

Identity crisis and identity formation in the context of the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in Eastern Slovakia and the surrounding region

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The paper attempts to delineate the issues related to the formation of identity and self-characterization in the context of the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in the complex region of Eastern Slovakia. It will study the cultural, religious, sociological and political elements that helped form the mindset and identities of these two Christian Churches. We will conclude that, in reality, both the Greek Catholic Church and its members and the Orthodox Church and its members have not arrived at a clear-cut self-definition. We will show how both Christian Churches attempt to define themselves in relation to each other. We also wish to demonstrate how complex it is to arrive at one's identity either as a corporate body or as an individual. Further, we will show that often, one's self-definition does not correspond to one's identity. The paper calls into question the concept of "identity" as shown in the cases of these two Churches, and further asks whether it is realistic to construct clear-cut definitions of identity.

Keywords: *identity, religious affiliation, Eastern Slovakia, Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox Church*

Introduction

In this article (which is all too brief given the topic at hand) we attempt to delineate some features which relate to the Orthodox Church and the so-called Greek Catholic Church and their self-reflection and self-definition. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the contradictory elements and currents in the history of these organisations, which played a significant role in the creation of their respective identities. We will be speaking solely about the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in the region of Eastern Slovakia, the former Podkarpatska Rus, and areas which belonged to the Austrian Hungarian Empire which have purport to these regions. When referring to the peoples in this region, for convenience sake I will use the term "Ruthenians". However, I understand this term to include various nationalities prevalent in this region not necessarily only Ruthenians as such.

The aim of this paper is not to submit an exhaustive historical survey, but only to draw attention to the organic character of history in relation to small communities. The basic theory is this: the identity of any particular group (be it a nation, religious community, etc.) is always determined by interaction with other groups. Thus, it is an illusion to believe that any given community is "culturally self-sufficient" or is able to be sufficient in itself.