

Editorial note

The theme chosen for the Donner Institute 22nd Symposium, 15–17 June 2011 in Åbo/Turku, Finland, was *Post-secular religious practices*. The field we were interested in had so far not received a set terminology. Against this background, we accordingly suggested a stipulative definition in our Call for papers: ‘A post-secular society is that which combines a renewed openness to questions of the spirit with the habit of critical enquiry.’

As noticed in our Call for papers, people today more often take responsibility for regulating their lives the best they can in order to become and stay healthy, efficient, moral and flexible actors both in their private lives and in the labour market. A common feature of many religious and spiritual practices is the invitation to work with oneself, more specifically with one’s mind, body and spirit, as well as with one’s emotions, goals, values and relations. This late modern orientation has been named, ‘the subjective or expressive turn of culture’. As a consequence, many people are today increasingly seeking a non-dualistic or holistic understanding of life and the human being, an understanding that would bring mind and body, or ‘nature’ and ‘spirit’, in unity. Some analyses of post-secular urban culture have depicted it in critical terms of, for instance, a disorienting character or disconnectedness, a lack of subjectivity or authenticity, a glorification of the superficial or as fragmentary, diffuse, and disassociated. This condition has been insightfully characterized as becoming ‘exhausted of being oneself’.

The papers that were presented at the symposium did not form a consistent whole, but were rather a fairly heterogenous collection of views on different aspects of Post-secular religious practices. Since the subject is new nothing else was to be expected. This heterogeneity also clearly appeared in our Call for papers: ‘We welcome papers dealing theoretically with secularization and post-secularity in relation to relevant post-secular religious practices such as, for example, Mindfulness, Yoga, Charismatic healing, Meditation and other spiritual health and well-being practices.’

I am nevertheless convinced that the present conference proceedings will awaken interest—as every pioneer act does. As if this was not enough, this is also the first volume in the series Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis that is published simultaneously both in printed and digital form.