

## **REVACERN Conference, Szeged 23.04.2008**

Miklós Tomka: **Religion and Nation - preliminary remarks to their relation and its study**

Europe is a geographical area, a political region, a network of economic interrelationships, an intellectual venture, a cultural universe. Europe, built on Greco-Roman civilization and the ruins of the Roman Empire, created its historical identity with the vision of the Corpus Christianum. Christianity unified peoples religiously, culturally and in final instance politically for over a thousand years. This order collapsed with the emergence of national states and with Reformation. Instead of Christendom as an integrating framework of one single collective identity of Europe and the Europeans nations as separate socio-political units developed. The national relativized religion in the political domain and as a frame of reference for collective identities. The age of nations contributed to secularization with its new religion of nationalism. Christianity and the national idea became apparently antagonistic symbolic forces of socio-cultural integration.

The first impression of an antagonism proved to be an error soon. On the one hand several new nations could define themselves only with religious references or needed the organizational support of a church for their political strives. Religion and religious intelligentsia became often the most important carriers of the national idea. On the other hand nation states needed support in social integration and legitimation additionally to the national fervor. Religion preserved much from its previous social capacity. Further on, religion and national feelings exercised similar functions in the socio-political realm. This parallelism turned subsequently to a close liaison materializing in national religions and patriotisms nurtured by religious commitment. The association of religion and the national spirit got sharper contours in the general social commitment and history-orientation of both in contrast to individualism and history-neglecting modernisms. The same polarization differentiated community-minded and law-and-rule behavior and people, as well as conservative and liberal positions.

Historical developments concerning national commitment, religion, social participation, social solidarity etc. structured the society. The discovery of this structure is a key topic in religious and value-studies like EVS and Aufbruch.