

## EDITORIAL

Mystical experience and its philosophical understanding are among the most topical subjects of philosophy of religion and Christian theology. The notion of mystical experience attracts the attention of theologians, philosophers, psychologists and many other students of religion. The issues of borderlines of mystical and religious experience remain relevant for science. Comparative study of Western and Eastern mystical experience proves to be in high demand as well.

An attempt to specify these and other issues was made at the international conference 'Philosophy and Mystical Experience: Modern Approaches and Historical Contexts' (Moscow, Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, May 22–24, 2014), at which Russian and North-American philosophers, theologians and scholars of religion participated. The conference was held with the support of the John Templeton Foundation.

The speakers displayed a variety of worldviews and methodological approaches. Several basic thematic areas were represented: mystical experience and its understanding in the Eastern and Western Patristics, Western Middle Ages, as well as theoretical approaches to this phenomenon in the Russian spiritual-academic school, in the Soviet studies of Religion, in the modern psychology of Religion and cross-cultural anthropology.

Petr Mikhaylov (St. Tikhon's Orthodox University), within the framework of the historical-theological approach, embarked on a typology of the methods of spiritual reading as the basic mystical experience in the Eastern Christian tradition. He divided those methods into narrative, oratory, instructive, and symbolic, and showed that spiritual reading was perceived as directly related to the person's spiritual formation.

Alexey Fokin's (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences; Sts. Cyrill and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies) paper was devoted to St. Augustine's mystical paradigm *ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab inferioribus ad superiora* and its wide circulation in the Christian West and East.

The writer of these words contributed an analysis of mystical experience of the Divine light vision by Venerable Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), whose heritage is one of the summits of Orthodox spirituality.

William Wainwright (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) criticized Stace's classical typology of mystical experiences and pointed to the importance of the notion of love, referring to Rhine mysticism.

Kirill Karpov's (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences) speech highlighted such important categories of the Order of Carthusians' mystical practice, as *lectio divina*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplation*.

In David Bradshaw's (University of Kentucky) talk, an attempt was made to expand the notion of mystical experience based on its mystical component in the context of the Divine liturgy.

Another attempt to enlarge the notion of the mystical experience was made in the paper by Stephen Grimm (Fordham University), who suggested that mystical experience should not be boiled down to exclusive cases and advanced the idea that every believer has some mystical experience.

Vladimir Shokhin (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences) highlighted the significance of the Russian spiritual-academic theological tradition (in the second half of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century) little known in the West, and devoted his talk to its reflexion on Friedrich Schleiermacher's mystical conception of religion, which made a profound impact on the shaping of the phenomenology of religion.

Tatiana Malevich (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences) presented an analysis of the epistemological and ideological foundations informing the general direction of research on mystical experience and mysticism in the Soviet and post-Soviet school of Religious studies.

Two North-American speakers presented modern mystical experience interpretation programs. Michael Stoeber (University of Toronto) made an attempt to apply John Washburn's Transpersonal theory to the analysis of certain medieval Christian and Eastern practices. Ryan Hornbeck (Fuller School of Psychology) showed the possibility of applying the methodology of cognitive science of religion to studies in religious experience.

In general, all the Conference participants, representing various philosophical schools with a diversity of methods and approaches showed an agreement of opinions in their evaluation of the importance and relevance of the interdisciplinary research of the mystical experience phenomenon in different religious traditions. This could promote a constructive dialogue both between different Christian denominations and world religions.

***Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk***

*Chairman of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission  
Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations*