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Much research on the Catholic experience in the United States has assumed that religiosity is related significantly to low social mobility among Catholics. This essay examines the work of A. M. Greeley and associates at the National Opinion Research Center and argues that the improved socio-economic status of Catholics documented by the NORC studies require historical investigations that use theoretical constructs as starting points rather than conclusions.

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# Beyond the Protestant Ethic: A Review Essay in the Historiography of American Catholic Education

American faith in the efficacy of popular education has been a perennial topic of discussion among students of the Republic. Historians have demonstrated, analyzed, praised, or deplored, the hold of the belief on the American mind.[1] More recently, revisionist historians have argued their reinterpretations of the American educational experience on grounds that have assumed the pervasive power of the common school to control, socialize, and manipulate a highly heterogeneous population.[2] The scholarly interest and belief in the omnipotence of public education among sophisticated historians and critics are convincing evidence of the degree to which it is the conventional wisdom of all segments of American society.

The nearly universal assumption of the power of popular education, for good or evil, in American social and political thought is central to any understanding of the experience of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities in the United States. For example, without that understanding it is virtually impossible to understand the acrimonious, mind-numbing controversy over busing as a means of integrating schools. That scholars can devote their lives and energies to examining the effects or non-effects of segregated, desegregated or integrated schooling, the politicians can make or unmake careers on the issue, and that urban communities can suffer substantial and lasting human, political, and social upheavals, for a social change that leaves untouched the whole spectrum of inequities can only make sense if what the common school symbolizes in American thought is firmly grasped.[3]

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[1]Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1962), has developed the most sustained analysis of the concept of popular education in American thought.

[2]Patricia T. Rooke, "From Pollyanna to Jeremiah — Recent Interpretations of American Educational History," *Journal of Educational Thought* 9 (April 1975), 15-28, and Geraldine Joncich Clifford, "Saints, Sinners, and People: A Position Paper on the Historiography of of American Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 15 (Fall 1975), 257-272.

[3]Among the principal research studies related to the movement for desegregated and integrated schooling are: James S. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (*Washington*, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966); U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools* (2 vols.; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967); Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *On Equality of Educational Opportunity* (New York: Random House, 1972); and Christopher Jencks et al., *Inequalitys A Reassessment of the Effects of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

Two large minorities, Black and Catholic Americans, have stood outside their nation's polity because for different reasons they remained outside — at least partially — the American system of common schooling. Blacks were first excluded as slaves and freedmen and the grudgingly admitted to separate and inferior institutions. Given the nature and purposes of Negro schools, one is tempted to exclude them from the category of "common schools" because those instruments of popular education were intended to integrate those who attended them, willingly or not, into the American polity.[4]

Whether or not contemporary critics are correct in arguing that popular education is intended to make the children of the poor "orderly, industrious, law-abiding, respectful of authority" is irrelevant to the centrality of the common school in that white society did *not* want Blacks to be integrated or to even possess the symbol of that integration — common schooling.[5]

In the case of the Catholics, the failure to embrace the common school was the result of a dialectic of rejection and withdrawal. The mutual hostility and vituperation have been extensively documented. The Protestants, however, enjoyed the high ground based on their numbers, power, and success, and, therefore, could rain contempt and abuse down on their enemies and, if that did not suffice, break their heads, pull down their houses, and burn their convents and churches![6] But the important point is that no matter their distaste for Catholicism and its works, Protestant Americans *wanted* Catholics integrated. With nineteenth century faith in reason and the righteousness of Protestant Christianity, the proponents of common schooling for Roman Catholics were firmly convinced that the most undesirable traits of Catholics would be rubbed off in the process. Although crude cases of anti-Catholicism abound in the literature, its essential genteel characteristic was the belief that those traits which made Catholics a threat to Republican America were the result of their religion which in turn rested upon ignorance and unreason. If popular education corrected those deficiences, then the enlightened would not be burdened by the handicaps of such a socially destructive religion.[7]

Catholic reaction to continuing negative assessments of themselves by the dominant society and the changing perceptions of the Catholic presence on the part of Protestants and secularists are interesting aspects of American social and intellectual history. This paper will examine the development and implications

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[4]For the marginality of the Negro common school in South, see Louis R. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958).

[5]Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools* (New York: Praezer Publishers, 1971), pp. XVIII, 9, and 48.

[6]American anti-Catholicism, as well as xenophobia, is amply documented in the following studies: Ray Allan Billington, *The Protestant Crusade: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1964); Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (New York: Atheneum, 1964); Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964); Donald A. Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964); and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism* (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

[7]The institutionalized anti-Catholicism and the drive to assimilate are examined in Robert M. Mennel, *Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquents in the United States, 1825-1940* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1973); David J. Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Joseph M. Howes, *Children in Urban Society* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1971); Carl F. Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1973); and Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1973).

of some of the scholarly studies and literature that sought to explain Catholic integration and participate in American life as a problem in the historiography of Catholic education in the United States.

The Catholic refusal to participate in the common schools represented a serious set back to the social philosophy that saw schooling as the chief instrument of Americanization.[8] Whatever the reasons for the refusal, its consequences were far reaching. The deep-seated nature of religious prejudices carried over into the nineteenth century, the mutual bigotry and rancor of Protestant-Catholic conflict, and the absence of brotherly love and forgiveness require no extensive documentation.

Allowing for mutual responsibility in the religious warfare should not blind us to the particular conditions of American society. Although Catholics probably would have dealt as harshly with a Protestant minority, American society was dominated by Protestants who viewed their country as possessing certain characteristics which Catholic values and beliefs threatened. Furthermore, Protestants believed that there was an essential relationship between an authoritarian polity and Catholicism. These beliefs cannot justify, however, the willingness of the majority to coerce religious, ethnic, and racial minorities.[9]

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catholics, who were largely immigrant, were desireous as were most immigrant groups to make it in American society and as a result willing to make the necessary accommodations for the dominant culture. Indeed, the Catholic hierarchy saw a too ready integration as a threat to the faith of the immigrant;[10] however, a set of conditions effectively blunted whatever assimilative properties American society possessed.

An aggressive able ultramontane hierarchy, an Irish immigration steeled in the fires of that island's religious wars, the psychological and cultural resources of the Roman Church, the counter-productivity of nativism, and finally an American ideology, which for all its cant and humbug concerning the dangers of Romanism could not abandon its commitment to free institutions and individualism, permitted the hard-pressed Catholic minority to maintain itself and its institutions.

The existence of separate distinct Catholic sub-culture and community that were progressively acculturated while retaining their own being precipitated an enormous body of literature on "the Catholic Question." Although the Catholic contribution to the debate has included scholarly work, its major thrust has been apologetic and defensive. On the other side, the interest manifested itself in attacks on Catholic institutions — mainly schools and colleges, those symbols of national integration — that argued the negative social consequences of a refusal to assimilate and in scholarly investigations of the educational and economic achievement of Catholics and the relative effectiveness of Catholic educational institutions.

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[8]Lawrence A. Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historical Conception* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia Univesity, 1951).

[9]Timothy L. Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality, 1800-1850," *Journal of American History* 52 (March 1967), 679-695; David Tyack, "The Kingdom of God and the Common School: Protestant Ministers and the Educational Awakening in the West," *Harvard Educational Review* 36 (Fall 1966), 447-469, and "The Perils of Pluralism: The Background of the Pierce Case," *American Historical Review* 74 (October 1969), 74-98; and Robert H. Wiebe, "The Social Functions of Education," *American Quarterly* 21 (Summer 1969), 147-164.

[10]Thomas T. McAvoy, "The Formation of the Catholic Minority in the United States, 1820-1860," *Review of Politics* 10 (January 1948), 13-34.

The first line of attack, the "public policy" argument, has fallen on hard times as a result of the rising tide of national and racial liberation movements of the past two decades.[11] The assumption of the superiority of Protestant values, at least as they relate to political and social organization, are now discredited and it would be a foolhardy person who would oppose Catholic schools on those grounds. In addition, the turmoil of the 1960s has brought a new sense of group identity and separateness to American thought — Black consciousness, demands for community control of schools, the discovery of the unmeltable ethnic, and an appreciation of the hard-worn and precarious margins of dignity and intelligence of the poor and neglected. In brief, the events of the recent past have drastically reversed the assumptions that had supported conventional wisdom in these matters.

The second line of interest has enjoyed a different fate. If one grants the desire of Catholics to get ahead in American society, the questions of educational and occupational performance and of the quality of Catholic schools and colleges are of considerable importance to the subjects of the studies themselves. Indeed, a good part of the recent work of assessing Catholic achievement has been done by Catholics. Also while the "public policy" argument has had its assumptions undercut, the scholarly investigation can justify itself on the grounds that it seeks to uncover the truth of the situation. And if the truth is unfavorable to a specific religious minority who could call that prejudice or bigotry?

What then was the truth uncovered by scholarly investigations? In general, the studies produced prior to the 1960s showed below-average performance by Catholics and their institutions. The data which supported such negative appraisals came from a variety of sources. With a predilection to equate Catholicism with superstition, dogmatism, and intellectual backwardness, scholars were interested in establishing the number of Catholics in occupations requiring advance training. The results of these occupational surveys from the 1920s to the 1960s confirmed the conclusions of informed observers that Catholic participation in academic and intellectual careers was minimal.[12]

If one were to become a professor, scientist, professional, or intellectual, then some post-secondary, and in most cases, graduate, education was required. An examination at Catholic attendance at colleges and universities would indicate the extent to which they were participating in the necessary preliminary training for professional and academic careers. This line of inquiry also produced consistent findings of low Catholic achievement. In a sense, the dismal record of Catholics

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[11]As Timithy Smith observed: "by the middle of the nineteenth century, leading citizens assumed that Americanism and Protestantism were allies." The survival and growth of the Catholic schools could be seen as a sign of the failure of Americanization. "Protestant Schooling," 680.

[12]A. Ament, "Religion, Education and Distinction," *School and Society* 26 (September 24, 1927), 399-406; Harvey C. Lehman and Paul A. Withy, "Scientific Emminence and Church Membership," *Scientific Monthly* 33 (December 1931), 544-549; S. S. Vicher, *Scientists Starred,* 1903-1943 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1947); Hadley Cantril, "Educational and Economic Composition of Religious Groups," *American Journal of Sociology* 47 (March 1943), 574-79; Bernard Lazerwitz, "A Comparison of Major U.S. Religious Groups," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 61 (September 1961), 568-579; Gerhard Lenski, *The* Religious Factor (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963); and Henryk Misiak and Virginia Standt, *Catholics in Psychology: A Historical Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954).

could be explained by their failure to share proportionately in the general rise in educational achievement in the twentieth century.[13]

The poor record of Catholics in professional and academic fields and in higher education could be connected to two other concerns of scholarly investigation. First, the existence of an extensive system of parochial schools that enrolled approximately one half of the Catholic school-age population meant that there existed the possibility that the educational and occupational deficiencies were partially the product of inferior Catholic schooling. Although other religious groups maintained schools, none approached the Catholic "system" in number, staff, enrollment, and cost. Thus, the principal focus was on Catholic institutions. Again the results of these studies were negative. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Catholic school graduates were shown to lag in critical thinking, interest in intellectual concerns, and those qualities of mind that prepare one for success in university and in careers requiring intellectual power.[14]

Secondly, not only had Catholics constructed a massive network of parochial elementary and secondary schools, but they had established a logical extension of the system in the form of colleges and universities. When the first post-secondary institutions were founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were not dissimilar to the *college classique* of Quebec in that they were adaptations of European, and particularly Jesuit, forms of secondary education. In that sense, early Catholic colleges stood outside the original English model and the developing American system of secondary and higher education. Although poor and understaffed, the colleges could claim to be in a tradition of academic work and character-moulding that stemmed from the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[15] When, however, in the twentieth century the better situated institutions began to imitate their public and private counterparts, the larger and more ambitious Catholic colleges turned themselves into urban universities cluttered with professional and semi-professional schools and with a variety of special service activities. In addition, those colleges that either resisted the American urge for inflation or failed in the attempt to become universities gradually modified their courses of studies so that their programs became only less ambitious versions of the elective system. Thus, as the Catholic institutions became increasingly Americanized, their work became that much more central to questions of Catholic educational and occupational achievement.[16]

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[13]Joseph Veroff, Shiela Feld, and Gerald Gurin, "Achievement Motivation and Religious Background," *American Sociological Review* 27 (April 1962), 205-217; Raymond W. Mack, Raymond J. Murphy, and Seymour Yellin, "The Protestant Ethic, Level of Aspiration and Social Mobility: An Empirical Test," *American Sociological Review* 21 (June 1956), 295-300; John Kosa and John Nash, "Social Ascent of Catholics," *Social Order* 8 (March 1958), 98-108; and "Patterns of Social Mobility Among Catholics," *Social Compass* 9 (1962), 361-371.

[14]Lenski, *The Religious Factor;* Robert E. Hill, "Scholastic Success of College Freshmen from Parochial and Public Schools," *School Review* 69 (Spring 1961), 60-66; Robert H. Bauernfeind and Warren S. Blumenfeld, "a Comparison of Achievement Scores of Public School and Catholic School Pupils," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 23 (Summer 1963), 331-336; John W. Butzow and Clarence M. Williams, "College Freshman Achievement of Parochial and Public School Graduates," *Journal of Educational Research* 60 (January 1967), 215-217; and Merle W. Tate and Jean S. Traub, "Thinking Abilities of Nineth Grade Students from Catholic and Public Elementary Schools," *School Review* 72 (Spring 1964), 74-88.

[15]George Ganss, *Saint Ignatius Idea of a Jesuit University* (Milwaukee: Marquette U.P., 1965).

[16]Neil G. McCluskey, ed., *The Catholic University: A Modern Appraisal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), and Edward J. Power, *A History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1958).

Two kinds of examinations of Catholic higher education illustrated its limited success. Studies that examined the collegiate origins of American scientists and scholars established that until the 1950s, Catholic institutions were among the least productive in American higher education.[17] In line with the massive growth of higher education and particularly graduate and professional training in this century, American academicians have shown considerable interest in the relative quality of advanced higher education. Through a number of associations and accrediting agencies and a steady stream of ratings, they have attempted to rank the major centres of graduate work. Although the interest in the assessment has come from outside the Catholic system of higher education, the results of the rankings — usually performed by panels of informed and prestigeous scholars and administrators — could help to influence both the attitudes of outsiders regarding Catholic universities and the self-image of Catholic academics.

These assessments by prominent scholars and administrators (the "significant others" of American graduate study) consistently illustrated the fact that Catholic advanced higher education counted for little. The conclusions of these studies into the 1960s were particularly damning because after two decades remarkable growth the largest and most advantaged Catholic universities occupied the fringe of quality graduate work. Whether the collective wisdom of these informed observers was fair and accurate is irrelevant because it *did* represent what strategically placed experts believed to be the state of graduate studies in the United States.[18]

Thus, both the studies of the productivity of Catholic undergraduate education and the ratings of American graduate training demonstrated the marginality of Catholic higher education and led consequently to the conclusion that Catholics were not only disadvantaged by attending parochial elementary and secondary schools but additionally so by Catholic higher education. Fewer Catholics relative to their proportion in the population entered colleges and universities, those that did were singularly missing in advanced training and subsequent academic careers, and finally those enrolled at Catholic graduate schools suffered the liability of attending what were perceived to be mediocre or inferior institutions. As a result, even able Catholic scholars bore the twin burdens of their religion and training, namely that their religious commitment compromised their scholarly integrity and their training had been obtained in inferior institutions.

Before 1945 the Catholic academics' burden of inferiority and alienation had been bearable because of the cultural and spiritual resources of the Church, the good offices of American anti-Catholicism, and the "besieged" position of the American Church. In the decades after the Second World War, Catholic academics, especially those associated with the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs, increasingly restive in the face of what they took to be an

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[17]Robert H. Knapp and H.B. Goodrich, *The Origins of American Scientists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); and Knapp and Joseph J. Greenbaum, *The Younger American Scholar: His Collegiate Origin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). A later study for humanistic scholarship showed better performance by selected Catholic institutions: Knapp, *The Origins of American Humanistic Scholars* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

[18]Hayward Keniston, *Graduate Study and Research in the Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958); Bernard Berelson, *Graduate Education in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960); Allan M. Cartter, *An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1966); and Kenneth D. Roose and Charles J. Andersen, *A Rating of Graduate Programs* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education( 1969).

unreasonably restrictive and authoritarian hierarchy and profound lay apathy, began to ask why Catholic Americans had contributed so little to the nation's intellectual life. In their indictment of the poverty of intellectualism among Catholics, the self-critics could cite the body of scholarly literature that demonstrated the limited success of Catholics in educational and occupational mobility.[19]

Although critics such as John Tracy Ellis and Thomas O'Dea admitted the burdens of poverty, immigrant past, and discrimination, they argued that other minorities, particularly the Jews, appeared to have made the adjustment to American society more quickly in the face of all the liabilities that Catholic apologists cited. In addition, O'Dea (1958) claimed that there had been no substantial Catholic immigrant for well over thirty years and thus an immigrant past could not effectively explain the poor performance of Catholics. Instead the self-critics pointed the finger at a lack of intellectuality and scholarship in the American Church and in those ethnic groups that had come to dominate it, at clerical paternalism and hierarchical authoritarianism, and at the lack of achievement motivation. In brief, it appeared that Catholics were not under-achieving educationally and occupationally because they occupied through accidents of immigration and discrimination the bottom of white American society but that they occupied it because Catholic values militated against achievement and socio-economic mobility. The logical conclusion of such a line of thought was the work of James W. Trent, who, with Janette Golds,[20] claimed to have found a profound anti-intellectualism among Catholics attending both Church and secular institutions.

At the peak of the controversy among Catholic scholars over the existence and explanation of Catholic underachievement, a series of studies was being undertaken at the National Opinion Research Centre (NORC) in Chicago that would substantially reverse our knowledge of Catholic life in the United States.[21] For purposes of this paper, the NORC studies can be considered under two headings: (1) Catholic performance in higher education, including graduate study, and their entry into academic careers, and (2) relationships between parochial schooling and educational achievement and between parochial schooling and religious commitment.

The principal investigator in the NORC Catholic studies has been Father Andrew M. Greeley who since 1961 has undertaken and directed an immense range of studies. The NORC studies of university students, which included Father Greeley's work with Catholic students, were based on data obtained from "four different national samples and five waves of interviews with a large sample of June, 1961, college graduates." In addition to the first set of interviews, the 1961 graduates were followed for the first three years of their post-college ex-

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[19]John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholics and the Intellectual Life* (Chicago: Heritage Foundation, 1956); Thomas F. O'Dea, *American Catholic Dilemma* (New York: Mentor Books, 1962); Gustave Weigel, "American Catholic Intellectualism — A Theologian's Reflections," *Review of Politics* 19 (July 1957), 275-307, and *Faith and Understanding in America* (New York: MacMillan, 1959); Walter J. Ong, *American Catholic Crossroads* (New York: Collier Books, 1962); and Frank L. Christ and Gerard E. Sherry, *American Catholicism and the Intellectual Ideal* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961).

[20]*Catholics in College: Religious Commitment and the Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

[21]Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion and Career: A Study of College Graduates* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), and *From Backwater to Mainstream: A Profile of Catholic Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969); Greeley and Peter H. Rossi, *The Education of Catholic Americans* (Chicago: Aldine, 1966); and Greeley et al., *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1976).

periences." A fifth wave of questionnaires was administered in June of 1968 as part of a study sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. As a check on the 1961 study, Michael Schlitz of the NORC working "with a completely independent sample of the June, 1964, graduates" found nothing to indicate that the 1961 sample was in any way unrepresentative.[22]

When Greeley first published his results in *Religion and Career: A Study of College Graduates* (1963), some commentators either challenged the results or argued that the aspirations of Catholic graduates would not come to fruition.[23] The reason for such scepticism are not hard to find. The study found that Catholic college graduates were just as likely to select scientific and academic careers and to select the hard sciences as other Americans. The 1961 study also indicated that Catholics were just as likely to go to high quality graduate schools and to perform as well as other graduates. The fifth questionnaire (1968) firmly established that not only were Catholics aspiring to academic and scientific careers but that seven years later they were just as likely to hold Ph.D.'s and to be employed by colleges or universities as other graduates. In a 1973 study, Greeley demonstrated that Catholics are now represented proportionately among the junior faculties at elite universities.[24] In brief, by the 1960s Catholic Americans (if not their institutions) had entered the mainstream of their society.

The significance of these NORC studies is that whatever the case before 1960, Catholics are now generally not distinguishable in terms of aspiration and achievement from other white Americans and that follow-ups and replication of the original panel have laid to rest the possibilities of high aspirations and low achievement over time and of lack of representativeness of the 1961 sample.

The second line of NORC studies in which Greeley participated has to do with assessing the impact of parochial schooling. In the *Education of Catholic Americans* (1966) and *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* (1976), Greeley and his associates examined "the effectiveness of the value-oriented education carried out in the Roman Catholic schools in the United States" and then in the second study not only analyzed "the impact of Catholic schools on adult behaviour but also [sought to determine] whether that impact [had] changed in the decade since the first NORC study . . ."[25] The results of these two major studies as well as a series of related ones have markedly changed our understanding of the functions and outcomes of parochial schooling.

As noted in the quotation above, Greeley and his associates took as the basis for their study the idea that Catholic schools existed for the purpose of preserving and transmitting certain truths of Catholicism and for training their members in the observance of prescribed behaviour that reflect those truths. It would seem odd, indeed, for any American church to maintain a system of schools merely in order to provide a superior form of secular education or even to protect the sensibilities of its young. The justification — and here we are speaking of an internal one based on the church's own criteria — would have to be more positive! Although the proponents of parochial schooling generally argued the

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[22]Greeley, *From Backwater to Mainstream,* pp. 88-90.

[23]See the debate between Greeley, Trent, and John D. Donovan in Commonweal 81 (October 2, 1964), 33-43.

[24]"The Religious Factor and Academic Careers: Another Commentary," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (March 1973), 1247-55.

[25]*Catholic Schools in a Declining Church,* p. 3.

practical outcomes of a systematic knowledge of Catholic beliefs and training in orthodox religious behaviour, others maintained that at least for a minority the schooling should contribute to an approximation of the counsels of perfection. If the graduates of Catholic schools would not live their faith heroically, they could do so with intelligence, sensitivity to the complexity of Catholicism, and a willingness to bring their actions into comformity with a more intelligent and profound understanding of their religion.[26]

The second level of expectation created a rather anomalous situation in which "friendly" secularists and champions of public schooling could claim that parochial schooling had failed (and probably could not succeed) in its true mission while at the same time they would have deplored the results of Catholic schooling if it had succeeded. In addition, Catholic critics who saw the schools as producing pious but not particularly alert church members argued for more effective ways of utilizing the vast expenditures of manpower and money[27]

In one of those mind-boggling, but not infrequent, occurrences, proponents of opposing social aims came to view a single institution as the essential contradiction that made the achievement of their ends impossible. That both secularists and devout Catholics could agree on the harmful results of parochial schooling should have been a warning that the assessment of its effectiveness was probably based more on ideology than evidence.

The remarkable aspect of the NORC studies of parochial schooling is that contrary to all previous studies and interpretations Catholics who had a totally Catholic education — elementary through higher education — were the most successful in socio-economic terms and also the most religious. In brief, parochial schools were not only not a hindrance in social mobility but were significant in achieving the objectives of religious and moral education.

The results of the NORC and related studies have demonstrated a significant transformation of the Catholic participation in American life. By the 1960s, Catholic Americans were coming to share in the social mobility, educational achievement, and occupational success in ways that were similar to those of the total white population. The continuing work at the NORC has established conclusively the coming-of-age of American Catholicism. Perhaps as the most recent of the Catholic population becomes increasingly Americanized, Catholics will be over represented in the upper half of the socio-economic scale. If the assumptions underlying most of the research on Catholic achievement were correct, the success should have been accounted for by the growing secularization of Catholics. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish such a hypothesis, some observations might help to put the issue in perspective. First, as indicated above, throughly socialized Catholics who received an extended Catholic education have enjoyed marked socio-economic mobility, that is, beyond that of all other Catholic

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[26]Greeley, *The New Agenda* (New York: Image Books, 1973), pp. 234-267; Michael O'Neill, *New Schools in a New Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: St. John's University Press, 1971), and William E. Brown and Andrew M. Greeley, *Can Catholic Schools Survive?* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970).

[27]Mary Perkins Ryan, *Are Parochial Schools the Answer?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

groups.[28] Thus, there appears to be no reason to expect committed Catholics to suffer from their religious beliefs.

Second, the 1976 NORC study provides evidence that parochial schooling has begun to show greater impact on those most likely to drift away — men and the young — and that the crisis within the Church has increased its impact in terms of participation in Catholic activities, support for religious vocations, and contributions.[29]

Thus, if the latest NORC study documents a sustained trend in American Catholicism, parochial schools are now not only significant means of socio-economic mobility but also effective instruments for fostering religiousity.

The success of Catholic Americans appear to have been related to conditions of poverty, immigrant status, and discrimination. If it ever had any apparent explanatory power in the past, the "Protestant Ethic" has clearly outlived its usefulness in the study of American Catholicism. To borrow a point from Eugene Genovese, concepts such as the "Protestant Ethic" are "essential in historical investigations for they provide a starting point and underline common characteristics that lead us direct to the mainsprings of social change . . . [but we must guard against transforming] that starting point into an end product by the promiscuous application of class labels as a substitute for historical specificity."[30]

What is needed now are historical studies that utilize the question of values, attitudes, and beliefs, as starting points in understanding how a cultural and ethnically heterogeneous Church accommodated itself in a not always hospitable nation.

RESUME

Une grande partie de la recherche au sujet de l'èxpérience catholique aux Etats-Unis a supposé que la participation réligieuse a un rapport important à la difficulté de la mobilité sociale parmi les catholiques. Cet article cherche à comprendre le travail de A. M. Greeley et ses collègues au "National Opinion Research Center" et prétend que le rang social et économique plus élevé chez les catholiques, documenté par les études de "NORC", demande des recherches historiques qui emploient des théories comme points de départ au lieu de conclusions.

[28]There appear to be two definite ways for Catholics to succeed that is, "by the path of alienation from the Catholic sub-community or through the path of integration into the Catholic sub-culture." Thus, Donald A. Erickson concludes his analysis of the effects of parochial schooling with the question — "Are the Catholic schools. . . . .the closest route for many, not to be the enclave, but to full participation in American society?" "Contradictory Studies of Parochial Schooling: An Essay Review," in *Eight Critiques of the Johnstone Study on the Effectiveness of Lutheran Schools* edited by William A. Kramer (St. Louis: Board of Parish Education, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, 1967), pp. 5-11.

[29]*Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*, p. 186.

[30]*The World of Slaveholders Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), pp. 19-20.