminence Archbishop Alexander (Golitzin), a distinguished hierarch of the Orthodox Church of America and renowned scholar in academia for his innovative research and studies.

His Eminence Archbishop Alexander was born in 1948 in Burbank, California. Following his studies at the University of California at Berkeley, he pursued his coursework and studies in theology under the direction of the most renowned orthodox theologians of the twentieth Century: first with John Meyendorff at *St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary* where he earned his Master's of Divinity; and then with Bishop Kalistos (Ware of Diokleia) at Oxford where he completed his doctorate on *Dionysios the Aeropagite* in 1980.

The shaping of his His Eminence's understanding of mystical experience was under the guidance of the Elder Aimilianos (a holy man - May his memory eternal) of *Simonos Petras Monastery* on Mount Athos, where he spent a year. I may even have personally met His Eminence during my pilgrimages to Simonos Petras as a young seminarian.

After receiving his D. Phil from Oxford and being ordained to the diaconate and priesthood, it was Geron Aimilianos who tonsured His Eminence to monastic orders and when he received the name of Alexander.

As professor at the Theology Department at *Marquette University* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he established himself as a leading expert on Jewish and Christian mysticism. His groundbreaking research is one of a kind in Orthodox academia and rarely do we find scholars who pursue research by studying relations between Judaism and Christianity.

His initiative to form, together with his doctoral students, the *Theophaneia School -A Theological Forum on the Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism-* is another indicator of his pioneering work which coincides with aims of the

*Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel* to deepen Christian relations with Judaism.

It should also be noted that His Eminence played a key role in the establishment of the later called *Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute* at Berkeley.

After his retirement as professor in 2012, he was consecrated Bishop of Toledo of the Bulgarian Diocese, then elected Bishop of Dallas, the South and the Bulgarian Diocese of the Orthodox Church of America, and then elevated to the rank of Archbishop.

I will not present His Eminence’s long list of publications which was shared with you in the invitation nor attempt to summarize any of his deep theological reflections, since unfortunately I myself have not read them in depth.

However, I would like to emphasize that the Orthodox Church should be indebted to His Eminence’s contributions to the appreciation of Christianity’s Jewish roots which unfortunately is strikingly lacking in our modern Orthodox theological reflection.

We must therefore firmly uphold with him the conviction that "Eastern Christian asceticism and monasticism — i.e., Eastern Spirituality, in short — arose out of an original matrix in the pre-Christian era of Second Temple Judaism."

In this framework, I welcome His Eminence Archbishop Alexander to present to us his theological reflections and findings on *Deification in Eastern Christianity and its Second Temple Background*.