

FORWARD

This issue of the *Researches in Religious Studies* is dedicated to the “sacred.” There is an obvious reason to address this topic at this moment in time as we celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of Rudolf Otto’s seminal book. However, contributions to this issue do not hearken back directly to the line inaugurated by the German scholar. Rather, various other traditions are invoked, thus pointing to a diversity of tools, methods, and principles by means of which the sacred category can serve as an object, as well as an instrument, of an academic inquiry.

In his paper, Ivan Strenski discusses the topography of the sacred in today’s Los Angeles. His examination of the ways by which religion is represented in the urban space and of how that very space gets altered through interventions of the sacred points to a continuing heuristic potential of that notion for contemporary research, particularly in a situation when the classical approaches of Otto and Durkheim are not being followed. Alexey Zygmunt and Dmitry Dyukov focus on the relationship between violence and the sacred in the conceptions of Rene Girard and Georges Bataille, who both take a cue from Emile Durkheim’s sociology, among other things. Their paper brings out a high level of plasticity of the sacred category within philosophical discourses. Pavel Kostylev looks at how the sacred has been approached in Islam, and at Islamic interpretations of the word *sakinah*. Finally, Alexey Rakhmanin analyses the status of the “sacred” as a category, the function of the “sacred” in definitions of religion, and the connection that may or may not exist between the religious phenomena and the “sacred” ones.

The diversity of the approaches and the research programs pursued here highlights the continuing heuristic significance of the “sacred.” On the one hand, the notion has become an all but

irreplaceable element within the academic thesaurus of religion as that thesaurus has evolved until the present moment. On the other hand, a running leitmotif—from the end of the 20 c. onwards—has been an effort to eliminate the “sacred” from the academic study of religion, and vice versa, to eliminate religion from the study of the sacred. Beyond that, the notion is ever more relevant in today’s social and political discourse; Russian media, for example, now applies it to an ever growing list of phenomena.

All of this merits further examination. However, in order to proceed, one needs to take a detailed look at all the prior academic tradition(s) of dealing with the “sacred.”

The issue to follow will address the question, how the philosophy of religion is possible.

Editorial Board