



René Gothóni (ed.)

Religious Experience: North and South

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As institutional religiosity loosens its hold, different modes of spirituality are on the rise. The essays in this volume, based on papers delivered at the 'Religious Experience: North and South' international symposium convened at the University of Helsinki in 2010, focus on how religious experience is linked to tradition and discuss current beliefs, debates, politics, rituals and spirituality in Finland and Malta. Malta is one of the most Roman Catholic and Finland one of the most secular countries in the world. This book, with its unique comparative perspective, illuminates the differences between northern and southern Europe in attitudes, norms and religious values, as well as exploring areas such as bioethics, a much discussed issue in contemporary politics. Finally, the Maltese *fešta* and the Finnish *sauna*, constituent elements in the construction of local identity, are analysed in relation to discussions of festival and ritual.

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RENÉ GOTHÓNÍ is Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Helsinki, a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and a life member of the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters. He is also President of the Finnish Society of Friends of Mount Athos. His publications include *Attitudes and Interpretations in Comparative Religion* (2000), *The Unknown Pilgrim* (2006) and *Words Matter: Hermeneutics in the Study of Religions* (2011). He also edited *How to Do Comparative Religion* (2005), *The Monastic Magnet: Roads to and from Mount Athos* (with Graham Speake, 2008) and *Pilgrims and Travellers in Search of the Holy* (2010).

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