

PEACE—A Vital Ingredient for a Society of Conscience: A White Paper on the Contributions of the Institute for Peace Studies in Eastern Christianity

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between religion as a source of meaning and the violent or compassionate behavior of the human beings is one of the vital ingredients of a Society of Conscience. While organized religions are viewed with suspicion, and accused to be the main sources of aggression, intolerance and divisiveness, the conscience of religious faith, as a devotional behavior, offers the key to a renewed spirituality; the cornerstone to a Society of Conscience. Therefore, this white paper focuses on the contributions of the founder of the Institute for Peace Studies in Eastern Christianity, in exploring the resources of Orthodox Christianity in order to advance compassion, and peaceful coexistence.

KEY WORDS: peace, Orthodox Christianity, education, consulting, research, politics, religion, economics)

1) About IPSEC

Following the end of the Cold War, religion became increasingly associated with death and destruction. From intellectuals to the common folk, people viewed religion as the main source of aggression, intolerance and divisiveness. Facing difficult questions about Orthodox Christianity, I easily ascertained that this subject was completely overlooked by the Orthodox seminaries and schools of

theology. Therefore, encouraged by several close colleagues, as well as by my wife, Denise Simion, I established the Institute for Peace Studies in Eastern Christianity (IPSEC) to help fill this gap. My vision for IPSEC was to focus on research, education, and consulting from a multidisciplinary perspective, simply because religion permeates all aspects of human life, and religious peacemaking can only become effective if taking a holistic and process-oriented approach.

Created in the spring of 2008, IPSEC was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on March 27, 2009. On April 9, 2009 the Internal Revenue Service assigned IPSEC the Employer Identification Number 26-4633958, and the institute was inaugurated on July 2, 2009 in Bucharest Romania. On December 15, 2013, IPSEC became a tax deductible 501(c)(3) entity under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, Section 170. Partnering with various organizations such as the World Council of Churches (Switzerland), the Institute for Theology and Peace (Germany), the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate (Romania), the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch (Syria), the Association for Freedom and Conscience (Romania), the Parliament of Romania, and others, IPSEC successfully completed several projects including two international expert consultations in Romania (Bucharest, 2009) and Syria (Damascus, 2010), one international workshop during the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Jamaica (Kingston, 2011), and others. IPSEC published two scholarly books in partnership with World Council of Churches and with the Boston Theological Institute, and has established partnerships with the Faculties of Orthodox Theology of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, of “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, as well as with the Business School of the Athenaeum University of Bucharest, Romania.

In 2014 IPSEC became affiliated with Harvard University as a field education agency site for the Divinity School.

In 2016, IPSEC was reorganized so as to increase its effectiveness as an agent of change, and also to distinguish its own work from the work developed by similar organizations such as the International Orthodox Christian Charities and the Orthodox Peace Fellowship.

While Orthodox Christianity remains at its epicenter, the departure from an ecclesiastically oriented programming, along with

the adoption of a meta-institutional approach, became necessary for strategic and ideological reasons.

The manifestation of religious faith as a mechanism of conscience (including that of the Orthodox Christians) is no longer restricted to institutional and cultural confines, as it engenders worldviews that transcend organized religions and permeate all aspects of human life. Thus, to become effective and meaningful, Orthodox peacemaking—which is at the core of IPSEC’s mission—ought to take a holistic and process-oriented approach to conflict, while also refining the self-understanding of the Orthodox Christians living in a globalized world; beyond the mental ambush of nationalism.

Partners

In order to implement this new vision and spearhead its work, IPSEC established various relationships with institutions mainly from the USA and EU, which impart similar goals. Currently, IPSEC has one permanent affiliation, three long-term partnerships, and several associations.

Affiliation with Harvard University

IPSEC is affiliated with Harvard University The Divinity School as an agency site for its Field Education program. Considering that authentic training for the ministry must include both practical experience and reflection on that experience, the Field Education Program at Harvard Divinity School was built around guided learning experiences that integrate theory and practice to develop professional attitudes. By exploring resources from Eastern and Oriental Christianity, IPSEC provides the students with training on inter-religious understanding and dialogue; religion and diplomacy; nationalism and pan-Orthodoxy in Russia and Eastern Europe; Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East, North Africa, and America; Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement, and issues of restorative justice and conflict transformation.

Partnerships

IPSEC has established partnerships with three Romanian universities for the purpose of promoting academic and cultural ties, educational and research activities in all areas and disciplines offered at/or via the two institutions, as well as exchange of members and researchers, and student exchanges. IPSEC's partners include:

- "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi
- "Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca
- The Athenaeum University of Bucharest, Romania.

Associations

In conducting its work, IPSEC has associated occasionally with various institutions from USA, EU, Middle East, Asia, and the Caribbean region. These associations took place both directly and via a third party, as driven by the nature of the common event or project. These included:

- World Council of Churches (Geneva),
- Institute for Theology and Peace (Hamburg),
- Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate (Bucharest),
- Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch (Damascus),
- International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (Geneva),
- The Boston Theological Institute (Newton Centre, MA)
- The Conscience and Liberty Association (Bucharest),
- Parliament of Romanian (Bucharest, Romania),
- International Religious Liberty Association (Silver Spring, MD)

2) IPSEC Research

IPSEC develops and conducts qualitative and quantitative research projects using a process oriented methodology I designed. This research methodology is interdisciplinary in nature and process oriented in structure; focusing on *inputs*, *meaning-making*, and *outputs*. While the inputs are treated as independent or causal variables, the meaning-making is treated as an intervening variable, and the outputs are treated as dependent, or effect variables.

Research on the *inputs* involves the analysis of the standard information imparted by the *institutionalized religion* concomitant with relevant *faith phenomena*. While the research on the standard information involves document analysis of resources such as sacred writings, doctrines, visual representations, engravings, polity, etc., the research on faith phenomena focuses on devotional sources of spiritual meaning found within the subcultures of the organized religion, which affect the believers' worldviews on evil, dualism, sacrifice, martyrdom, death, rituals, funerals, mythologies, taboos, and so on.

Research on the *meaning-making* process focuses on how the inputs are interpreted by groups and individuals in position of power, under conditions of crisis. The research process uses direct and indirect observations of devotional behavior, as well as surveys designed to measure the interpretative switch between *soft* religion and *hard* religion, on the ideals of religious life, social consequences, psychological tonalities and strategic action.

The *outputs* are the byproducts of the inputs' refinement through meaning-making, which generate new cognitive and affective realities. The analysis of the outputs is crucial because it reflects the institutional change which becomes visible in new public policies, new educational curricula, new perspectives on political theology, new pastoral guidelines, new symbolic acts, speeches, declarations, jurisprudence, and so on.

Data Gathering : Some projects developed by IPSEC involves data gathering in terms of surveys which are designed to measure and monitor the process of interpretation and meaning-making.

Publications: IPSEC offers several publications in order to disseminate information about its activities, partnerships, events, work-in-progress, as well as to disseminate the results its research.

a) *IPSEC Newsletter* | IPSEC Newsletter disseminates information about our activity; selected information about the activities conducted by our partners and similar organizations, and selected news about conflicts affecting the daily existence of Orthodox Christians around the world.

b) Research Reports | Research Reports display the results of surveys and additional research conducted by, or in partnership with IPSEC.

c) IPSEC Books Series | IPSEC Books series includes monographs and edited volumes reflecting the activity of IPSEC and of its partners. IPSEC books include the following: *Religion and Politics: Emperor Constantine, Orthodox Church and Freedom* (edited by Marian Gh. Simion, Cristian Sonea) is a collection of papers on Orthodox Christian perspectives on faith, politics, and freedom. *Fear Not: Biblical Calls for Faith* (authored by Raymond G. Helmick, SJ) is a tightly argued exegetical study of divine promise and encouragement that focuses on meaning of fear in contexts of violence and peace. *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives* (edited by Semegnish Asfaw, Alexios Chehadeh, Marian Gh. Simion), is a collection of essays on contributions from Orthodox Christianity and its efforts to conciliate conflict, avoid violence, and stop war.

d) Round Table Series | IPSEC is a co-publisher with the Scientific Press, as part of the Round Table consulting program. Publications include thematic conference proceedings, journals, and books on general themes in arts and science, which signal the presence of religion.

e) Case Studies | IPSEC publishes various Case Studies to serve as teaching tools to the benefit of students and professionals.

IPSEC is also open to working with interested parties (organizations and individuals) in order to develop research projects on the power of religion in the public life. Although our work is global in nature, we focus primarily on areas where Orthodox Christians live, as well as on areas affected by the cultural, political and economic power of Orthodox Christian states. Please contact us, if interested!

3) IPSEC Consulting

Developing a society of conscience entails a successful consulting and exchange of ideas followed by action. This is because, the twenty-first century ushered mankind into adventurous, exciting, but challenging new horizons. The new power of computation made colossal advances in quantum physics, space exploration, and genetics—just to name a few—while the power of human imagination reached new summits. At the same time, mankind faces existential threats posed by an increased competition over resources, military rivalries, economic imbalance, environmental depletion, demographic growth, terrorism, wars and migration. The changing attitudes of the global scientific community toward religious faith—which incrementally abandoned diatribe and started accepting religion as a partner in the exploration of the unknown—demand new paradigms of communication between science and religion. Last but not least, the resurgence of religion as a global political force steers public policy in ways which can dramatically impact the existing relations between religion and secular governance, as well as between organized religions themselves, while imposing unanticipated restrictions against anything that would run contrary to its interests.

Therefore, in promoting peace and peaceful coexistence, IPSEC provides consulting services to leaders from the academia, religion, public policy, business and science.

Programs such as the Round Table and Preventive Diplomacy are geared toward the academic world as an effort to *anticipate* ideological conflicts and *prevent* them from developing. The “workshops” focus on *existing tensions*, offering training on “conflict transformation” and on building skills for “interreligious dialogue” to the benefit of communities facing unrest, while “religious diplomacy” training is geared toward Foreign Service officers and transnational business leaders. The “theological consultations” are settings where Orthodox theologians convene and discuss various doctrinal, ecclesiastical, moral, and liturgical issues of theological and educational interest. Last but not least, the “policymaking”

program offers consulting services to the policy world in general, which includes government, business and religion.

Consulting Programs

In order to anticipate and prevent ideological conflicts, IPSEC offers the “round table” program as a structural setting for the development of meaningful conversations between religious leaders and academics in general for the purpose of *anticipating* potential ideological conflicts. Once such potential ideological conflicts are identified, the “preventive diplomacy” program focuses on developing tools and solutions to prevent such ideological conflicts from erupting.

Round Table

Universities are laboratories for the formation of tomorrow’s leaders, and as such, issues bearing the potential of religious influence, interference and obstruction, are addressed in an anticipatory fashion. Because collective violence is driven by economics and meaning, religion is an institution which defines the meaning of life and drives economic attitudes. Therefore, the “roundtable program” serves as a venue to engage established and promising world-class academics from arts and sciences, whose thinking and work affects the world of economics, business, politics, science and technology. For this purpose, IPSEC established a partnership with the Athenaeum University from Bucharest Romania, and a symposium program with the Scientific Press from Cambridge, MA.

Atheneum University | IPSEC’s partnership with the Athenaeum University of Bucharest was created to foster international expert exchanges, research and education in a global environment that is increasingly aware of the unavoidable presence of religion in business, economics and public administration. Research and education involve creative approaches to business ethics, awareness of diverse religious systems of thinking which drive specific attitudes

towards wealth, poverty, social responsibility, common good, ownership, banking, and taxation.

The Scientific Press | IPSEC has partnered with the Scientific Press to organize inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary conferences, and to publish the work of the participants as proceedings, journal articles and monographs. The topics of these conferences include general themes from science and humanities which intersect with religious worldviews. The current series of conferences is called “Harvard Square Symposium,” and it was named after the physical location of IPSEC in Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts. This symposium reunites promising and well established scholars in a creative environment to propose holistic ways of thinking by nurturing the engagement of the global intellectual elite into conversations meant to tackle the new challenges faced by the mankind. It is a conversation which attempts to go beyond the existing paradigms of thinking.

Preventive Diplomacy

Ideas lead to actions and actions create new ways of thinking (and acting), which often clash with the old paradigms. Fortunately, such conflicts can often be anticipated. IPSEC offers a preventive diplomacy consulting program which focuses on the geographic areas marked by the presence of Orthodox Christianity. The program is designed to take “diplomatic action” at the earliest stage, so as to prevent disputes from arising and potentially escalating into conflicts. Potential conflicts can involve various issues ranging from political ideologies and religious identity to issues related to science and technology, business and public policy.

Workshops

Religious peacemaking is not only a matter of individual conscience, but also a creative environment in which a peacemaker plays a significant role in the ecosystem of the public life. Therefore, in order to have an impact on the public life—the very place where decisions are made and action is taken—IPSEC offers workshops on conflict

transformation, religion and diplomacy, and inter-religious dialogue. The workshops are designed for specific audiences (e.g. companies, diplomatic personnel, professional groups, churches, clergymen, seminarians, parish councils, etc), as well as for the large public, for the purpose of training how to manage interpersonal conflicts and group conflicts, and how to reach diplomatic solutions.

Conflict Transformation Workshops: Anchored into the psychological dynamics of forgiveness and reconciliation, IPSEC workshops focus on developing the skill for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Our method focuses on self-preparation, interaction with other players, and transformation of conflict, by involving proven techniques in combination with cultural factors.

Religion for Diplomats: Religion for Diplomats is a coaching program designed to train Foreign Service officers and transnational business leaders in the arts of political ritual, religious etiquette, religious protocol and diplomacy, and negotiation with religious leaders. The program emerges from my postdoctoral project “Global Religion Advancing Successful Policymaking,” (GRASP), which I conducted at Harvard Divinity School during 2013-2015, and it is anchored into the theories, structures and practices of diplomacy, as well as into the role of religion in human affairs.

Inter-Religious Dialogue: IPSEC workshops for inter-religious dialogue are settings where members of different faiths meet in a bilateral fashion to negotiate their religious differences in the interest of the common good. The ground rules for communication involve the building of conversational skills on how to de-construct assumptions about each-other, how to realize that inter-religious dialogue does not mean betrayal of one’s faith or conversion to other faith, and how to accept the reality of religious pluralism.

Theological Consultations

Theological consultations represent settings where Orthodox theologians convene and discuss doctrinal, moral, and liturgical issues as related to peace and violence. During 2009 and 2010 IPSEC has partnered with the World Council of Churches (Geneva,

Switzerland) and the Institute for Theology and Peace (Hamburg, Germany), and together they organized two international consultations on Orthodox peace ethics. The first consultation was held in Bucharest, Romania, from June 29 through July 3, 2009, and the second consultation was held in Damascus, Syria, from 18 through 22 October 2010. IPSEC also organized a consultative theological workshop in the context of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Kingston, Jamaica, from 17 through 25 May 2011.

Bucharest 2009 (Peace Ethics): The first pan-Orthodox international expert consultation took place at the Patriarchal Palace of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Bucharest, Romania, from June 29 through July 3, 2010. The theme of the consultation was “Orthodox Peace Ethics in Eastern and Oriental Christianity,” and the discussions focused on various issues including the blessing of the weapons in times of warfare, the role of canonical tradition in political conflict, the relationship between Church and State, Nationalism, globalization, psychology of victimization, cultural perceptions of Good and Evil, role of chaplaincy, and more.

Damascus 2010 (Just Peace): The second pan-Orthodox international expert consultation was hosted by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and it took place in Saidnaya-Damascus, Syria, from 18 through 22 October 2010, on the theme of “Just Peace.” The Orthodox Christian understanding of peace-oriented justice is rooted in a long ethical and canonical tradition anchored into two definitions offered by the Roman jurists Celsus and Ulpianus, which had been adopted by the Byzantine State as guiding principles for social justice. While Celsus (+129AD) defined justice as “the art of good and equity,” (*jus est ars boni et aequi*), Ulpianus (170-228AD) emphasized its distributive aspects, saying that, “justice is the constant and perpetual desire to give everyone his due.” (*Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas, jus suum cuique tribuendi*).

Kingston 2011 (Peace Education): IPSEC presented a consultative theological workshop titled, “Developing Strategic Education on Peacemaking: An Orthodox Christian Contribution,” during the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), which was held by the World Council of Churches in Kingston, Jamaica, from

17 through 25 May 2011. Contributing to the goals of IEPC, the workshop was part of the “peace in community” component of the Convocation, and it addressed Orthodox theological perspectives on international relations theory, diplomacy, identity, ecumenical and interfaith relations, and theological education.

Policymaking

IPSEC provides policy consulting services pertaining to the power of religion in the public life. Its expert services are provided directly and/or in partnership with affiliated institutions and individuals, for the benefit of businesses, governments, and religious entities. Specifically, IPSEC expert services focus on the role of religion in collective violence, cultural communication, politics, terrorism, collective identity, migration, diplomacy, bioethics, business development, and more. IPSEC consulting services are delivered via formal training programs, direct coaching and facilitation; by providing customized policy analysis reports, by offering policy advice on specific issues, by conducting and providing specific research, and by serving as “good offices” in contexts of conflict.

4) IPSEC Education

IPSEC offers an ample educational program accessible to anyone interested in learning more about the Orthodox Christian heritage of peace and violence. The educational program includes lectures, summer institutes, workshops, on-line courses, field education, certificate program, mass-media conversations, conferences, and more.

Courses

Part of its educational program, IPSEC offers several courses which explore and advance the general study of religion and collective violence, while also exploring the subjects of peace and violence

through the lenses of Orthodox Christian theology, ecclesiology, history, and culture. IPSEC courses can be taken for audit or for credit. If you are interested in taking a course, please note the available options.

An *Option 1* course is designed for personal development and it is offered as an introductory course for the general audience. The course package includes access to a limited amount of educational materials, recorded lectures, and tests for self-evaluation. Please note that courses in the Option 1 format receive no faculty support, no academic credit, and cannot be counted toward the requirements for a Certificate of Studies, since the awarding of a Certificate demands faculty supervision and evaluation.

The *Option 2* course is designed for university level (undergraduate and graduate) and it can be taken for personal development or academic credit. The package includes academic syllabus, access to the complete educational material, recorded lectures, advanced tests for self-evaluation, faculty support, and grading. Upon completion, IPSEC will issue an academic transcript upon request only. Please note that IPSEC is not accredited as a college. Therefore, if you wish to transfer IPSEC credits to your college or university, it will be up to your institution to accept credits.

Option 3 is similar to Option 2 in terms of contents, faculty support, and evaluation. The only difference consists in the variability of the fees assigned per credit hour, as well as in special enrollment requirements set by the university granting academic credit. If you are interested in pursuing this option, please contact us for details.

Method of Instruction

Option 1 offers access to a limited amount of educational materials, recorded lectures, and tests for self-evaluation, but no faculty support, evaluation and grading. The method of instruction for Option 2 and Option 3 includes lectures, readings assignments, group discussions, individual research assignments, a mid-term and a final exam. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the courses, each

class will be structured in such a way as to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the readings and stimulate creative thinking and conversations across the disciplines. Each class session will include lecture, a power-point presentation, a threaded discussion which will focus on the assigned readings, and email and video access to the instructor. Class participation will be evaluated and graded by assigned deadlines. Examination will also include a midterm and a final paper.

Current Offerings

Currently, IPSEC offers two online courses “Religion and Collective Violence” (a government course taught at Harvard University), and “War and Peacemaking in Orthodox Christianity” (a theology course taught at Boston College.)

Religion and Collective Violence

Centered on the idea of improving communication between religious leaders and policymakers when dealing with situations of collective violence, this course aims to offer a theoretical framework and a practical understanding of this phenomenon from the perspective of religious studies and political science. The course is innovative and cross-disciplinary in the sense that while covering the basic theoretical approaches to religion and political science, it correlates and integrates them via three major theories of violence derived from Evolutionary Psychology: frustration-aggression, alienation-deprivation, and learned behavior. Therefore, the students will first identify and understand the basic trajectories that religious leaders and policymakers follow when attempting to manage situations of collective violence. Students will then develop an understanding of an integrative method designed to improve cross-communication between policymakers and religious leaders, and to improve the coordination of the existing conflict management strategies between the two sources of authority. Students gain insight on how religious leaders and policymakers think and make decisions, and how best practices could be developed and implemented. (0 credits for Option 1; 3 credits for Option 2 and Option 3)

War and Peacemaking in Orthodox Christianity

The purpose of this course is to study the concepts of war and peace in Eastern Christianity. Despite its compelling record on pacifism, the Eastern Church had occasionally derailed from this position due to heretical attitudes in defining and identifying ‘the enemy,’ as well as due to pressures from political authorities. In the first part of this course, a focused literature review of patristic writings, liturgical compositions, Canon Law and selected contemporary writings will be conducted for the purpose of identifying the core, structural position of the Eastern Church(es) on violence and peacemaking. In the second part of the course, phenomenological themes such as ‘evil’ and ‘dualism’ will be analyzed for the purpose of comprehending heretical attitudes that emerged during times of war (e.g. demonizing of enemies), while political themes such as Just War and Nationalism will be explored for the purpose of identifying instances when members of the Church sanctioned defensive violence and fostered a version of nationalism that contradicted Christian universalism. The third part of this course will explore peacemaking methods developed throughout Eastern Christianity in light of the tripartite dimension of violence (against oneself, against God and against another human being), when managing human passions towards “fighting the good fight.” (0 credits for Option 1; 3 credits for Option 2 and Option 3)

Field Education at Harvard Divinity School

The Institute for Peace Studies in Eastern Christianity (IPSEC) is affiliated with Harvard Divinity School (HDS) as an agency site for its Field Education Program. IPSEC is an intellectual setting which provides the students enrolled in the programs of Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Master of Theological Studies (MTS) with guided learning experiences that integrate theory and practice. The students direct their own learning, using their imagination and creativity to find the appropriate settings for their educational and vocational goals.

Opportunities: IPSEC is an Orthodox Christian agency site seeking to work with students interested in making a positive

contribution to the world peace, by focusing on the role of religion in international relations and policymaking. By exploring resources from Eastern and Oriental Christianity, IPSEC offers a dynamic learning environment where theory is combined with practice. By understanding the structural intricacies of various religious and political organizations in a pragmatic sense, and by dispatching the basic rules of protocol required when interacting with spiritual leaders and policymakers, IPSEC is an ideal site where the student will develop strong skills in religious diplomacy; skills that are useful beyond the tradition Orthodox Christianity. Pending on the student's interest, IPSEC will also facilitate access to, and interaction with spiritual leaders and policymakers in a hands-on fashion and on real life issues geared toward building the capacity for conflict transformation. IPSEC will also offer access to additional local and international venues for pragmatic learning about the role of religion in public and international policy.

Student Involvement: IPSEC provides an opportunity for students in theological ministry to engage in up to 12 to 15 hours per week during the academic year (or 35 to 40 hours per week during the summer for approximately eight weeks), for a total of 350 to 400 hours per unit of supervised ministry experiences. Thus, one hour per week will consist of one-on-one theological supervision, travel time, on- or off-site preparation, participation in worship and various tasks.

IPSEC is seeking to work with one or two graduate theology students—from the perspective of each art of ministry—on the following issues and areas: a) inter-religious understanding and dialogue; b) religion and diplomacy; c) nationalism and pan-Orthodoxy in Russia and Eastern Europe; d) Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East, North Africa, and America; e) Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement, and; f) issues of restorative justice and conflict transformation.

Arts of Ministry Competencies Offered:

- * Administration and Program Development
- * Denominational Polity
- * Pastoral Care and Counseling

- * Public Leadership, Community Organizing, and Planning
- * Preaching and Worship
- * Religious Education and Spiritual Development

Supervision: Theological supervision is conducted in-person and one-on-one, for at least one hour a week, in order to assist the student to successfully test and apply classroom knowledge to real life situations, and thus become a stronger reflective practitioner. We are also looking for students who will be involved directly with IPSEC, or, while participating in other designated sites, are willing to be involved in a gathering once a month to discuss the principles of religion, conflict, public and international policymaking and diplomacy, then applying them in a hands-on fashion in a specific project.

Certificate of Studies

Upon the successful completion of two courses taken for credit, IPSEC will issue a Certificate of Studies. This Certificate is not a degree, but a recognition of academic work performed in the general field of Peace Studies, with a focus on Orthodox Christianity. The academic credits obtained either from IPSEC or from one of IPSEC's partnering universities can be used toward a degree.

Summer Institute

The Institute for Peace Studies in Eastern Christianity (IPSEC) offers summer institutes independently or in partnership with various universities from the U.S. and abroad. The purpose of the summer institutes is to investigate how Orthodox Christianity manages its encounter with collective violence in a various geopolitical spheres which are situated at the intersection of former empires, political ideologies and organized religions.

For purpose of safety and logistics, IPSEC summer institutes are currently organized in Romania, in partnerships with local

universities. Logistically, it has long been recognized that Romania is a unique place of religious, political and diplomatic collision, where the Ottoman Muslims, the Russian Orthodox, and the Austro-Hungarian Catholic and Protestant leaders have learned how to negotiate their political differences and interests, territorial influence and control, and faith limitations.

Based on a study and travel model, the summer institute combines classroom training with onsite learning that involves visits to sacred places, and interviews with academics, religious leaders, political leaders and journalists.

IPSEC welcomes undergraduate and graduate students, as well as anyone interested in learning more about Orthodox Christianity and its challenges in Eastern Europe, Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia, and elsewhere.

Undergraduate and graduate academic credits may be available if a course is completed in the context of a summer institute.

Conclusions

As the distinction between the cruel and the compassionate behavior of the human being remains at the heart of human conscience, a “society of conscience” can indeed become sustainable only by tapping into the abundance of religious spirituality. In this case, IPSEC’s institutional design, as outlined in this white paper, is an attempt to appraise the existing spiritual possessions of Orthodox Christianity, beyond the restrictions of ignorance.