

BIULETYN SOCJOLOGII RELIGII (80)

I. Metamorphoses of the Religiosity of Slovaks against the Background of the Cooperative Model of Laicity in Central Europe¹

Introduction

In this text, I would like to connect the topic “laicity in cultural contexts” with my own scientific and research interests, which oscillate primarily around the issue of religiosity, morality and values. The result of this connection sounds: *Metamorphoses of the religiosity of Slovaks against the background of the cooperative model of laicity in Central Europe*. I will primarily focus on the first part of this title, but will start with the second one. The Central European cooperative model of a religiously neutral state that cooperates with religious communities on its territory appears to be very close to Christian social teaching. It emphasizes that mutual autonomy of the state and religious groups does not entail a separation that excludes cooperation. Both, although by different titles, serve the personal and social vocation of the same human beings. The state and religious communities “can more effectively render this service for the good of all if each works better for wholesome mutual cooperation in a way suitable to the circumstances of time and place” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* 2004, art. 421–426).

Anyway, as sociologists, we observe that there are various relations and influences between society and religion. On the one hand, religious ideas more or less influence society, on the other hand, social processes have their consequences in religious life. The interaction between society and religion takes place constantly, although in some periods or situations

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it is more intense than in others. In the outlined context, we can say that Slovak or Uruguayan religiosity is what it is partly because of a specific socio-cultural context, which includes the realized model of laicity as well. At the same time, Slovak or Uruguayan society or culture are what they are partly because of specific religious ideas and values (e.g., Christian) (Yinger 2003, p. 305).

It would certainly be a mistake if we wanted to reduce religion and religiosity exclusively to the socio-cultural context. However, sociology of religion cannot take into account the “transcendent co-factor” in its research and analyses (Marianański 2002, p. 48). Theoretically, we could ask, what would Slovak or Uruguayan religiosity look like in the case of a different model of laicity? What would the introduction of a model of strict separation of state and religion do to Slovak religiosity? Possibly, what would the introduction of a church tax do to Slovak religiosity? And so on. Of course, I do not want to lead my lecture in the direction of “what if,” so I will rather move to the first part of its title, i.e. to the real metamorphoses of religiosity of Slovaks.

The presented empirical study deals with the issues of metamorphoses of Slovak religiosity – specifically in three basic dimensions of religiosity, namely general, doctrinal, and practical religiosity – concretely during last three decades. The lecture is based on socio-religious reflection that relates to the main theories or scenarios of religious changes in the contemporary world. The empirical parts of the lecture refer mainly to data from last four population censuses in Slovakia and three representative sociological surveys of religiosity in Slovakia. The obtained data does not only support the scenario of advancing secularization and the phenomenon of “belonging without believing” among a large part of Slovaks, but partially also the scenario of pluralization, individualization and stabilization of religiosity among a certain part of Slovaks.

Almost everything is changing in the course of fast and radical social and cultural changes. This statement can be applied also for religiosity, especially for religiosity of the young generation. Sociologists of religion try to describe and explain these metamorphoses within specific theories, paradigms, concepts, scenarios or models. They usually claim that religiosity is changing according to different patterns of transformations – many people emigrate from religious organizations, but some rather immigrate to them (for example to the new religious movements). In the context outlined, we can ask how the religious faith, beliefs and practices of Slovaks changed during last decades? The description and an attempt to explain the presented issue are the basic goals of this sociological study. This

lecture consists of three parts: 1 – Main theories or models of religious changes; 2 – Transformation of religious affiliation of Slovaks in the years 1991–2021; 3 – Metamorphoses of religious faith, beliefs and practices of Slovaks in the years 2008–2020.

1. Main theories or models of religious changes

Before presenting the transformation of religious affiliation of Slovaks in the years 1991–2021 on the basis of the last four censuses and the metamorphoses of religious faith, beliefs and practices of Slovaks in the years 2008–2020, it will be appropriate to briefly recall the main theories, scenarios, or models of religious changes. It is necessary to remember the fact that sociologists of religion observe and interpret these changes, not to mention religious progress or decline. There is no one general scenario of changes of religiosity in the contemporary world. Depending on the Author, we can distinguish at least a few main models of transformation. According to the well-known Polish sociologist of religion, J. Mariański, we can distinguish five partially complementary and partially competing scenarios of religious changes.

1.1. Scenario of advancing secularization

This thesis is about the necessity of erosion of religion as a result of modernization processes and *ex definitione* applies to the young generation, which is significantly affected by social modernization. The weakening of religion has often been interpreted as a reverse side of technical and social progress, and Weber's "disenchantment of the World" as the inevitable fate of the modern societies. Many sociologists considered the model of Western European secularization as very probable also in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Even if Poles or Slovaks are still characterized by high rate of religiosity, at least in some of its dimensions, its lowering is only a matter of time. According to the scenario of advancing secularization, the departure of contemporary people from religion is already a fact and it can be expected that this "emigration" will continue. Supporters of the described scenario of transformation believe that all societies are or will be affected by the process of secularization – especially young generation (Mariański 2008, p. 16–18).

1.2. Scenario of religious pluralization

The next model of transformation is ideologically connected with the theory of pluralization. According to P.L. Berger (2005, p. 5–7), modern globalization is a great engine of pluralism. As such, it questions the integrity of the system of beliefs and values – through migration and urbanization, through universal education and most of all through mass communication. The scenario of pluralization of religiosity expects that religious involvement will become more and more diverse. However, there will be no radical increase of atheism or agnosticism. The expanding religious market, forces people to make choices. Choosing among various options becomes a cultural imperative or a necessity in life. Religiosity becomes a private matter, it does not function as much as a comprehensive system of beliefs and values, but as a system of diverse offers on the “religious market” from which the individual can freely choose in the processes of social communication. The described model emphasizes that, in fact, we are not observing so much the decline of religiosity as the transformation of its forms and images (Mariański 2008, p. 27–33).

1.3. Scenario of religious syncretism

The third scenario of religious changes is ideologically connected with the theory of individualization. As F.X. Kaufmann (2003, p. 361–382) notes, there is no longer one common “whole” to which an individual belongs. People compose their individual worldviews from elements that come from their own tradition as well as from others. The process of globalization, which brings transformations on various levels and areas enables this type of tinkering. In any case, the religious reality cannot be fully understood apart from the global context. The scenario of religious syncretism points to the processes of formation of new forms of syncretic religiosity, even syncretic churches, in which diverse elements from different religious or quasi-religious traditions are mixed. In the processes of religious syncretism, elements of Christianity, other religions, magic, national symbols, and many other cultural elements are mixed. In some youth environments traditional churches lose their significance and raise those ideological directions in which the individual can selectively choose religious contents and acts, unite them in numerous ways and reinterpret them in a new way (Mariański 2008, p. 22–25).

1.4. Scenario of religious fundamentalism

The next model of transformation finds its expression in the idea of a “return to the roots.” Usually, it manifests in the effort of religious orthodoxy, in the effort of fidelity to traditional religious acts, or in the effort of fidelity to traditional moral values. Religious or moral fundamentalism understood in this way is most often associated with the rejection of secularism and religious or moral relativism and with the return to traditional religious beliefs or moral principles to all aspects of personal and social life. It is primarily caused by the universal liberalization in all spheres of modern people’s life. As demonstration of the revival of religious fundamentalism is considered for example a birth of new religious movements. E. Barker (2007, p. 127–143) emphasizes that religious fundamentalism is associated with strict adherence to traditional principles of faith or morality and is not necessarily associated with religious fanaticism. In addition, many empirical studies show that this connection is often not the case. Many contemporary people simply find the diversity and relativization of religious truths or moral principles as worrying. They do not accept the thesis that, ultimately, all religions or ethics are equally true (Mariański 2008, p. 25–27).

1.5. Scenario of stabilization or even revitalization of religiosity

Finally, the fifth and at the same time the last scenario of religious changes presupposes the cessation of secularization processes or even the gradual restoration of the religious order in society. Some of the supporters of such a model of transformation believe in the “re-religiousness” of social relations. Even if the model of revitalization of religion does not currently seem very probable, it cannot be *ex definitione* excluded. J. Casanova in connection with the described topic writes: “Western modernism is at a crossroads [...] It would be deeply ironic if religion, after all the blows it received from modernism, could in some unforeseen ways help to save it” (2005, p. 383). The revitalization of religion and religiosity is associated with the dynamic activity of religious organizations – especially in youth environments, seeking values that give real meaning to human life. Many sociologists of religion talk about the renaissance of religiosity, about the return of *sacrum*, about the repeated “enchantment of the world.” It can be said that in the process of revitalization of religiosity it is going especially about restoring its splendor and meaning, also in social dimensions (Mariański 2008, p. 19–22).

2. Transformation of religious affiliation of Slovaks in the years 1991–2021

The above presented scenarios of religious metamorphoses in the contemporary world – represent a theoretical framework for empirical analyzes and reflections. Mentioned models of transformations can be considered as scientific hypotheses. The changes that have been taking place in the religious life of the inhabitants of Slovakia in recent decades are most objectively indicated by the evolution of religious affiliation, recorded during censuses every ten years. Moving to the empirical part of this study I would like to briefly recall data from the last four censuses in Slovakia, which communicate the changes in religious affiliation of Slovaks. While before the Velvet Revolution in 1989 (during the communist regime in the former Czechoslovakia) the religious affiliation of the Slovak population was deliberately not established, more or less reliable empirical data is practically available only from the last four censuses in the years 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021. How Slovaks approached the issue of religious affiliation in the above-mentioned census years is shown in Table 1.

Based on the presented empirical data from the last four censuses in Slovakia, it should be stated that – according to the 1991 census – 72,8% of Slovaks explicitly identified with some Church or religious organisation (9,8% of Slovak population was with no religious affiliation and 17,4% did not answer the analyzed question). At the same time, it can be stated that 63,8% of Slovaks identified with the Catholic Church, 0,7% with the Orthodox Church, 6,2% with the Evangelical Church, 1,6% with the Reformed Christian Church and 0,6% with other Churches or religious organisations. It should be noted that in the era of formation of a free democratic society immediately after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the indicator of people who did not answer the question about religious affiliation was surprisingly high (as many as 17,4%) – perhaps for pragmatic and vigilant reasons.

Table 1. The structure of population by religious affiliation in the Slovak Republic in 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021 (in %)

Churches or religious organisations	1991	2001	2011	2021
Roman Catholic Church	60.4	68.9	62	55.8
Greek Catholic Church	3.4	4.1	3.8	4
Orthodox Church	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.9
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession	6.2	6.9	5.9	5.3
Reformed Christian Church	1.6	2	1.8	1.6
Religious Society of Jehova's Witnesses	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
Other Christian Churches	0.3	0.6	0.7	1
Other religious organisations	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.9
With no religious affiliation	9.8	13	13.4	23.8
Not found out	17.4	3	10.6	6.5
Total (N 1991 = 5 274 335; N 2001 = 5 379 455; N 2011 = 5 397 036; N 2021 = 5 449 270).	100	100	100	100

The situation was a bit different in 2001. At the beginning of the third millennium, relatively high level of religious affiliation was marked. This was connected mainly with the fact that only a small portion of the population of Slovakia at that time refused to answer described question, which is very good for the reliability of sociological research. In Slovakia – according to the 2001 census – 84,0% of Slovak population explicitly identified with some Church or religious organisation (13,0% of Slovaks were with no religious affiliation and only 3,0% did not answer the analyzed question). At the same time, it can be stated that 73,0% of Slovak population identified with the Catholic Church, 0,9% with the Orthodox Church, 6,9% with the Evangelical Church, 2,0% with the Reformed Christian Church and 1,2% with other Churches or religious organisations.

At the beginning of the second decade of the third millennium (in 2011), to a certain degree the situation from 1991 was repeated – at least due to the fact that a relatively high percentage of Slovaks did not answer the question about religious affiliation. As a result, we do not know who they were. One way or another – according to the 2011 census – 76,0% of Slovaks explicitly identified with some Church or religious organisation (13,4% of Slovak population was with no religious affiliation and 10,6% did not answer the analyzed question). At the same time, it can be stated that 65,8% of Slovaks identified with the Catholic Church, 0,9% with the Orthodox Church, 5,9% with the Evangelical Church, 1,8% with the Reformed Christian Church and 1,5% with other Churches or religious organisations (Štefaňák 2021a, p. 103–107).

Finally, the most up-to-date Slovak census (in 2021) shows significantly lower indicators of religious affiliation and higher indicator of population with no religious affiliation. In Slovakia – according to the 2021 census – only 69,7% of Slovak population explicitly identified with some Church or religious organisation (23,8% of Slovaks were with no religious affiliation and 6,5% did not answer the analyzed question). At the same time, it can be stated that 59,8% of Slovak population identified with the Catholic Church, 0,9% with the Orthodox Church, 5,3% with the Evangelical Church, 1,6% with the Reformed Christian Church and 2,2% with other Churches or religious organisations.

In order to learn more about the transformation of religious affiliation of Slovaks, the above-presented empirical data should be methodologically correctly recalculated “in the manner of elections” (it means to not take into account missing data, because we do not know whether it is going about people who are not religious, indifferent to religion or religious who consider religious faith is a private matter). It is important mainly due to the fact that in individual censuses the percentages of missing data were quite different (in 1991 and 2011 they were much higher than in 2001 and 2021). The outlined – recalculated empirical data are presented in Table 2.

If we do not take into account missing data, in 1991 there were in Slovakia 88,1% of believers or – more correctly – identifying with some religious organisation (77,2% of Catholics) and 11,9% of non-believers or – more correctly – not identifying with any particular religion. In 2001 there were 86,6% identifying with some religious organisation (75,3% of Catholics) and 13,4% not identifying with any particular religion. In 2011 there were 85,0% identifying with some religious organisation (73,6% of Catholics) and 15,0% not identifying with any particular religion. Finally, in 2021 there were in Slovakia only 74,6% believers or identifying with some religious organisation (64,0% of Catholics) and 25,4% non-believers or not identifying with any particular religion. It should be added that in field of religious affiliation and other indicators of religiosity, there are significant differences between particular regions of Slovakia, as well as in terms of sex, age, education, place of residence and other demographic or social characteristics (Sopóci – Búzik 2006, p. 135–137).

Table 2. Transformation of religious affiliation of Slovaks in 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021 – without missing data (in %)

Churches or religious organisations	1991	2001	2011	2021
Roman Catholic Church	73.2	71.1	69.4	59.6
Greek Catholic Church	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.3
Orthodox Church	0.8	1	1	1
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession	7.5	7.1	6.6	5.6
Reformed Christian Church	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.7
Other Churches or religious organisations	0.6	1.3	1.8	2.4
With no religious affiliation	11.9	13.4	15	25.4
Total	100	100	100	100

It should be emphasized that in the above-outlined approach to the analysed issues, Slovakia in the years 1991, 2001 and 2011 secularized relatively slowly (1991: 88,1% were believers – while 11,9% were non-believers; 2001: 86,6% were believers – 13,4% were non-believers; 2011: 85,0% were believers – 15,0% were non-believers). It is really interesting that in 2021 the decline of religious affiliation was relatively significant – highlighted by approx. 10 percent (2021: 74,6% of believers – 25,4% of non-believers). It is difficult to clearly indicate the reasons for such a significant decline (natural replacement of generations, insufficient religious socialization of children and youth, the question of financing of Churches or religious organisations – depending on the results in the census, the crisis related to Covid-19, several publicly discussed issues related to the activity of churches or religious organisations since the previous census – e.g., the case of Archbishop Bezak).

If the above-outlined secularization trend continued (in 30 years a decrease of about 13 percent), in about 180 years there would be only non-believers or not identifying with any particular religion in Slovakia. It is obvious that as a sociologist of religion I cannot and do not take this “prophecy” seriously. For I would make the same mistake as the adherents of theory of secularization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who expected that religion is just finishing its life journey. Sociologists of religion have “learned” that the future cannot be treated in a linear way as a simple continuation of the present. In any case, the fact that in recent decades we have observed a decline of religiosity or – more correctly – religious affiliation in Slovakia, is not an irreversible process, as the theory of secularization expected or prophesied (Barker 2007, p. 132).

Based on the empirical data from the last four censuses presented in second part of this lecture, we can claim that approx. three quarters of Slovaks still declare religious faith and approx. two thirds of them identify

with the Catholic Church. It is obvious that the denominational declarations from censuses are quite often formal and superficial. On the one hand – some believers do not declare “their religion” during the census. On the other hand – even more people dispute some or many of religious beliefs or practices of religion declared during the census. In today’s pluralistic World, one can believe without belonging (*believing without belonging*), but also belong without believing (*belonging without believing*). The boundaries between religious belief and unbelief are not always the same as the boundaries between religious affiliation and non-affiliation (Hervieu-Léger 1999, p. 219–220).

3. Metamorphoses of religious faith, beliefs and practices of Slovaks in the years 2008–2020

The above-presented metamorphoses of religious affiliation of Slovaks during last decades are an important, but not the only indicator of religious transformations. Therefore, in addition I will present changes of selected indicators of religiosity of Slovaks based on representative sociological research from the years 2008 (N = 1138), 2014 (N = 1215) and 2020 (N = 1000). Concretely, I will briefly present metamorphoses of general religiosity, acceptance of religious beliefs and realization of religious practices, which can be described as the most important among the basic dimensions of religious involvement (Piwowarski 2000, p. 58–66). Overall, I will present changes of five specific indicators of religiosity of Slovaks during the last 15 years.

3.1 Metamorphoses of general religiosity

It is important to say that empirical research of general religiosity, respectively religious declarations, characterize religiosity only in very wide terms. The criterion of general identification in relation to religious faith does not inform about the acceptance of religious beliefs or about the realization of religious practices – it testifies exclusively about the will of individuals to define themselves as believers or non-believers. In the group declaring themselves as believers, there are Christians, believers of other religions, but also people associated with religious movements and sects or believers “in their own way” (Mariański 2004, p. 134–164). The metamorphoses of religious declarations of Slovaks surveyed in 2008, 2014 and 2020 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Religious declarations of Slovaks (in %)

You consider yourself as a person...	2008	2014	2020
– very strongly or strongly religious	19.9	23.2	11
– rather religious	37.7	31	43
– neither religious nor non-religious	15.4	15.1	18.6
– rather non-religious	10.1	12.2	7.3
– strongly or very strongly non-religious	14.2	16.5	20.1
– does not know or refuses to answer	2.6	2.0	–
Total	100	100	100

Sources: *ISSP na Slovensku 2006 – 2008*, Tížik – Zeman 2017, Štefaňák 2021.

Based on the presented empirical data, we can claim that among the population of Slovakia in 2008, there was a relatively high indicator of religious faith. Almost three fifths of those Slovaks considered themselves as very strongly, strongly or rather religious (57,6%). Six years later, 54,2% of Slovaks considered themselves as religious and in 2020 it was 54,0% of respondents. Overall, in the dimension of general religiosity a very slight decrease was recorded among Slovaks over the last 15 years (only 3,6%). On the other hand, there was a very slight increase of people who consider themselves as rather, strongly or very strongly non-religious (2008: 24,3%; 2014: 28,7%; 2020: 27,4%).

3.2. Metamorphoses of the acceptance of religious beliefs

Religious doctrine, or a set of religious beliefs can be recognized as a basis of religious faith that unites and gives real meaning to the other dimensions of religiosity. For example, religious practices are not understandable if they are not carried out within a religious doctrine, that assumes the existence of God as a Transcendent Being. Every religion has a set of religious beliefs, which its members have to accept as their own. The described dimension of religiosity is closely connected with expectation that members of a particular religion will accept (and also understand) its religious doctrine (Stark – Glock 2003, p. 184–185). The metamorphoses of belief in the existence of God among Slovak population surveyed in 2008, 2014 and 2020 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Belief in the existence of God (in %)

Please tell me which statement best describes your overall belief in God.	2008	2014	2020
I know that God really exists and I have no doubts about it	39.2	35.9	33.3
Though I have some doubts I feel that I believe in God	17	20	17.3
Sometimes I feel I believe in God and sometimes I feel I don't	13.0	9.9	5.6
I don't believe in personal God but in some superior being	10.2	4.9	14.8
I don't know if God exists and I don't think we can find it out	6.1	8.6	7.5
I don't believe in God (I am a convinced atheist)	11.7	17.8	15.3
Does not know or refuses to answer	2.8	2.8	6.2
Total	100	100	100

Sources: *ISSP na Slovensku 2006 – 2008*, Tížik – Zeman 2017, Štefaňák 2021.

Looking at the recorded empirical indicators, it can be stated that in the years 2008, 2014 and 2020, almost two thirds of the surveyed Slovaks declared their belief in God, or at least in some superior being (2008: 66,4%; 2014: 60,8%; 2020: 65,4%). In addition, we can say that approximately one seventh of the respondents explicitly did not believe in the Transcendent Being (2008: 11,7%; 2014: 17,8%; 2020: 15,3%) and approximately one fifth of them presented an ambivalent attitude (2008: 21,9; 2014: 21,3%; 2020: 19,3%). Overall, in the belief in the existence of God a very slight decrease was recorded among Slovaks over the last 15 years (only 1,0%). The metamorphoses of belief in the afterlife among Slovaks surveyed in 2008, 2014 and 2020 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Belief in the afterlife (in %)

Please tell me how much you believe in the afterlife.	2008	2014	2020
Definitely or rather yes	55.1	51.9	56.5
Definitely or rather no	35.4	39.2	21.4
Does not know or refuses to answer	9.5	8.9	22.1
Total	100	100	100

Sources: *ISSP na Slovensku 2006 – 2008*, Tížik – Zeman 2017, Štefaňák 2021.

Based on the presented empirical data, we can claim that in the years 2008, 2014 and 2020, more than a half of the surveyed Slovak population declared a belief in the afterlife (2008: 55,1%; 2014: 51,9%; 2020: 56,5%). Overall, in the belief that human life does not end with death of human

body, a very slight increase was recorded among Slovaks over the last 15 years (only 1,4%). We do not know the reasons, but partially it could be connected also with the Covid-19 pandemic. Summarizing the presented empirical results within the acceptance of religious beliefs, we can say that the level of belief in chosen basic religious truths has hardly changed at all over the last 15 years – almost two thirds of Slovaks believed and believe in God, or at least in some superior being, and more than a half of them believed and believe also in the afterlife.

3.3. Metamorphoses of the realization of religious practices

In sociology of religion, religious practices are considered the most visible signs of religiosity that can be measured relatively easily. In early French sociology, there was even a tendency to identify religiosity with religious practices, due to which other – more internal dimensions of religiosity – were not taken into account sufficiently. Religious practices or rituals include all activities of religious veneration – both official and private, obligatory and optional, individual and collective (Piwowarski 2002, p. 47). The metamorphoses of attendance at religious services (e.g., masses) among Slovak population surveyed in 2008, 2014 and 2020 are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Attendance at religious services (in %)

How often do you attend religious services (e.g., masses)?	2008	2014	2020
Several times a week	8.9	8.1	7.8
Once a week	20.3	20	11.3
Two or three times a month	5.9	7.1	4.4
At least once a month	4.6	5.5	4.6
Several times a year (only on fest days)	15.2	15.5	12.9
Once a year or less often	17.2	17.3	30.7
Never	25.9	25.1	28.3
Does not know or refuses to answer	1.9	1.4	–
Total	100	100	100

Sources: *ISSP na Slovensku 2006 – 2008*, Tižik – Zeman 2017, Štefaňák 2021.

Looking at the recorded empirical indicators, it can be stated that in the years 2008, 2014 and 2020, approximately one quarter of the surveyed Slovaks attended religious services at least once a week – very probably on Sundays (2008: 29,1%; 2014: 28,1%; 2020: 19,1%). On the other hand, approximately one quarter of the respondents did not attend religious services at all (2008: 25,9%; 2014: 25,1%; 2020: 28,3%). It should be noted

that when analysing the described variable, we must also take into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which partially “closed churches” in Slovakia in 2020. In normal circumstances, the frequency of attendance at religious services that year would be slightly higher (based on other surveys at least once a week approx. 24% or 25%). Overall, in the frequency of attendance at religious services, a slight decrease was recorded among Slovaks over the last 15 years (approximately 4% or 5%). Finally, the metamorphoses of practising of an individual prayer among Slovaks surveyed in 2008, 2014 and 2020 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Practising of an individual prayer (in %)

How often do you pray?	2008	2014	2020
Every day	29.8	23.3	27.1
Several times a week or at least once a week	12.8	16.8	10.7
Several times a month or at least once a month	12.9	8.8	14.8
Several times a year (only on feast days)	9.3	5.8	11
Less often (only in difficult life situations)	3.5	13.9	6.3
Never	24.1	27.8	30.1
Does not know or refuses to answer	7.5	3.6	–
Total	100	100	100

Sources: *ISSP na Slovensku 2006 – 2008*, Tížik – Zeman 2017, Štefaňák 2021.

Based on the presented empirical data, we can claim that in the years 2008, 2014 and 2020, approximately one quarter of the surveyed Slovak population prayed every day (2008: 29,8%; 2014: 23,3%; 2020: 27,1%). On the other hand, approximately one quarter of the respondents did not pray at all (2008: 24,1%; 2014: 27,8%; 2020: 30,1%). Overall, in the frequency of practising of an individual prayer, a very slight decrease was recorded among Slovaks over the last 15 years (only 2,7% on daily basis). Summarizing the presented empirical results within the realization of religious practices, we can say that the frequency of practicing of basic religious practices (namely attendance at religious services and practising of an individual prayer) has slightly decreased over the last 15 years.

Conclusion

After presenting several concrete correlations, we can claim that stereotypical social views on the topic of metamorphoses of religiosity in Slovakia are not very far from the reality. It is true that during last decades religiosity of the Slovak population has slightly decreased – primarily in relation to religious affiliation, which is examined every ten years during

the population censuses, but also in the case of general religiosity (religious declarations) and realisation of religious practices (frequency of attendance at religious services and practicing of an individual prayer). It is interesting that in relation to acceptance of religious doctrine no significant changes were recorded – almost two thirds of Slovaks believed and believe in God and more than a half of them believed and believe also in the afterlife.

If we link empirical data, presented in the second and the third part of this lecture, with the main theories or models of religious changes in the contemporary world, presented in the first part of this lecture, we can say that the results of the last four population censuses, as well as the reported empirical researches, confirm not only the scenario of advancing secularization, but partly also the scenario of stabilization of religiosity in Slovakia. If we were present more empirical analyses, we would find out that we observe also religious pluralization and syncretism in Slovakia, and even religious fundamentalism, which is associated with the rejection of boundless relativism and secularism. The results of my own (Štefaňák 2019) as well as other empirical research (Matulník 2008; Tižik – Zeman 2017; Kondrla – Lešková – Ďurková 2023; Świątkiewicz 2005; Mariański 2018; Świątkiewicz 2020; etc.) confirm the presented conclusions.

In addition, in relation to still relatively high indicator of religious affiliation (1991 – 88,1%; 2001 – 86,6%; 2011 – 85,0%; 2021 – 74,6%) associated with lower indicators of religiosity in cases of other religious dimensions, we can recall the phenomenon, which is in sociology of religion called “belonging without believing” or “belonging without religious beliefs” or “belonging without religious practices.” In 2020 only 54,0% of Slovaks considered themselves as religious; 65,4% of them believed in God or some superior being; 56,5% of them believed in the afterlife; only 19,1% of them attended religious services every week and only 27,1% of them prayed every day.

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