



## THOUGHTS FROM SOME OF OUR STUDENTS:



### **Jarrod Huffman, MA student, USA**

'I really cannot overstate how much IOCS has been part of my life since beginning the program—even as a distance student. While there are few MA programs in theology that offer distance learning, and fewer still that offer it in an Orthodox setting, what really makes IOCS such a unique

program is the centrality of the virtual classroom. Here, students participate in discussion-based learning and develop relationships with their Christian brothers and sisters from all over the world. Having even had the opportunity to meet many of those students and instructors in person for an on-site intensive, I can honestly say I experienced a seamless continuation of the relationships that began online. The only thing that was odd was how natural it all felt. As for the coursework, all the instruction has been a wonderful learning opportunity. The faculty at IOCS are warm, thoughtful, and extremely knowledgeable. It is obvious from the classroom experience how invested they are in their work. For me personally, as a lay church school teacher and choir director in training who is considering an eventual transition into full-time ministry, IOCS has had a transformative effect on how I perform my responsibilities, and has greatly broadened my perspective on how I view challenges both in the global Church and my local parish.'

### **Sergei Baranov, MA student, Russia/USA:**

'In mid-2000s, my professional activities took me and the family to London, so it was then when I first discovered IOCS with its Cambridge based weekend program. However, at the time, given the logistics and family commitments, traveling from Wimbledon to Cambridge on a regular basis was a hard-to-do undertaking. I did not give up, so every year (for 10 years!) I kept visiting the IOCS website to check if they had any new developments on the distance learning front (the only real option for me, given my full-time job and frequent relocations). Finally, in 2015, I discovered the MA program, which turned out to be very flexible, as it is delivered in any imaginable mode: 100% on campus, or fully leveraging distance learning technology, or a combination of the two modes. This is my fourth semester as a part-time MA student at IOCS. So far the experience has been nothing but amazing. Each of the five modules I have taken was both challenging and stimulating, which made my

learning experience worthy of all the sacrifices that I and those around me had to put up with: shortage of sleep, time away from kids and family, on-the-go lunches, lack of focus at work, to name a few. These are inevitable when you juggle between family, 40-hr/wk job, library visits, and church ministry. However, I am convinced that in the course of the year, it was these intense academic pursuits that contributed the most to my spiritual growth, making me self-reflect and inviting me to seriously re-consider the scope of my own ministry. Thus, the MA at IOCS is nothing but a life-changing and transformative experience, undoubtedly, due to IOCS's high-caliber faculty and fellow students. Glory to God!'

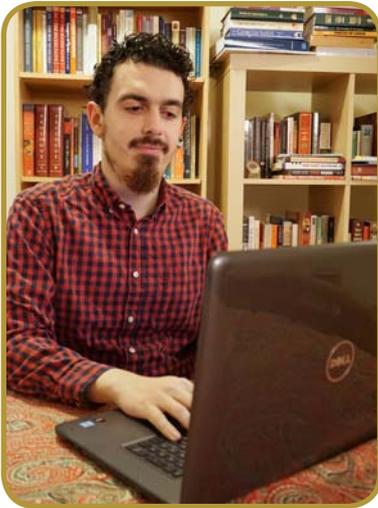


### **Eija Pehu, MA student, former Certificate/ Diploma student, Finland/USA**

'Turning on my computer, putting on headphones and going to the IOCS site has been a weekly routine in my past three years. I took the IOCS certificate and diploma courses, which helped me to deepen my spiritual journey and to see the world through another perspective. The lecturers, some who are experienced professors and scholars, some from a monastic path, some young theologians from many different parts of the world, greatly challenged and inspired us students. To the extent that I now find myself in the MA course, which has started this fall with the research and reflection module. I have been amazed how well the weekly lectures and interactive exercises have been developed and structured to work in a distance learning format. It is also so enriching and fun to have fellow students, in our little 'boxes' on the screen during the sessions, from Egypt, Norway, USA, UK, Finland and from different denominations, to share our views and to learn from each other and from the in-class students in Cambridge. With the help of the tutors I am working hard to pass this module and to move on to new exciting topics in the spring.'



**Andrew Matthews, MA student, former Certificate student, Canada**



Even as a distance student, I have never felt distant at IOCS. The staff is always welcoming, warm, and knowledgeable. Classes are an engaging learning experience, where students are able to learn from both the teachers and from one another. Moreover, my time at IOCS has not only deepened my understanding of my own Orthodox Christian

faith, but it has also given me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge of other Christian traditions in an ecumenical environment.

**Stephanie Wolff, Diploma student, former Certificate student**

As an important part of my life, the Distance Learning programme has been accompanying me like a friend for the past seven years. Living in Mexico in a distinctively catholic environment, I have no access to libraries offering Orthodox literature. The DL programme is a great blessing and an opportunity for me to consolidate my Orthodox faith. I have received extremely useful materials for my studies, with an impressive diversity of authors from different Orthodox backgrounds. I highly value the spiritual guidelines which the intense examination of an essay topic provides and even more so the contact with and the care of my personal Tutor. My view on the Orthodox Faith has significantly widened since I began the DL program. To meet people from all over the world with Orthodox, but also other religious backgrounds, ages and nationalities, widens the experience which the weekly chats offer. In the contemporary context with isolationist tendencies, the Cambridge DL programme plays a major role as an open-minded, yet deeply profound and rooted academic meeting point.



Although my mother tongue is German and my English is far from perfect, I find the correction of my essays very supportive, not judgmental and always focusing on content. It is an educational and enriching experience to adapt my studies to my busy life and to make the effort to write an essay. It is a unique opportunity to be able to learn in this outstanding school.

**Francisco José Pino Rodríguez, Certificate student, Spain**

As an Orthodox Christian, I have always felt the need to acquire a deeper knowledge of my faith in order to more efficiently serve the Church (I am training to become a Reader in the Ecumenical Patriarchate). And that is exactly what

IOCS offers in a systematic and well-organised way. One of the most interesting aspects of IOCS is that it has a flexibility that allows me to adapt the programme to my usually very tight agenda and thus advance at my own pace, not to mention the high quality of the contents and the prestige of the tutors, teachers, etc. I definitely feel very blessed and privileged to be a student of this internationally renowned institution.





## The new Principal of IOCS

On 16 December 2016 the Board of Directors of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies appointed Father Dragos Herescu in the position of Principal of IOCS. Father Dragos had previously served as Acting Principal since May 2016.

Father Dragos is an alumnus of the Institute's MA in Pastoral Theology. He later graduated an MPhil in Theology with the Divinity Faculty, University of Cambridge.

He is teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level on the degree programmes offered through the Institute and the Cambridge Theological Federation. He is also an Affiliated Lecturer of the Divinity Faculty, University of Cambridge.

Father Dragos is in the last stage of completing a doctoral thesis with Durham University, on the secularisation paradigm in the context of Eastern Orthodoxy, with particular focus on the Romanian context.

Fr Dragos also serves as parish priest for 'St John the Evangelist' Romanian Orthodox parish in Cambridge.

## The IOCS MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission - possibly our most successful programme to date

From 2014, the Institute has started using the experience gained in the Distance Learning area by mounting an MA programme offered by Distance Learning. One year later our unique Distance Learning MA became part of the prestigious Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission (in partnership with Durham University).

The Distance Learning method has become increasingly suitable for many candidates today due to its flexibility, convenience and reduced expenses. Our MA course can be taught in its entirety by Distance Learning - although students can opt for one or two on-site modules taught over the summer in Cambridge. The main aim of our MA course is to explore how the Church and Christian theology can critically and creatively relate to the contemporary world and contemporary thought. Students have the opportunity to reflect - together with colleagues from the other theological houses in Cambridge - on the current ecumenical situation, the dialogue between theology and science, secularisation, and the relationship between philosophy and theology.

Our MA course has quickly gained popularity as we now have a record number of fifteen postgraduate students with many more applications arriving every week.

We're

grateful to our students for making this course a fascinating platform for learning, sharing and growing together in

knowledge and faith, and we're eager to continue our journey with them and with other new students in the New Year.

<http://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/master-of-arts/>



## Federation Worship in Cambridge

On 22 November 2016 it was our Institute's turn to organise the Common Service for all our friends in the Cambridge Theological Federation. Father Dragos Herescu, Principal of IOCS, served The Order for the Lesser Sanctification of the Water, in an atmosphere of joyful peace and togetherness.

## The revision of our Distance Learning Certificate continues

We have continued these past months our very important project of revising the Distance Learning Certificate course. This overhaul is aimed to improve the structure of the course and the quality of the audio and video recordings. We have started a series of new recordings, with lectures filmed and/or recorded with professional equipment. We expect to be able to attract more students onto our Distance Learning platform when we launch the upgraded version of the course next year. This development would not have been possible without the contribution of the *Gerald Palmer Eling Trust*, and we are particularly motivated and greatly encouraged by their generous support.



<http://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/distance-learning-certificate-diploma-in-orthodox-christian-studies/>

## Support needed for IOCS Library collection update

Our Institute strives to keep its **Library collection** up-to-date, enabling students and researchers to access the latest research available. Donations towards collection development allow us to purchase new books that would otherwise be beyond our budget. Such donations are now more necessary than ever, as we are in the process of updating our Distance Learning Certificate course which requires another 150 new books, which will require an overall budget of at least £3,000. With your help we could reach this target before spring. A donation of £20 could buy a single volume, £200 would pay for a multi-volume set. Donations will be bookplated as appropriate.

You can make a donation via our website, at <http://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/library-support/>



## Father Dragos Herescu (Principal, IOCS)



I very much look forward to 2017, thinking of all the exciting projects that IOCS has lined up (the MA programme by distance learning, our revamped Certificate Course – also by distance learning, and several outreach and fundraising activities – to list just a few).

Another reason to look forward to 2017 is the prospect of the completion of my PhD research

project, investigating secularisation in the Orthodox context, particularly Romania – a majority Orthodox country, with the largest Orthodox demographic among the European Union states. Although in the last 25 years Romania has developed into a modern society, with many Western hallmarks becoming less alien and more domestic (from the free market economy, to the democratic social and political principals, to pluralism of ideas and practices), it continues to score high on religious affiliation and practice – with Orthodoxy as a major contributor to the fabric and direction of society. To capture the tension and rapport between modernity, religious life and the place of religion (Orthodoxy) in the public square, my research has at its core an analysis of probably the most significant – certainly the largest – pilgrimage in Romania: the pilgrimage to the relics of St Parascheva of Iasi, which takes place every year around the Saint's feast day, 14 October. Growing year on year (in 2016 the



estimate was of between 200,000 – 400,000 pilgrims), this pilgrimage is an unequivocal statement about the vitality of religious expression in Romania. At the same time, it is a snapshot, a cross-section of Romanian society, of its values, hopes and fears, of its relationship with the institutional Church, as well as with the way God and the Sacred is perceived, mediated and connected with today. In 2015, I spent a week doing field-research at the pilgrimage and I am still working with the wealth of data and information gathered. I trust that, once completed, my research will make a small contribution to understating better the complex reality of secularisation in Orthodox contexts, as well as highlighting some of the challenges and opportunities

presented to the Orthodox Church by its encounter with the advancing and contextually-shaped modernity of our times.

## Dr Razvan Porumb (Koga Postdoctoral Fellow, IOCS)



*Two new studies of mine are to be published next year:*

The first study attempts to present 'An Orthodox Model of Practical/Pastoral Theology' and is to be published in the *International Journal of Practical Theology* (de Gruyter). The article explores the Orthodox vision of theology as holistic, where liturgical and sacramental life on the one hand, and social action and commitment on the other hand are inextricably connected. Theology appears as an inseparable whole, in which societal commitment cannot be divorced from the sacramental spiritual element. All theology is therefore implicitly practical/pastoral. This study approaches the Orthodox response to the western perspective of pastoral theology as community-focused process. The concept of theosis is presented as 'engine' and ultimate goal of Orthodox practical/pastoral theology. The study emphasises the fundamental importance of liturgical, eucharistic and sacramental life in the life of the Orthodox Church. Following from that it reveals that, when approaching the ministry of the wider community of the Church, that too is essentially understood as another level of sacramental participation. Here Eucharistic sacrament marries the complementary concept of the 'sacrament of the brother', akin to the concept of the 'Liturgy after the Liturgy'. This study also addresses the concepts of withdrawn 'inner life' and monasticism, which evidence the tension between the rejection of the world on the one hand and social 'incarnational' involvement on the other.

Continuing some of the themes encountered in the above-mentioned study, my second article will address 'Orthodoxy in engagement with the 'outer' world. The dynamic of the "inward-outward" cycle' and is to appear in the *Religions* journal - the forthcoming Special Issue on "Inward Being and Outward Identity: The Orthodox Churches in the 21st Century". This study will explore the tension between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces informing the activity of the Orthodox Church - both with regard to its interaction with the secular world and the wider ecumenical scene, using examples from contemporary Orthodox life. The Church is called to look inwardly as an essential connection with its intimate sacramental life. This contraction must be followed organically by a movement of expansion - a continuing sacramental interaction with the secular local context and the wider Christian world. This cyclical movement (inward-outward) informs all Christian life in a mutually perpetuating rotation. Although the reaction to any engagement with the 'outer' dimensions is often one of rejection, it is nevertheless crucial as it brings fullness and fulfils the vocation and identity of the Orthodox Church.

## Dr Christoph Schneider (Academic Director, IOCS)

My research is dedicated to the question of how the Orthodox Church has responded, or is supposed to respond, to the challenges of modernity and postmodernity. It is encouraging to see that more and more Orthodox scholars and institutes are willing to explore how we are to conceive of the relationship between Orthodoxy and contemporary thought. The answers we give to this question will decide whether the Orthodox Church of the future will be a defensive, reactionary and nostalgic institution, or whether it will be able to equip Christians to face the manifold challenges of our time; whether we will have a Church that primarily aims at *sheltering* its members from the 'evils of a secular age', or whether it will be capable to take the initiative, and to positively propose and embody alternative ways of life.

The Anglican movement *Radical Orthodoxy* has chosen the second option and attempts to combine faithfulness to the Christian tradition with innovative and creative ways of reinterpreting the Gospel message in the contemporary cultural context. I have recently contributed an article to a collection of essays with the title *Between Immanence and Transcendence: an attempt to think with Radical Orthodoxy* that will be published early next year [Sven Gross and Harald Seubert (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy: Eine Herausforderung für Christentum und Theologie nach der Säkularisierung* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017, pp. 185-201)]. In this article I deliberately highlight some of the main affinities between Eastern Orthodox theology and Radical Orthodoxy. In terms of scope and intellectual depth, Radical Orthodoxy in some respects continues the work of the Russian religious philosophers of the nineteenth

and twentieth century – even if they mainly draw on the Christian sources of the Latin West, rather than the Greek East.

At the moment, Russian religious philosophy is my main research interest. I am currently completing an article on the relationship between faith and reason with the title *Reason in the Garden of Gethsemane*, which examines how far P. Florensky has managed to

propose a 'third way' beyond ontotheology and fideism: the two approaches that epitomize the most characteristic features of modern and postmodern philosophy and theology. I am trying to answer the question whether Florensky's alternative vision of a Trinitarian rationality is theological and philosophically convincing, and what its implications are for a Christian understanding of culture.

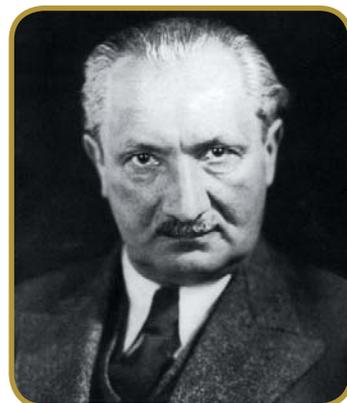


My second project is an article on the same author, P. Florensky, for the *Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought* that will be edited by George Pattison, Caryl Emerson and Randall Poole. Florensky is one of the most enigmatic and fascinating characters of the Russian Silver Age, whose immense contribution to Christian thought has not been fully investigated yet. One of the main challenges is to select and present the most essential aspects of his work, which – given the incredible scope and complexity of his writings – is no easy task.

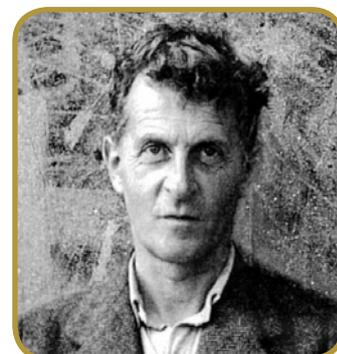
Thirdly, in collaboration with Wipf & Stock Publishers, I am planning to edit a collection of essays with the title *Theology and Philosophy in Eastern Orthodoxy*. The aim of this project is to explore how the Eastern Orthodox tradition conceives of the relationship between theology and philosophy. The main focus is not the reception and transformation of Greek philosophy in the patristic period. Rather, we would like to encourage critical and creative engagement with modern and

postmodern philosophy, but without disregarding the 'doctrinal grammar' of the Orthodox tradition. A number of renowned scholars have already confirmed to contribute to this volume.

Finally, Dr Clemena Antonova, a Research Associate and friend of the Institute, and I, have completed a research proposal with the title *The Word made Flesh:*



*Toward and Eastern Orthodox Christian Philosophy of Language and of the Image*. The aim is to relate Pavel Florensky's and Sergei Bulgakov's writings on language and the image to the Western intellectual history. We would like to show that these thinkers make a unique and highly original contribution to present-day discussions about language and the image that is rooted in a consistently theological outlook on the world. We will explore, first, how far language and the image/icon can mediate (on the 'horizontal' level) between the sciences and the humanities/ arts, and secondly, how we are to envisage of (on the 'vertical' level) the reintegration of the noumenal and transcendent aspect of linguistic meaning and visual expression in the current intellectual context. We hope to find external funding to carry out this project that should result in a monograph.





## Orthodoxy in Cambridge



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