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**Review of: Ondrej Štefaňak,
Religiozita mládeže v procese premien
(*Religiosity of Youth in the Process
of Change*). Nitra, 2019, 258 pp.**

Religiosity of Youth in the Process of Change – this is the title of a very interesting sociological study (monograph), written by Ondrej Štefaňak, a well-known sociologist of religion and morality in Slovakia. The reviewed monograph is very actual and interesting for sociologists of religion, but also for other scientists, pastors, educators, teachers or parents. In Slovakian circumstances it is also very rare. There are not many scientific books that deal with the issue of metamorphoses or youth religiosity. In this context it can be stated that sociological research, studies or analyses concerning Slovak youth religiosity in the process of change are almost like discovering a “virgin land.”

The monograph written by Ondrej Štefaňak fits very well in the discussion about the transformation of youth religiosity in the first decades of the third millennium. Several primary and auxiliary research questions outline the range of issues addressed by the author of the reviewed monograph, including changes of global attitudes towards faith, changes in religious practices, changes of acceptance of religious doctrine, changes of religious knowledge, changes of religious experiences, changes of religious community and changes of acceptance of religious morality. The reviewed sociological book is a very interesting theoretical and empirical study, increasing the sociological knowledge about the transformation of Slovak youth religiosity.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses are based primarily on the materials from the questionnaire research carried out in the group of school-leaving

young people in the regions of Spiš, Liptov and Orava in northern Slovakia in 2006 and 2016. The author also showed a wide knowledge of the socio-religious literature, which he skillfully used by exposing many threads related to the analysed issue. The reviewed book is a very good sociological monograph, indirectly encouraging further sociological research on the phenomenon of religious metamorphoses in the environment of Slovakian, Central European or European youth. It is a serious contribution to the Slovak socio-religious literature in the field of sociological research of changes of religious and moral values in the youth circles.

Many social researchers think that countries in Central and Eastern Europe are likely to experience particularly rapid secularization. Therefore, it is useful and interesting to examine, on a regular basis, how the religiosity of young people is changing at the backdrop of continuous social, cultural, political or economic transformations. The main goal of reviewed monograph, which bases especially on two own empirical researches in regions of Spiš, Liptov and Orava in northern Slovakia, is a description related to metamorphoses of youth religiosity and an effort to appoint demographic and social features which differentiate that religiosity. The basic method for the implementation of the empirical research was a questionnaire. It consisted of special research problems, translated into the language of particular questions, which involved sixty-four thematic and six identification questions.

The reviewed monograph is composed of nine chapters. It opens with a theoretical chapter, followed by a methodological chapter and seven empirical chapters, each devoted to the transformation of a specific dimension of religiosity. The theoretical chapter presents the sociology of religion as a science and main theories of sociology of religion. It is necessary to remember the fact that sociologists observe and interpret religious changes, not to mention religious progress or decline. According to the well-known Polish sociologist of religion and morality, Janusz Mariański, we can distinguish five partially complementary and partially competing theories of religious changes in the contemporary world: the theory of secularization, the theory of religious pluralization, the theory of religious individualization, the theory of religious fundamentalism, and the theory of desecularization.

In the methodological chapter, the reader can find particular information about the implementation of the above-mentioned two empirical researches. They were quantitative researches carried out by means of a survey. The first terrain data collection took place in November 2006. The target group (a basic set) was the 17–18 year-old youths in the regions of Spiš, Liptov and Orava. From the basic set a sample (a random set) was deliberately created, which consisted of 663 young people (24 grades of eight public schools and one church school). The implemented set consisted of 629 respondents, which constituted 94.9% of the random set. The second terrain data collection took place in November 2016. The target group (a basic set) was the school-leaving youth in the regions of Spiš, Liptov and Orava. From the basic set a sample (random set) was deliberately created, which consisted

of 708 young people (30 grades of seven public schools and two church schools). The implemented set consisted of 677 respondents, which constituted 95.6% of the random set.

With regard to Slovak society, it can be assumed that it is rather religiously homogeneous, in which notable religious pluralism or individualism are only *in statu nascendi*. In this society, as well as in the two cohorts of young people examined in the study, approximately 80% of respondents declared a religious faith or affiliation. The most frequent referred reasons of religious faith among the young people were education and tradition in the family, but also personal consideration and confidence. In practical dimension of religiosity, we might confirm a relatively high level of realization of religious practices. Among the Catholic youth, there were approximately two thirds of “Sunday Catholics” – people who participate in the holy mass at least once a month. Approximately three quarters of Catholic young people attend confession at least once a year.

Regarding the empirical findings of the ideological dimension of religiosity, we can agree with W. Piwowarski who emphasizes, with relation to truths of faith, that people more often accept abstract truths (they do not really reckon with them in their lives) than practical truths that influence everyday life. Generally, we can tell that approximately a half of the young people in the study accepted at least six out of seven chosen religious truths. The next dimension of religiosity is religious knowledge. The indicator measuring knowledge of the names of the Persons of the Holy Trinity was relatively high (81.4% in 2006 and 75.3% in 2016). However, knowledge of the names of the Evangelists was substantially lower (50.2% in 2006 and 35.5% in 2016). Knowledge of the sacraments was lower still, amounting to 22.6% in 2006 and 13.7% in 2016.

In religious experiences, a medium level of religiosity was typical of the surveyed young people. These facts are indicated by the following empirical indicators: the connection of the meaning of life (also) with faith (2006: 58.6%; 2016: 51.7%) and confidence in God's help in difficult situations (2006: 65.3%; 2016: 60.7%). Secularization is the most present in the community dimension of religiosity. The respondents perceived Catholic church as a community of believers. However, in their consciousness, they declared “Church-oriented religiosity” only in less than one-fifth of the responses. More than a half of the respondents described their religiosity by the statement: “I am a believer in my own way.”

Generally, the young population under study was characterized with relatively high indicators of acceptance of various commands of Decalogue. The average indicator of acceptance of those basic moral norms was 75.6% (2006) and 75.1% (2016). However, in the case of much more concrete norms of marriage and family morality we can see a marked decline in their acceptance. The average indicator of their non-conditional acceptance was only 42.2% (2006) and 44.6% (2016). At the higher end of the scale, the rejection of rape and marital infidelity was observed;

at the lower end, particularly low levels of rejection were found for premarital sexual relations and the use of contraception.

In the conclusion of the presented book, the main types of religiosity among the two groups of young people surveyed and the changes observed in them are briefly introduced. The groups were identified according to the procedure of two-step grouping in the nominal scale by statistical program SPSS. The author distinguished four types of religiosity: 1. Church-oriented religiosity (2006: 15.9%; 2016: 14.9%) – the most important fact is the firm will of identification with the Church; 2. Selectively oriented religiosity (2006: 38.3%; 2016: 29.5%) – in relation to realization of religious practice and acceptance of religious doctrine or morality we can see selective access; 3. Doubtful and seeking religiosity (2006: 31.3%; 2016: 37.7%) – those young people are indecisive, doubtful, questioning, but also looking for answers in religious questions; 4. Indifference to faith or atheism (2006: 14.5%; 2016: 17.9%) – members of this group openly declare indifference in relation to religious faith or atheism.

When the author links the presented empirical data with the main socio-religious theories, he claims that the results of the presented research confirm not only the theory of secularization, but partially also the theory of desecularization (for example, an increase of identification with one's own parish), theories of religious pluralization and individualization (for example, an increase of the indicator of the search for meaningful values outside religious faith) and theory of religious fundamentalism (for example, an increase of the indicators of acceptance of some traditional moral norms). In addition, in relation to the relatively stable indicator of religious affiliation (2006 – 89.9%; 2016 – 91.2%) associated with the decline of religiosity in its basic dimensions, he recalls the phenomenon which in the sociology of religion is called "belonging without believing." The reviewed book is situated in the area of sociology. However, its intention is to bring help for other fields of science and also for those who work with young generation as pastors, educators, teachers, and especially for parents.