

## Editorial note

For a few years now a new trend in the study of religion has been discernible in the choice of themes for the Donner Institute conferences. The object of interest is no longer old, established religions—and neither are recently established religious movements found on the agenda. The attention has thus turned away from organised religious practices. Instead, studies are focussed on non-institutional and non-organised practice of religion. This is obvious in the theme for the 2008 symposium ‘Postmodern Spirituality’, in the 2010 theme ‘Religion and the Body’—also the subject of the present volume of the series *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*—and in the theme for the Institute’s symposium organised 15–17 June 2011: ‘Post-Secular Religious Practices.’ In all these cases, human religious activities are explored in a secular context outside of established religions.

Our Call for Papers for the symposium ‘Religion and the Body’ included the following brief definition of the theme: ‘One of the places where religion and culture intersect is the body. The body can be manipulated using various methods that are also used in a non-religious context. Examples of such are asceticism, fasting and other dietary restrictions, and various psycho-techniques such as yoga. The body is also mutilated for religious reasons, as in the case of circumcision.’ Having given some 15 examples of phenomena within this theme the definition continued thus: ‘The theme of the body has been topical for quite some time—for example, within gender studies. . . . We should, however, point out that we are thinking of the concrete body, not of the body in a metaphorical sense.’

The symposium ‘Religion and the Body’ attracted a great deal of interest; it was well attended and well organised—we now hope that the conference publication will be well received.