

Apparitional Movements as Sites of Religious Experimentation

Apparitional Movements as Sites of Religious Experimentation: A Case Study from Transcarpathian Ukraine

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Abstract

Based on an analysis of existing literature on Marian apparitions and field research-based case study from contemporary Transcarpathian Ukraine, this article asserts that an interpretation of Marian apparitional movements as a form of acquiescence to the authoritarian and conservative vision of the Catholic Church is too simplistic. The Virgin Mary appears in moments of crisis that are often caused or exacerbated by conflicts, especially ecclesiastical ones and it is also true that the sites of apparitions often do give a voice to those critical of modern changes. However, they are not always instrumentalized in support of conservative ideas. To the contrary, Marian apparitions are often sites of religious experimentation and innovation. On the one hand the Church can be extremely skeptical of or even hostile to apparitional events, still on the other hand the Church makes use of them as places of religious modernization with an aim to revitalize religious adherence.

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