

The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

The Learning And Teaching Church

I have resigned myself, regretfully, to the fact that antagonism to empirical social science will never disappear from the Catholic church. I do not know why this is so; all that the empirical social researcher wants to do is



Fr. Greeley

to study as objectively and systematically as he can the way things are. I can't figure out why such an aim should bother Catholics, but it does.

I have been told through the years that the Catholic church does not need sociology because it has the Scriptures, or the infallible teachings of the pope, or divine providence, or God's grace or, more recently, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I have always suggested in response that these various aids, the importance of which should not be minimized, are very

good sources for description of the social reality as currently is. The unfailing response is to look at me as though I were a heretic.

A few weeks ago, Father James Schall, S.J., a political theorist of some note from Georgetown University, renewed the charge that sociology and faith are incompatible, and said quite bluntly and quite explicitly that as a sociologist I believe the norm for morality depends on the way things are and not the way things should be.

I'm not quite sure how seriously to take Father Schall (though heaven knows his modest contribution to scholarship is not burdened with empirical evidence or indeed evidence

of any sort).

He takes exception, for example, to the restaurants at which I ate when I was in Rome studying the papal election (not the top-of-the-line tourist traps, by the way). Since he was there at the time, Father Schall knows as well as I do that these are restaurants to which I was taken by his Jesuit colleagues and friends, and, in any event, one has to wonder what restaurants have to do with serious intellectual discussion.

Moreover, my colleagues at NORC and I have repeated ad nauseam through the years that we do not believe that the way things are is the appropriate norm for devising moral principles. Either Father

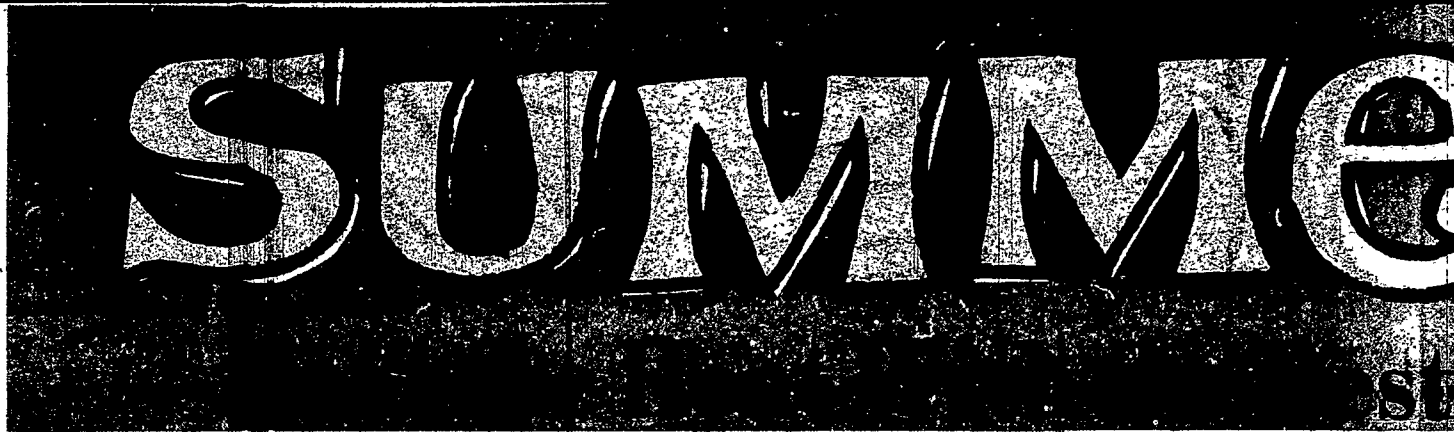
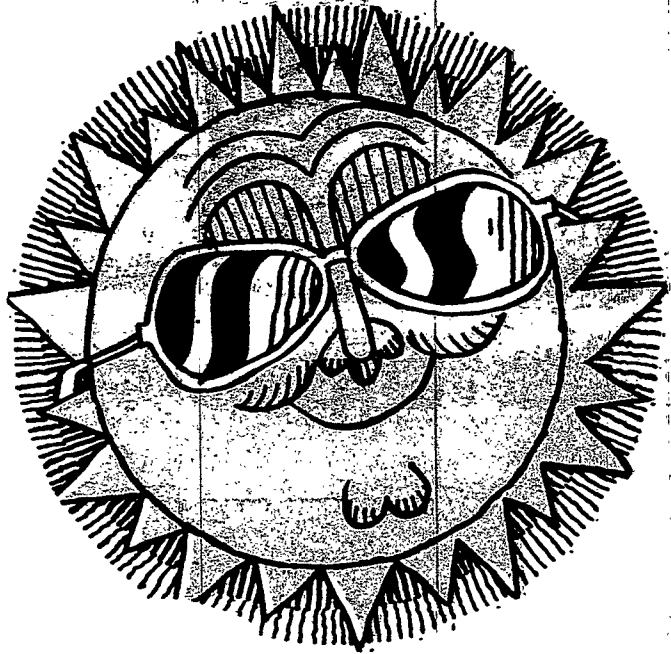
Schall has read our work carefully enough to know that is our position and hence is deliberately deceiving his readers, or he has not read our work and is writing irresponsibly. In either case, his reputation for intellectual honesty suffers.

But it will not do merely to say, as Father Schall does, that the proper norm for morality is the way things should be; if one purports to engage in serious philosophical and theological discussion.

Furthermore, Father Schall also knows that traditional Catholic theology asserts that a locus theologicus is the "sense of the faithful" or the belief of the "learning church."

Indeed, we were all taught in the seminary the ancient Catholic doctrine that the learning church is infallible in its beliefs.

How do theologians cope with the disagreement between the teaching church and the learning church? Neither Father Schall nor anyone else that I know of seems willing to address the question, or even to admit that it exists. To the extent that anybody pays any attention to the question, their response seems to be that only those among the faithful who accept what the magisterium has already laid down deserve to be called the faithful. Such a stand seems to preclude the necessity of taking the learning church seriously as a theological source.



BUCKMAN'S ICE CREAM VILLAGE

We Make All Our Own
ICE CREAM
On The Premises Daily
We have the largest selection
of ice cream treats
in the area!

BANANA SPLIT TO GO

(3 Scoops of Ice Cream
3 Toppings, 1 Whole Banana
Whipped Cream, Nuts, and
Cherry) \$1.54 + Tax

LARGEST ICE CREAM
CONES AROUND
(2 Scoops, .60)



OPEN EVERY DAY
AT NOON 'TIL 11:00
Fri. & Sat.
'til 12:00

2576
RIDGE RD. W.
227-0670

Gruttadauria

&

Cafe Gruttadauria

Gelati, Spumoni
Lemon Ice

19 Jay Street Midtown Plaza

IT'S NOT FAR TO

Tom Wahl's

IN AVON

NEW

FREEZE FRESH
SHEBET DAILY

- Super Banana Splits •
- Soft Ice Cream Cones •

Air-Conditioned Dining Room
Plus

Picnic Pavilion

IN AVON Rt. 5 & 28 Between Avon & E. Avon