

Greeley, Andrew M.; McCready, William C.; and McCrout, Kathleen. *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1976. 483 pp. \$15.00.

In 1963 Andrew Greeley and Peter Rossi of the University of Chicago National Opinion Research Center carried out a highly important study of American Catholic education (*The Education of Catholic Americans* [Chicago, 1966]). The study showed that Catholic schools were successful in transmitting to children the ethical values of Catholicism and knowledge about the Catholic Church's life.

Now Greeley and two of his colleagues have followed this work with another major study of American Catholics. Their research replicates the earlier work, but also relates the impact of the Catholic schools to the overall setting of American Catholicism and the changes it has experienced. This new book is a remarkable study of social change. It contains a vast amount of important material on American Catholicism.

The detailed and carefully documented background to the study of public schools is as interesting as the findings specifically related to Catholic schools. Broadly speaking, the traditional expressions of Catholic religiosity have significantly declined: since 1963 weekly mass attendance has declined 21%, and support for religious vocations has declined 16%. Attitudes toward those who have left the priesthood tend to be sympathetic: Some 80% say they would be prepared to accept married clergy, and as many as 63% are actually in favor of marriage for the clergy. Another area of considerable change is that of sexual values. Only 32% still believe the church has the right to teach how Catholics should practice birth control. Whereas 45% approved of artificial contraception in 1963, it is now approved by 83%.

In spite of these and many other carefully recorded shifts in values, support for parish schools remains the same as in 1963. In view of all the other attitude changes towards the formal teachings of the church, it is all the more remarkable that 89% of Catholic adults responding to the survey reject the idea that the Catholic school system is no longer needed in modern life. Not only do they want Catholic schools, but 80% say they would be willing to contribute more money to keep them open (chap. 7). The main reason given for not sending children to parish schools remains the same as in 1963: the unavailability of such schools, especially in the suburbs. A second reason is the increased cost (pp. 230-234).

In a section which is methodologically extremely valuable for sociologists seeking to analyze such social changes, the authors systematically review the various explanations which have been offered to account for the decline in the American Church and scrupulously sift the evidence (pp. 103-154). Using a sophisticated model devised to analyze and interpret the processes of social change, they argue that there is a strong relationship between the decline in church attendance and the decline in sexual orthodoxy. Their next step is to suggest that there is a causal flow: "One disagrees with the Church's sexual teaching, rejects the authority of the leader who attempts to reassert that teaching, and then becomes alienated from other dimensions of religious belief and practice" (p. 130). The authors conclude that *Humanae Vitae*, and not the Second Vatican Council, is responsible for the dramatic crisis in American

Catholicism. As their investigation indicates, its publication marked the turning point in the attitudes of many Catholics, clergy, and laity toward their church and served as a catalyst for decision-making in a variety of areas of Catholic religiosity.

The authors state that they did not anticipate the "shattering blow" of the encyclical and its negative consequences for papal authority. The data, they tell us, forced them to this conclusion. Yet, one wonders at times how much of a polemic Greeley has in mind when he paints his optimistic picture of the Catholic Church immediately after the Council, a church proud and confident, moving unimpeded toward a blooming future until the heavy weight of *Humanae Vitae* crushed its growth. Are there not other factors that could be adduced persuasively as causes of the crisis documented by the NORC report? Would it be inaccurate to say that the loss of a sense of the transcendent in the modern world has had an impact on Catholic people, or that the Catholic church right after the Council was apprehensive about its future? This excellent research will best be read in the larger context of, e.g., Langdon Gilkey's *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* and Gregory Baum's *Religion and Alienation*, which analyze the ambiguous relationship between religious faith, modernity, and the shaping of the surrounding world in a way that forces the reader to think in a context far wider than *Humanae Vitae*.

*Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* treats serious issues of general interest and raises critical questions about church decisions. As its senior author notes in his lucid personal comments which conclude the book, it is not an easy volume to read if one is not somewhat accustomed to following analyses of sociological data. But it is an important book that should be read by anyone who feels compelled to comment on the state of American Catholicism. Its findings will continue for years to offer a great deal for thought and discussion.

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Hebblethwaite, Peter. *The Runaway Church. Post-Conciliar Growth or Decline*. New York: Seabury, 1975. 256 pp. \$8.95.

Countless books have been written to explain what the Second Vatican Council did and why it was important. There has been little detailed analysis, however, of the impact it made in the everyday life of the Catholic Church. Most writers have usually been too deeply involved in the changing church to be able to view it objectively. Besides, in addition to the difficulties confronting any writer of contemporary history, Hebblethwaite has attempted the impossibility of surveying so vast a subject in a mere 250 pages. That he succeeds as well as he does is more significant than his occasional lapses into journalistic generalities.

Rather than a chronological history of the decade that has elapsed since the end of Vatican II, Hebblethwaite has organized his material according to the various issues that have challenged Catholicism during that time. He touches most bases: liturgical change, coresponsibility, clerical unrest ("Behind the dog-collar"), the vexations of the pope and the bishops, the failure of the