

Editor's Note

A brief survey of the choice of subject for various recurring conferences in religious studies reveals that the problem of ritual is more frequent than many other topics. The reason for this is clear: ritual is one of the most central phenomena in all religions. An examination of the congress activity of the Donner Institute shows that among the seventeen topics discussed at the seventeen congresses to date between the years 1965 and 2001, there is one theme that dealt explicitly with ritual; this was the symposium organized in 1991 under the rubric "Religious Rites" and whose proceeds were published in 1993 as volume 15 in the institute's series, *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, under the title *The Problem of Rituals*. The first essay in that volume was written by Jørgen Podemann Sørensen and was entitled "Ritualistics: A New Discipline in the History of Religions". The theme for the Donner Institute's 2001 symposium, "Ritualistik", and the title of the conference volume, *Ritualistics*, is taken from Podemann Sørensen's 1993 article. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen naturally appears in this volume, too, with a masterly essay – and I have no hesitation in claiming that Podemann Sørensen is the leading scholar in the Nordic countries in the field of ritualistics. Even if I have already noted that ritual is one of the most interesting phenomena in religion, I would also make the not particularly original claim that ritual in societies like those of the increasingly secular Nordic countries is fast becoming the only visible expression of religion. This would mean, then, that the discipline of ritualistics would acquire a central role in religious studies.

The Donner Institute's next symposium will be arranged in Turku, in 2005, and on that occasion will have the status of a European Association for the Study of Religion conference. The theme is built round the frame of Violence and Religion and is being worked out by those members of the Donner Institute board who are appointed by the faculty council for the Humanities at the University of Uppsala: Peter Schalk and Ing-Britt Trankell. The symposium will, in other words, be "European" and the conference language will be English. As was the case at the 1997 conference on Methodology in the Study of Religions, on this occasion, too, a Nordic Ph.D. school will be organised in conjunction with the conference. The conference policy of the Donner Institute, as the only organization regularly organising Nordic conferences in religious studies, is aimed in principle at arranging alternately a Nordic regional conferences (with Swedish or "Scandinavian", together with English, as conference languages) and an international conference (where the conference language is English). In this way, we feel

that we can best fulfil both the need for purely Nordic conferences, where the target group is defined as the Nordic countries and where the language is regional, as well as recognise in practice that religious studies is an international discipline which cannot be exercised exclusively within regional boundaries.

Much credit for the production of the present volume goes to editorial assistant Björn Dahla.

Tore Ahlbäck