

FOREWORD

A strong dereligionisation, secularisation and religious individualisation occurred throughout Europe in the second half of the 20th century. As a consequence of this process and the mass migration, there has been a change in the place and role of the long-standing Christian churches and religions in Europe. It has resulted in a loosening and separation in the formerly close connection between religion and culture.

This was caused in the Central and Eastern part of Europe by the hostility to the church and religion that was made an official policy of Socialist states, and further to the West by the consumer society. In the case of the Jews, the Holocaust and the large-scale emigration following the Second World War created a new situation throughout Central Europe.

The change of the political and legal system in 1989/1990 created new circumstances in the former socialist countries. Freedom of assembly and association brought the possibility of reorganising church/denominational frames and the freedom to form or revive religious societies. Beatification procedures were initiated. With the opening of political borders and the elimination of ideological borders, together with globalisation, new religious movements appeared: the 1990s saw the establishment of various churches with eastern and western roots, and the emergence of new religious (neopagan) movements with local roots. The religious ideas crossed the borders between the different social strata and age groups. The traditional forms linking religion and culture, religion and society, religion and ethnicity weakened and new connections arose.

In this process the individual (re)discovery of religion played a much greater role than attachment to traditions. The emphasis of religiosity rather than religion became important.

At the same time previously non-religious/atheistic groups began to discover religious culture. There were many conversions and religious revival events. However, this involved not only the historical Christian denominations but the full spectrum of the “religious mar-

ket". Not only did various forms of civil/political religiosity appear around public holidays and political ideologies, but a kind of "profane religiosity" was also forming. This can be seen especially in the star cult that could be called a profane cult of saints, and in a number of quasi-religious forms of civil religiosity (state/national days, cult of nature, cult of health, etc.). A desacralised form has been developed for the celebration of the feasts in which the traditional forms mingle with elements of civil religion. This is particularly striking in the case of the major Christian feasts (e.g. Christmas) and the state and national days.

This world in transition, change and movement, the coexistence of secular and religious communities, the emerging secondary and virtual communities, the new, often individual forms of religious practice that are emerging, the sacral or desacralised culture of feasts that is now taking shape and its points of contact with politics have not yet been examined adequately or even at all by Hungarian and European social science research. This is why in 2006 we formed a research group on "*Borders and Influences. Interferences in the religious life in contemporary Hungary*" financed by the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA) under grant No. K68325. We express our thanks for this support. In October 2010, the year before the project closed, we held a conference to report on the preliminary results achieved. It must be stressed that these are only preliminary results as the final summing up of the still ongoing research could take another one or two years. We also invited foreign colleagues to the conference. This volume includes their writings together with our own studies, expanding the frames of interpretation to Europe as a whole.

Gábor BARNÁ