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## Sociology and the Study of Religion

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# Sociology and the Study of Religion

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JOHN F. DOHERTY

In recent years the study of religion as a social reality has gained a respected place in social-science research. One might summarize the work done to date by saying that, in general, there have been two approaches to the study of religion in the social sciences: the first might be called the socio-cultural or functional approach, the second, the psychological or phenomenological approach.

The functional approach has characterized most of the work of the sociologists and anthropologists in the field of religion. They have "studied religion as a universal function of human societies wherever they may be found." They are concerned with religion mainly as an aspect of group behavior and with the roles religion has played through the ages and still plays, in furthering — and hampering — the survival of human groups.<sup>1</sup> They tend with Parsons and Durkheim to look upon religion as a purely social phenomenon or as "a set of beliefs, practices and institutions which men have evolved in various societies."<sup>2</sup>

The phenomenological approach to the study of religion, on the other hand, focuses on the religious experience itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Nottingham, *Religion and Society* (Studies in Sociology; New York: Random House, 1954), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Talcott Parsons, *Religious Perspectives in College Teaching in Sociology and Social Psychology* (New Haven: The Hazen Foundation, 1951), p. 7.

It centers its perspective on religion rather than on society and tries to discover what religion is in itself, quite apart from its function for society. Some of the advocates of this approach are so concerned with the highly personal and individualized character of the religious experience, that on this account they hesitate to define it at all. Thus Allport in his *Individual and Religion* does not define religion, though he does define religious sentiments.<sup>3</sup>

Both of these approaches have provided valuable insights into religion. Yet too often the sacred character of religion and the unknowable forces present to it have been either neglected entirely or denied. All too often religion has been defined by the social scientists as an epiphenomenon. Parsons, for example, who is quite representative of the functional school in this regard, sees religion as something residual to the task of everyday life. It is basically an adjustment mechanism which comes into play when rational-empirical knowledge can provide no basis for adaptation. Thus, religion provides emotional support and reconciliation in the face of death and meaning in the face of evil and suffering. In short, religion provides meaning in terms of goals where these are not immediately justifying.

The psychological school, too, tends to view religion as an epiphenomenon, as some type of projection either of infantile problems or conflicts or of one's wishes or impulses onto the infinite or at least onto some non-personal object of the outside world. Perhaps the classic example of this approach is Freud's analysis of religion in *The Future of an Illusion*.<sup>4</sup> Freud sees religion as a matter of wish fulfillment, which arose from the helplessness of man in the face of the many dangers he must face from nature in the course of his life. Just as from infantile helplessness the need for help from one's father arose, so the helplessness of the adult in

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960).

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of An Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1949).

the face of nature leads to a projection of the father image onto God for protection against nature.

Yet, despite their limitations, these two approaches have provided some valuable insights into the nature of the religious experience and into the difference between mature and immature religion as well as into the functional role of religion both formative and integrative in social life.

These approaches are not, as many of the studies made to date on the psychology and on the sociology of religion imply, mutually exclusive. For social structures, cultural systems and personality structures are elaborated together in one and the same process and social structures and cultural systems are in addition perceived and acted on from the point of view of the actor.<sup>5</sup> So too, religious institutions and cults are, as Wach indicates, elaborated to give availability to the religious experience of an individual or group, to capture for posterity the charismatic moment.<sup>6</sup> Thus an exclusively sociological orientation, on the one hand, or an exclusively psychological orientation on the other, or the isolation of either or both orientations from the insights provided by history, philosophy and theology can scarcely do justice to scientific research into the field of religion. For, as Professor O'Dea has pointed out, "the knowledge which Social Science possesses must be related to human existence in the interest of the freedom and dignity of man and not remain merely objectized aspects of social processes perceived from a particularly disciplinary perspective."<sup>7</sup> This is not to argue against limited frames of reference in sociological or psychological research. The social sciences are justified in concentrating on their own problems but they must see these

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<sup>5</sup> Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Schils (editors), *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 3-27. This chapter gives a detailed explanation of the Action Frame of Reference.

<sup>6</sup> Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1958), p. 5 & p. 17 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas O'Dea, "The Sociology of Religion," *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (June 1954), p. 90.

problems within a genuinely human vision which cannot be shut up within any one conceptualization.

Our main interest at present is Catholic scientific studies in the field of religion. To date these studies have not altogether avoided the pitfalls mentioned above. The majority of these studies have been done in Europe. European studies however, have for the most part focused "on the percentages of those interested in religion in relation to the total population, with regional, community, sex, age, class and occupational comparisons which are of sociological value."<sup>8</sup> Until recently the majority of these studies have lacked sociological sophistication. Yet, they have supplied bishops, priests and religious groups generally with very valuable area profiles which have aided considerably in the planning of apostolic endeavors.

Catholics in the United States, on the other hand, have been slow in interesting themselves in the type of parish or diocesan profile which has absorbed their European counterparts. The few studies by Catholics on the sociology of religion in the United States have for the most part been problem-oriented, concentrating in the earlier stages on religious practice especially among immigrants or on Catholic-non-Catholic relations. More recently, influenced no doubt by European studies, a number of works have appeared on the parish and parish problems.<sup>9</sup> The most significant of these for our purposes are the works of Fichter and Schuyler.<sup>10</sup> Both are trained sociologists and their work has given most promise of establishing the value of social-science research in the field of religion among Catholics. Yet for one reason or

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<sup>8</sup> Eva J. Ross, "Modern Studies in the Sociology of Religion in France and Belgium," *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (June 1954), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> John D. Donovan, "American Catholic Sociologists and the Sociology of Religion," *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (June 1954), p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Fichter, *Southern Parish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) and *Social Relations in the Urban Parish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954). Joseph Schuyler, *Northern Parish* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960).

another, they, like their European counterparts, have not gone much beyond presenting a profile of the parish population and surveys of variations in religious practice.

In this and two subsequent articles, we shall attempt to show how these and other studies which restrict themselves to presenting parish profiles cannot really come to grips with some of the more significant problems facing the modern church. Then we shall attempt to indicate some guidelines for fruitful research into Philippine Catholic life.

Though some effort was made by both Fichter and Schuyler to get at the meaning of religious practice for values and attitudes, the results were inconclusive. For Schuyler, the question of whether or not differential participation in the life of the parish has a relationship to the degree of acceptance of Catholic values and attitudes is not answered;<sup>11</sup> while, for Fichter, it seems to be problematical that many high on religious practice are low on the degree of acceptance of Catholic values and attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this is as far as such studies can legitimately go for the simple reason that both Fichter and Schuyler take as their point of departure in their parish studies the definition of a parish given in canon law, which embraces four elements, namely an appointed pastor, a church, certain territorial limits and a designated group of persons.<sup>13</sup> Such a definition directs their studies along exclusively pastoral lines. For in its origin, its history, and by its very nature, canon law is principally a systematizing of sacramental cultus and it is normal that it should be chiefly a code for clerics and sacred matters.<sup>14</sup> Such a canonical definition may facilitate one's description of the parish as a social system,<sup>15</sup> and lead naturally to the question of function in investigating the services provided by the parish and the

<sup>11</sup> Schuyler, *op. cit.*, Chapter XIV.

<sup>12</sup> Fichter, *Southern Parish*, Chapter 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Codex Juris Canonici*, Canon 216, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, Md: Newman Press, 1959), p. xxx.

<sup>15</sup> This conceptualization is developed at length by Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 56 ff.

use made of these services in terms of religious practice. This information is useful from a pastoral viewpoint. Yet, the sociologist who confines his research into parish life to religious practice seems to be perpetuating a canonical point of view which has taken over the mind of the clergy and become the essential determinant of their attitude toward pastoral matters since the sixteenth century. This point of view tends to define a "good" Catholic in terms of the receptive position of the laity in sacred things.<sup>16</sup> Studies based on such a definition of the role of the laity within the Church, while necessary and useful in some respects, are essentially one-sided since the lay vocation is not a passive one. Nor can such studies come to grips with some of the more basic problems which must be faced on the level of parish life. As Charles Glock has pointed out in his review of *Northern Parish*, "this study does not answer the need for a more sociologically sophisticated inquiry into the significance of his religious participation for the contemporary church member, Roman Catholic or otherwise."<sup>17</sup> The same criticism might, with equal relevance, be made of Fichter's work. The real deficiencies of such an orientation are seen clearly in Fichter's analysis of the "nuclear Catholic."<sup>18</sup> The nuclear Catholic, according to Fichter, is at the very heart of the Catholic parish. He is most faithful in his religious observance and participates most actively in the social relations of the parish.<sup>19</sup> Yet, such a Catholic also rejects worldly success, is indifferent to secular values or rejects such values entirely and depreciates membership in non-religious groups. These last three are all interestingly enough sect traits.<sup>20</sup> Thus, by some strange coincidence, the staunchest members of the Church universal in Fichter's typology are sectarians. The fact that the Christian position in the world makes a demand of detachment and that there is such a thing as a specifically

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<sup>16</sup> Congar, *op. cit.*, p. xxx.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Glock, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April, 1961), p. 312.

<sup>18</sup> Fichter, *Social Relations, op. cit.*, p. 21 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28 ff.

lay vocation is lost sight of. This, it seems to me, is the reason why the discrepancy, which Fichter found so problematical in an earlier work between religious practice and adherence to Catholic attitudes and values,<sup>21</sup> has not been dealt with adequately, for the Code is not the place to seek an adequate answer to questions about the laity.

Though the studies of Fichter and Schuyler have helped to focus the problem centered around this discrepancy, they have not been the first studies to touch on it. In recent years, there have been many studies on personality in which American Catholics were found to be more authoritarian, prejudiced, ethnocentric and conservative than other religious groups. Possibly the best known and most influential of these studies are *The Authoritarian Personality* and *The Open and Closed Mind*.<sup>22</sup> Though open to much criticism these studies cannot be dismissed lightly since they touch on a matter of great importance to Catholics, namely, the structure of authority within the Church. Once we have evaluated them, we shall be in a better position to see why it is that Catholics who score high on any measurement of religious practice may, perhaps contrary to expectation, score low on any measurement of Catholic values and attitudes.

#### THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

With the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950, a great deal of socio-psychological research has been devoted to the study of authoritarianism and such related "isms" as ethnocentrism, dogmatism, prejudice, and politico-economic conservatism. Possibly more explicitly than in many other areas of social research, research in the area of social discrimination has been oriented to a scientific analysis of the growth conditions which gave rise to the authoritarian-personality type with a view to an educational counterattack on such conditions.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Fichter, *Southern Parish*, op. cit., Chapter 20.

<sup>22</sup> T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950). Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960).

<sup>23</sup> Adorno et al., op. cit., p. x.



*The Authoritarian Personality* study was begun in May, 1944 at the invitation of the American Jewish Committee. It began as a study in anti-Semitism, but in the course of the five years that went into its production, the scope of the work broadened into an "exploration of a problem not less decisive for an understanding of our times: the relation between personality, social discrimination and political ideology."<sup>24</sup>

*The Authoritarian Personality* has been a milestone in sociological research as is attested by the fact that it is the second work the scope and method of which have been submitted to an intensive analysis with a view to promoting continuities in research.<sup>25</sup>

In the first part of the work, four scales were constructed to measure ethnocentrism, politico-economic conservatism, fascism, and anti-Semitism respectively.<sup>26</sup> Since each of these scales has been submitted to extensive analysis in the literature, it is possible to check their validity as instruments for measuring the various "isms" they were intended to measure.

The F scale was intended to measure only right authoritarianism but the authors generalized too readily from the results of this scale to general authoritarianism.<sup>27</sup> Left authoritarianism, however, was not measured. It should be recalled here that the study was begun at the height of the preoccupation with the Nazi extermination of the Jews and was intended to be a study in anti-Semitism. Yet, as the scope of the study broadened, the more limited instruments

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Christie and Maria Jahoda (eds.) *Studies in the Scope and Method of the Authoritarian Personality* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Robert F. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (eds.) *Studies in the Scope and Methods of the American Soldier* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950) is the other such work.

<sup>26</sup> We shall refer to these scales in the future as the E, PEC, F and A-S scales.

<sup>27</sup> Most of the criticism of *The Authoritarian Personality* in this section are based on the work of Christie and Jahoda cited above.

used in measuring a limited aspect of authoritarianism were no longer adequate. If the generalizations had been limited to right authoritarianism only, there could be little quarrel with the results of this scale, yet, the authors considered those who disagreed with their views, whether they were Communists or democrats, humanitarians or New-Deal interventionists, to be equally authoritarian.

This fact influenced the scale construction, for the authors designed a scale to measure only "right nativist fundamentalist authoritarianism." They seemed to presuppose that political opinions were distributed along a unilinear scale and "that the left being at the other end of the scale from the right was of necessity its opposite in every respect."<sup>28</sup> As a result, the investigators failed to see that at the left pole of the continuum there is an authoritarianism impressively like the authoritarianism of the right.

The same criticism applies to the three other scales used in this study. There is a general failure to distinguish between different types of outlook which can be called liberal, liberal collectivist, radical, Marxist. This failure is due for the most part to the authors' own failure to distinguish between totalitarian liberalism and humanitarianism.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from the fact that the scales were a reflection of the political climate of the times, methodologically they make no provision for the expression of qualified or ambivalent opinion. Though the respondent could indicate the extremes of his agreement or disagreement, ultimately he had to be for or against a given proposition. This was a legitimate decision on the part of the authors, but, in discussing scale results, they should not then have treated the lack of qualification as a characteristic of Fascist or anti-Semitic respondents. For example, in the anti-Semitism scale, statements beginning "No Jews are," "Jews do" or "Jews do not" can easily lead in the analysis of the results, as it does here, to false generalizations or stereotype, since

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> A discussion of the four scales is given in Jahoda and Christie, *op. cit.*, p. 70 ff.

prejudiced and non-prejudiced alike were forced to over-generalize single traits to reveal a stereotyped image.<sup>30</sup>

#### THE OPEN AND CLOSED MIND

A more recent work on authoritarianism, *The Open and Closed Mind* by Milton Rokeach, takes cognizance of the criticism levelled against *The Authoritarian Personality* study and develops two new scales in an attempt to overcome the difficulties inherent in *The Authoritarian Personality* scales. These scales, the Dogmatism scale and the Opinionism scale,<sup>31</sup> the author maintains will measure left and general as well as right authoritarianism.<sup>32</sup>

The Dogmatism scale is intended to measure individual differences in openness and closedness of belief systems.<sup>33</sup> A person's belief system is considered to be open to the extent to which, he can receive, evaluate and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the person or from the outside. Examples of such irrelevant internal pressures that interfere with the realistic reception of information are beliefs, unrelated habits, the need for self-aggrandizement, the need to mind the pressures of reward and punishment arising from external authority.<sup>34</sup> Strong agreement with the statements in the scale would indicate that the person possesses one extreme of the characteristic being tapped and strong disagreement would indicate that the respondent possesses the opposite extreme. As a result, persons adhering dogmatically to Capitalism and Communism, Catholicism and anti-Catholicism should all score opposite those with equally diverse but undogmatic views.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Anti-Semitism Scale is given in Chapter 3 of *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. 68. The entire chapter is interesting for the authors' view of the anti-Semitic ideology and for grasping the rationale behind the scale.

<sup>31</sup> In the future we shall refer to them as the D and the O scales.

<sup>32</sup> Rokeach, *op. cit.*, p. 13 ff.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The O scale was intended to serve as a separate measure of general intolerance. It is made up of two parts. Part One links a variety of opinionated rejection phrases with a variety of beliefs about God, socialized medicine, Franco, Capitalism and Communism, among other things. Part Two is made up of opinionated acceptance statements implying the speaker believes something. Half the items in the scale are worded in such a way that agreement with them indicates that the respondent is left-opinionated and the other half in such a way that agreement with them would indicate that the respondent is right-opinionated.<sup>36</sup>

An effort was made in the construction of these scales to focus on the ideological structure rather than the content of beliefs and thus keep the scales as free as possible of specific ideological content. Yet, since every opinionated phrase must end up with some content, the problem was solved by building a scale with a balanced content. Half the items were worded in such a way that agreement with them would indicate right opinionation. Left and right being defined in terms of being either left or right of center and not in terms of extremist orientations. For example, if we take the following pair of opposites: "Any intelligent person will tell you God exists" and "Any intelligent person will tell you God does not exist", and ask which is left and which is right? The answer typically given is that the first statement is right and the second one is left, since most judges would agree that a belief in God is to the right of a disbelief in God. The author claims that proceeding in this way, "it is possible to decide objectively, regardless of one's own ideological biases, whether a given ideological belief is politically to the left of center or to the right of center."<sup>37</sup>

*The Open and Closed Mind* has not as yet been subjected to the extensive analysis to which *The Authoritarian Personality* has been subjected, yet some tentative conclusions can be drawn with regard to the two scales herein presented. First, let us consider Rokeach's definition of the Open and Closed Minds. A Closed Mind, according to the

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80 ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

author, is one which is swayed by irrelevant internal or external pressures in evaluating information. As an example of such irrelevant internal pressures, he lists the "pressures of reward and punishment arising from external authority."<sup>38</sup> The author never defines what he would consider a relevant belief or relevant external authority. The result is that anyone committed to a set of beliefs or to an authority structure should prove to be authoritarian on Rokeach's scales. So, for example, one committed to a belief in Catholicism could not, according to the author's reasoning, give an open-minded response to items such as the following on his D scale: "Communism and Catholicism have nothing in common" or "Man on his own is a helpless and miserable creature."<sup>39</sup> Such a definition of authoritarianism seems to pre-judge the case from the start against those who have any deep religious commitments, to say nothing of others.

The defect just mentioned is common to most studies of authoritarianism in which Catholics almost invariably touch on areas which impinge on Catholic teachings in the area of faith and morals. Non-Catholics are astounded at Catholic conformity and Catholics, in turn, may be amazed that such conformity is not one hundred percent. In the matters of divorce, mercy killing, and sterilization, Catholic teaching is clear and Catholics in turn react accordingly. If these issues are used as indices of a closed mind or the authoritarian personality type, then predictably enough Catholics will score as authoritarians. Many non-Catholics see a real difficulty here, as for example Talcott Parsons who writes: "Through the claim to control all matters of faith and morals, the Church as an organization has a certain tendency to encroach on the freedom of the individual as that is conceived in relation to our basic doctrine of the separation of Church and State."<sup>40</sup>

This attitude is based on the impression that the Church thinks for the individual Catholic who, as a result, is un-

<sup>38</sup> Confer Note 34 above.

<sup>39</sup> Items 2 and 11 on the D scale. This scale may be found in Rokeach, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-80

<sup>40</sup> Parsons, *Religious Perspectives*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

able to decide any issue on its merits unimpeded by external pressures. A Catholic, therefore, is not free, but rather is bound into an authoritarian system. The unvoiced assumption behind such reasoning seems to be that the individual Catholic accepts such teaching blindly, under coercion, merely on the authority of a man or a group of men. He has for all practical purposes abdicated his own freedom to judge and adheres unswervingly to the line laid down by Rome or some prelate.

Such an assumption, however, belies the facts as the informed Catholic sees them. First of all, where the Church has spoken in the area of faith and morals, the Catholic, if he is to remain such, must accept her teaching. That such an acceptance encroaches on the "freedom of the individual," however, is difficult for the Catholic to see and that for two reasons. First, because he accepts the teaching of the Church not on human authority but on the authority of God. Catholics accept the Church as an infallible teacher in the area of faith and morals only because they believe that God in the Person of Jesus Christ established it to hand down without error the truths He committed to His Apostles. Only those who do not believe that God spoke directly to men and that He did establish an institution to transmit His doctrine unchanged, and that this institution is and can be known by devout inquirers will see in the Catholics' acceptance of dogmas any limitation on human freedom. Secondly, the Catholic supposes that one of his most basic freedoms is that of choosing his own moral and religious guide. His choice is freely made and the implications of that choice freely seen. Catholic belief is not coerced. Finally, it should be noted that the truths Catholics are obliged to believe are limited in number and very carefully specified. They leave an enormous field for human liberty. Even within the area of faith and morals a vast array of questions are openly debated and very sharply so among Catholic scholars.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> "Dr. Mackay Insults American Catholics," *America*, Vol. 90 (Dec. 5, 1953), 258.

This is not to deny that there may be too rigid a unanimity of opinion among Catholics on matters which do not fall within the Church's teaching office and which of their nature admit and demand diversity of views even within the Church. We shall return to this point later in a subsequent article. First, let us consider Catholic authoritarianism more in detail as it appears in the two works dealt with here.

#### CATHOLIC AUTHORITARIANISM

The authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* in concluding their study of religious affiliation and ethnocentrism state:

The factor of religious denomination is not very significant... Frequency of Church attendance is also not very revealing; however, the finding that those who never attend Church obtain lower E scores than those who do attend is added evidence that those who reject organized religion are less prejudiced than those who accept it....

When religious affiliation of the subject is considered in relation to that of his parents, it appears that ethnocentrism tends to be more pronounced in subjects whose parents presented a united religious front than in cases where the religious influence from the parents was inconsistent, partial or non-existent. . . . These results suggest that acceptance of religion as an expression of submission to a clear pattern of parental authority is a condition favorable to ethnocentrism.<sup>42</sup>

Later in discussing the function of religion for high and low scorers in their various scales, the authors state:

Subordination of religion to extrinsic aims is common to both high and low scorers; by itself, it does not appear to differentiate between them. It seems, however, that prejudiced and unprejudiced subjects do differ with respect to the kinds of goals that are emphasized and the ways in which religion is utilized in their service.

High scorers, more often than low scorers, seem to make use of religious ideas in order to gain some immediate practical advantage or to aid in the manipulation of other people.<sup>43</sup>

Religion does not seem to be accepted in itself because of its objective truth but rather because of its value in realizing goals that might also be achieved by other means. This distinction between religion as a means and as an end is an

<sup>42</sup> Adorno *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 220 ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 733.

important one and is basic to the distinction we shall try to make later on between the mature and the immature religious personality. The authors themselves touch on the importance of this distinction when they state:

Acceptance of religion (for those who accept religion as a means) is not based upon understanding of or belief in its contents but rather upon what immediate use can be made of it, or upon arbitrary decisions. . . . One selects a "Weltanschauung" after the pattern of choosing a particularly well advertised commodity, rather than for its real quality. This attitude applied to religion, must necessarily produce ambivalence, for religion claims to express absolute truth. If it is accepted for some other reason alone, this claim is implicitly denied, and thereby religion itself is rejected even while being accepted. Thus, rigid confirmation of religious values because of their usefulness works against them by necessity.<sup>44</sup>

It should be noted here that apart from the cases studied in this work, the respondents to the various scales were mostly college students who were asked to state their church membership and the church membership of their parents and whether or not they considered religion to be important in their lives. It may be questioned, however, whether a mere statement of religious affiliation and its importance is an adequate criteria to use in investigating a connection between religious affiliation and ethnocentrism. Attitudes are in question here and a mere statement of religious affiliation, which could range all the way from superficial preference for a particular denomination to deep personal commitment, may not touch at all on religious attitudes. Where the criterion is so vague, the relationship between ethnocentrism and religion must also be vague. More basic to the whole question of ethnocentrism, authoritarianism and religion than mere religious affiliation or considering religion important, is the distinction referred to above between the mature and the immature religious personality. It is possible to be a fully practicing member of a religious group and to consider religion very important, personally and socially, and yet have a very immature religious outlook as we shall see presently.

In *The Open and Closed Mind* Catholics score higher than all other religious groups (i.e. Protestant and Jews)

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



and non-believers on right-opinionism and dogmatism as well as on the F and E scales.<sup>45</sup> Though not all the differences found were statistically significant, high Catholic scores come as no surprise to the authors.<sup>46</sup> One can only speculate as to the extent that the author's own value judgments prejudiced the results of his work. In discussing the validity of his theoretical formulation regarding the nature of general authoritarianism and general intolerance, Rokeach states: "We should expect to find that Catholics and Communists, even though they are poles apart ideologically, will, on the average, score higher than other groups on general authoritarianism and intolerance because of similar group pressures upon them."<sup>47</sup> This statement is interesting in view of some of the items included in the author's D and O scales. For, despite his disavowal to the contrary, some of the statements in these scales do embody what Catholics would consider doctrinal content.<sup>48</sup> The structure of the scales, however, demand that one take a position on the right or left of such statements.<sup>49</sup> It should not be surprising, then that the average Catholic would choose a position to the right, for the simple reason that doctrinally every Catholic is a conservative. For example, the average Catholic forced to agree or to disagree with the following statement: "Communism and Catholicism have nothing in common,"<sup>50</sup> would predictably enough agree with it. This would indicate some degree of dogmatism since his agreement would place him to the right of center. On the other hand, a fundamentalist Protestant might well disagree with such a statement. This disagreement would place him to the left of center. This possibility introduces a very pertinent criticism made by Christie in his review of *The Open and Closed Mind*, namely, that the work suffers "from an exaggerated tendency to view behavior in a psychological frame of reference with a consequent neglect of the effect of member-

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<sup>45</sup> Rokeach administered the F and E scales of *The Authoritarian Personality* as a check on his own D and O scales.

<sup>46</sup> Rokeach, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Note 37 above.

<sup>50</sup> Rokeach, *op. cit.*, p. 74, Item 2.

ship in social groups.”<sup>51</sup> The criticism certainly applies to the above item from the D scale. A fundamentalist Protestant may well see little more in Catholicism than a power structure bent on taking over the world; consequently, from his point of reference there is little distinction between Communism and Catholicism.<sup>52</sup> A Catholic, on the other hand, may well look on the above statement from a theistic point of view. As a result, he could only agree that theism and atheism have nothing in common. Such a statement seems to be obviously intended to have Catholics and Communists “though poles apart ideologically” score equally high.<sup>53</sup> If the word “Catholicism” had been changed to the word “Christianity” in the statement, Fundamentalists and Catholics might well have looked on it from the same point of reference, and scored equally right of center.

In general, it can be said that where scales contain items touching on dogmatic or moral issues for Catholics such as religious indifference, the relativity of truth, sex morals, and divorce among other things, Catholics will generally score as conservative or right of center. If, however, the scale contained items on biblical interpretation, the morality of gambling, drinking, card playing or commercialized Sunday sport, they might well score as being quite liberal or left of center. Yet, for some strange reason, such items are never included in scales as evidence of a non-authoritarian or dogmatic approach to the subject of beliefs or morality.<sup>54</sup>

Rokeach's sample of Catholic students was selected from secular universities. This may or may not have had a bear-

<sup>51</sup> Richard Christie, Review of *The Open and Closed Mind*, by Milton Rokeach, *The American Journal of Sociology*, LXVI (November 1960), 308-309.

<sup>52</sup> The religious issue in the 1960 Presidential Election Campaign should have provided ample evidence of this fact.

<sup>53</sup> The statement dealt with here on Communism and Catholicism is not the only one in the D scale to which the above criticism would apply. For other such statements cf. Rokeach's D scale, p. 73 ff. especially items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 39, 42, 57, 59, 61.

<sup>54</sup> Edward H. Nowlan, “The Picture of the Catholic Which Emerges from Attitude Tests”, *Lumen Vitae* XII, No. 2, 1957, p. 277.

ing on the results of his study, since it is not an uncommon occurrence that a Catholic student in a secular university "not infrequently present himself as an embattled believer clinging grimly to a cause, but fighting a university battle with high-school weapons."<sup>55</sup> It would be rather foolish to form any generalizations about Catholic authoritarianism from such a group unless it were clearly established that they were representative of the Catholic population, which the author makes no attempt to do.<sup>56</sup>

A number of items on both the E and A-S scales used in both the Adorno and Rokeach studies are clothed in language which no Catholic with any deep Catholic convictions or knowledge of Catholic authoritative pronouncements on the brotherhood of man, individual dignity, the nature of charity and the demands of justice could accept. Yet, results indicate that Catholics accepted as many of these items (*Authoritarian Personality*) or more of them in most instances (*Open and Closed Mind*) than other religious groups, indicating that Catholic authorities were not dictating their positions. These facts tend to lead to either of two conclusions: first, that Catholics are selectively authoritarian or secondly, that the D and O scales used by Rokeach were not tapping the same personality type as the E and A-S scales.

Let us consider the second of these conclusions first. In the Rokeach study in which all four scales were used, Catholics scored higher than other religious groups and higher than non-believers on all four scales.<sup>57</sup> The problem presented by these results is to explain why, if the Catholic is authoritarian, he scores so high on the E and A-S scales. The author of *The Open and Closed Mind* considered consistently high scores on all four scales as evidence of consistent right authoritarianism. Yet consistently high scores among Catho-

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>56</sup> Descriptions of such students can be found in Nowlan, p. 299, and Thomas O'Dea, "Catholic Ideology and Secular Pressures" (Unpublished Bachelor of Arts thesis, Harvard University, April 1949).

<sup>57</sup> Rokeach, *op. cit.*, p. 111 .

lics on these scales seems to involve a contradiction overlooked by Rokeach and his associates. They seem to betray ignorance of Catholic doctrines in regard to many of the items in the E and A-S scales, when they interpreted high scores on these scales as evidence of right authoritarianism among Catholics. Such a conclusion is all the more interesting when we consider the explanation given by the authors, as to why Communists who were high on left authoritarianism should score lowest of all groups on the E scale. This finding is explained in terms of the emphasis on humanitarianism in the Communist ideology. Communists are low on ethnocentrism because humanitarianism is ideologically at least, an authoritative Communist position. As developed by the authors this explanation of Communist scores on the various tests provides a great deal of insight into the disillusionment experienced by many fellow travellers after an event such as the Hungarian revolution.<sup>58</sup> From this explanation of the Communist scores it would seem that the authors had an answer to the contradiction posed by consistently high Catholic scores on these scales but they seem to have missed the problem and the contradiction posed by Catholic respondents.

The reason the authors missed this contradiction in Catholic test scores is, I think, evident from a careful reading of their work. First of all, they seem to have been unprepared to evaluate contradictory evidence in Catholic test scores since they assumed too readily the monolithic structure of Catholicism,<sup>59</sup> thus betraying little knowledge of the Catholic Church or its teachings. This monolithic structure was assumed to explain positions taken contrary to authority as well as those taken in conformity with authority. This leads one to believe that the authors found what they were looking for, since as was indicated above, they did expect to find Catholics high on authoritarianism.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps they betrayed here some of that subjective objectivity often associated with those who are committed to a belief in the relativity of all truth. Thus they would be led to consider any

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*,

absolute belief to be authoritarian whether or not it actually represented an authoritative position of the group to which the individual belonged. As a result of their partiality to the relativity of all truth<sup>61</sup> they seem to have been unprepared to evaluate any relative commitments of those committed to a belief in the absolute nature of some truths.

The other conclusion to be drawn from the fact that Catholics score higher on the E and A-S scales than might be expected if they were consistently authoritarian, is that the Catholics were selectively authoritarian. This possibility touched on in *The Authoritarian Personality* does not seem to have been considered in *The Open and Closed Mind*.<sup>62</sup>

In discussing religious ideology as found in his interview materials, Adorno states; "the more religion becomes conventionalized, the more it falls in line with the general outlook of the ethnocentric individual."<sup>63</sup> By "conventionalized" he means "an almost complete absence of personally experienced belief."<sup>64</sup> Connected with this conventionalized religion is the tendency to believe selectively, "the specific contents of religion are continually submitted to a process of selection and adaptation."<sup>65</sup> The interview material from *The Authoritarian Personality* indicates that this tendency "to believe selectively in religion is a distinguishing feature of the prejudiced subjects."<sup>66</sup> Such an explanation has the advantage of being more general and since Catholics are not the only ones who exhibit authoritarian traits, an explanation that would explain authoritarianism in general rather than authoritarianism in one specific group is more desirable. Secondly, not all Catholics are authoritarian, hence an explanation of authoritarianism based on the monolithic structure of Catho-

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. "The ax we frankly grind is simply this: it is not so much *what* you believe that counts, but *how* you believe."

<sup>62</sup> Adorno *et al.*, p. 736. Though this possibility has been touched on in *The Authoritarian Personality*, it has not been considered in relation to Catholics specifically.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 730.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 736.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

licism must assume that non-authoritarian Catholics are deviants from Catholic norms and values, which assumption would be highly gratuitous.

If the authoritarian person tends to be a conventional type who believes selectively, it would explain why Catholics high on the D and O scales were also high on the E and A-S scales, even though many items on these scales contradict official Catholic teaching. A further problem, however, presents itself here, namely, do Catholics who score high on the E and A-S scales do so because of conventional religious traits which lead them to be selective in their beliefs or do they so score simply because they are ignorant of official Catholic statements in these areas? If the latter, was this ignorance due to selective perception which would lead them to affirm very strongly official pronouncements which would confirm their own views and to ignore those which did not tend to confirm such views? We feel that there is a certain amount of selective perception involved here traceable in part to the fact that there seems to be a great deal of confusion among Catholics as to the area within which religious authority legitimately functions.

The four studies treated here have been discussed in an attempt to focus on certain problems touching on the significance of his religious beliefs for the individual Catholic. The significance of these beliefs cannot be determined by religious practice alone nor by the stated importance of religion for one's personal life or for society but it must rather be determined in relation to a mature or immature religious orientation. Catholic studies on the sociology of religion to date have overlooked the importance of religious maturity and have focused on religious practice alone as the mark of the good Catholic. Such an emphasis tends to sanction an empty formalism which in many circles all but stifles the vital spirit that should animate Catholic life. In subsequent articles we shall examine religious maturity more in detail and look at some empirical evidence which indicates that the liturgy properly understood and practiced is a source of religiously mature attitudes.