

Editorial Note

The symposium *Pilgrimages Today*, which the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History arranged 19–21 August 2010 in Åbo, Finland, attracted a lot of interest. We might note that earlier, a decade ago, Nordic scholars of comparative religion still comprised the target group for the Donner Symposia, which were begun in 1962. Today, however, researchers of comparative religion from all parts of the world are our target group. The turning point was the symposium in 1997, *Methodology of the Study of Religion*, which was ‘an IAHR Regional Symposium’. That was the first time English was the language of the conference, and it has been so at all symposia since then. Nowadays, information on a forthcoming symposium (a word we use as fully synonymous with conference) is no longer spread using traditional postal services, but through mailing lists that disseminate the message with the speed of the wind in a multitude of directions. It is always a pleasure to see the registrations for a symposium today—most continents are represented.

Our definition of pilgrimage in our Call for Papers was in no sense controversial: ‘Basically, a pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by individuals or a group to a place, which for the single individual or the individuals in the group is of great importance because of something they have learnt and experienced in the culture and religion which they have grown up within. . . We explicitly welcome papers on pilgrimages that are akin to, but not identical with, religious pilgrimages. As examples of such, we could mention pilgrimages to Elvis Presley’s Graceland or to the grave of Jim Morrison. Here, it should be noted that one of our points of departure is also that, despite their similarities, it is important to take into account the difference between pilgrimages and tourism.’

An answer to the question of whether a trip to Graceland or to the grave of Morrison or other similar tourism perhaps in a post-modern world are, after all, pilgrimages of today—in a world where many put together their own religious salvation message about their own imagined gods—is hopefully provided by the present volume.

