THE LITTLE WORLD OF MATERIALISM

ALL THROUGH both Old and New Testament, Israel, the people of God, is described as a vineyard, planted and tended by God. Beyond the vineyard of Divine law and custom is a people who are not God’s chosen. You can go beyond the boundaries and thereby cease to be part of Israel. Motives, feelings, and degrees of sincerity do not change the fact of having crossed the border. It is important that this border is well-defined. Those who approach it from either side can compare the orderliness of a tended vineyard on one side and the randomness of thicket, bramble, brier, and rocks on the other. It reminds me that C. S. Lewis once observed that the border of Christianity is closer in than we once thought!

In ancient times God’s people and God’s Church were one and the same. Notions of secular and sacred were unknown. There was no separation of church and state. This is not to deny that in the Old Testament we can certainly see friction and confrontation between God’s prophets and the various kings of Judah and Israel! At issue, however, was fidelity to (and corruption of) God’s law as it affected every aspect of the people’s life. No one believed in the non-existence of God or that His claim was not pervasive. The prophets regaled the various kings not only about religious and liturgical matters but brought Divine moral and ethical demands to bear on the practice of law, medicine, education, diplomacy, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and every other endeavor of God’s people, commercial, social, and professional.

Already in the Old Testament we can see a material world view gradually crowding out or marginalizing the Spiritual realm. The parable Our Lord Jesus told shows the conflict. God, like the owner of the vineyard, is out of sight. From that fact (and from the reliance we place upon our physical senses) it is easy to conclude that if God is out of sight He is also out of existence. And if God does not exist, human beings do not have any rival for mastery of the universe. Against this prevailing mind-set Jesus constantly spoke of a superseding spiritual reality that shelters and supports this lesser world of matter and stuff. In the parable Jesus shows what happens when the little world of materialism fails to take into consideration the larger reality. It will believe itself to be autonomous and dominant when in fact it is only a part of a larger creative foundation upon which it is dependent for its very existence.

All of this begins to sound very modern! Jesus was describing a world in which the higher authority of God had become remote or theoretical, a place where God is understood as merely symbolic, like the American flag or apple pie, rather than a truly living being with Whom we must contend and to Whom we must account. The secular world sees the Church as a mere set of “vested interests” attached to a past, resistant of progressive change, and with no legitimate claim on any sphere of life beyond the private aspirations of her own adherents. When the Church
weighs in on any of the affairs of society: politics, commercial activity, statecraft, or education, she is seen as meddling beyond her competence as defined by the new thinking. Because God is no longer seen as a Being but a thing, the Church is seen as an institution much like any other. By her actions and reactions she is perceived to be using her authority to suppress people and keep them back from the new age (however this new age may be defined by the people in secular power).

Christ’s parable shows the final insanity of this drift. In the parable society refuses to comply with the demands of God and attempts to kill Him through His Son. Killing God is seen as progress! And all of a sudden what sounded so contemporary and modern is revealed as being the old story. When Caiaphas counseled that it was expedient for one man to die than for the entire nation to suffer, he was simply reworking the primitive impulse: you gain another’s power by killing him. That is something any cave man or cannibal would understand. The only difference is that the “thoroughly modern” Caiaphas re-packed his atavism in the guise of “sound political reasoning!”

The parable Our Lord tells is therefore of greatest importance. The disciples had been nurtured to a point where the whole drama of human history could be laid before them, even though in veiled form. In the Garden of Eden man and woman were exiled because of their disobedience. In Christ’s parable it is God’s exile that is attempted by His creature. God’s Own Son is killed, but not before it is established that He is “the beloved Son” and whose credentials are therefore from the Father. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants was told to help the followers of Christ see the total picture, the titanic struggle between good and evil that would come to a head in the Passion of Christ.

Those followers needed also to be told about the Resurrection. And in the parable this is given in the form of a proverb, a verse of Psalm 118. It tells of a stone which is rejected by the builders and yet in the end is set in the place of honor. The teaching of the Lord sums up the whole drama of man’s relationship with his Creator. And He tells us that, as the headstone of the corner, Christ will reign over the world in glory. And those who oppose Him shall be scattered like the dust of a crumbling wall.

Father Bradford
¶ This sermon was preached on The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, October 2, 2011.

**SHORT NOTES**

† Many thanks to those who contributed altar flowers during the summer months. Some of you brought flowers more than once. And also the appreciation of us all goes to those who hosted receptions and/or coffee hours recently: Judie Bradford, (twice), Eric Mauro and Jim Reedy, John and Pam Covert (twice), and Corinna and Jonathan Bradford. Hosts are needed for coffee hours this fall; a sign up sheet is provided after Mass.

‡ A year’s-mind Mass for parishioner Dr Terry Maltsberger will be offered on Saturday October 7th at 8 AM. May he rest in peace.

∗ Many thanks to Fr Patrick Armano for being our celebrant on four Sundays in September. Fr Armano is chaplain in Austin Preparatory School and our own chaplain-designate.

‡ A new collection of writings by Dr Thomas Howard (with forward by parishioner Dr Peter Kreeft) has been published by Ignatius Press. Dr Howard was a speaker at Evensong & Benediction in our early days, and Dr Kreeft worships with us most Sundays. This book might make a fine Christmas gift.

‡ Travelling parishioners during the late summer included the entire Bradford family spending several weeks in Germany, and nearby countries.

‡ Massachusetts Citizens for Life will celebrate fifty years of witness in the pro-life movement with a celebration Saturday October 14th. The featured speaker at a banquet is Dr Ben Carson. The Boston area coordinator for MCFL is our own Steven Hardy.

‡ Father Bradford will offer his Retirement Mass (postponed by the pandemic) in St Theresa of Avila Church on Sunday, October 22nd at 10:00 AM. You are invited to attend. (Fr Armano will offer our regular 11:30 AM Mass in St Lawrence Church that morning). Fr Bradford was Parochial Vicar in St Theresa’s Church for twenty-three years.

‡ Saint Luke’s Day is Wednesday, October 18th. The regular Wednesday Mass in St Theresa’s Church is
Father Peter Stravinskas will be our preacher at Sunday Mass and at Solemn Evensong & Benediction on The Solemnity of Christ the King, Sunday, November 26th.

Daylight Savings Time ends Sunday, November 5th. (Set your clocks back one hour on Saturday night.

A GRATITUDE NOTE FROM SEAN CARDINAL O’MALLEY
17 August, 2023

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Anniversaries provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on life’s gifts. As I mark 20 years as Archbishop of Boston, I am grateful for the blessings I have received over the last two decades.

The Capuchin Franciscan ideals of fraternity, ministry, and prayer guide my life and serve as my compass. Fraternity is seen throughout each of our parishes as we are blessed to have priests, seminarians, and deacons minister to us. Their spirit of outreach and commitment to service is a gift for our parishes and communities.

Our brothers and sisters of diverse ethnicities have been a source of joy for my ministry. We are all enriched by the many vibrant ways they contribute to the beauty of our Church. I have also been uplifted by the idealism and optimism of our youth. Ours is an archdiocese that truly mirrors the universal body of Christ.

Most significantly during my time as Archbishop, I have seen the many ways in which you have followed Christ’s example by helping those most in need of the Lord’s grace and mercy. Together, we have journeyed with Christ from the cross to new life.

Please know that in a very special way, you are a blessing to me and to our Archdiocese. Every day, I see the impact you have on our ministries. Without you, we could not carry out the mission of bringing Jesus’ love, support, and compassion to others.

I see and appreciate what you have done for the Catholic Appeal. Your gift to the Catholic Appeal helps to build upon the strong foundations established in our communities and I am so grateful. Your support grows our ministries, good works, and Catholic schools so that we can continue to lift up our brothers and sisters in need and assure that our Church will be even stronger in the future. Your generosity is an inspiration to me and all those we serve as together we follow Jesus’ call to be His witnesses in the world today.

With the assurance of my prayers for you and all whom you hold dear, I remain devotedly yours in Christ.

Sean Patrick Cardinal O’Malley,
OFM Cap.
Archbishop of Boston

SOLEMN EVENSONG & BENEDICTION
Sunday, October 15, 2023
5:00 PM
Father Bradford is the preacher
Service music for choristers is under the direction of Dr Janet Hunt
a reception follows this service

THE CONGREGATION is conducting an Every Member Canvass during October. Your contributions support the parish program. The existence of the Anglican Use in Boston depends on that support. Please be generous.
THE INTERIOR STATE OF OUR SOULS

When we were baptised we would have been clothed in a white robe. For children this christening gown is sometimes an ancestral heirloom, passed down in the family from generation to generation. As modern parents insist on postponing the baptisms of their offspring for ever more frivolous reasons, gowns that were created for Edwardian babies often seem in peril-of bursting at the seams when occupied by the strapping limbs of incipient toddlers.

After the Baptism itself, the child is covered in another white garment, such as a shawl or a bonnet. This is a visible sign of an invisible reality. It symbolises the life of grace which now animates the soul of the Christian. In Baptism a great change comes over us. Before Baptism, God looks on us and He sees that we are made in His image, with a mind and a will. After Baptism, He sees that in addition to this image which belongs to us by nature there is a supernatural likeness. We call this ‘Sanctifying Grace.’ It is what we are talking about when we talk about someone being in a ‘state of grace,’ and it bestows on us a participation in the very life of the Blessed Trinity.

Fresh from the waters of supernatural regeneration, the newly baptised Christian is enjoined to carry his baptismal garment Without stain throughout his life until reaching the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. This reminds us that the outcome of our particular judgment—the judgment that occurs immediately after our death when our soul finds itself before Our Lord Jesus Christ—will depend on whether we are in a state of grace when we die. If, pray God, we are, then our eternal destiny will be everlasting blessedness in Heaven, very possibly after a period of purification in Purgatory. If, heaven forbid, we are not in a state of grace, then Our Lord has warned us in St Matthew’s Gospel of an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Reading the twenty second chapter of St Matthew’s Gospel, we might be unsettled by the treatment given to the wedding guest who sits himself at table improperly dressed and is subsequently thrown out, having been bound by his hands and feet. Surely it is not his fault if he could not afford to kit himself out in a morning coat at Moss Bros? The message of this Gospel obviously refers not to outward appearances but rather to the interior state of our souls. The wedding banquet is a symbol of Holy Communion, when we, as members of the Church which is the Bride of Christ, receive Our Living, Risen Lord at the altar rails.

Following the Gospel, the Church has always taught that we must be in a state of grace before we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. This means that if we have committed a mortal sin—a sin that is called ‘mortal’ because it kills the life of grace that is infused into us in Baptism—we must first have that grace restored to us in Penance. If we were knowingly and deliberately to receive Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin, then we would commit a further grave sin of sacrilege.

Sceptics sometimes mock Catholics for treating the Sacrament of Penance as a sort of spiritual launderette. Actually, the deep-cleansing that takes place in a top-of-the range German washing machine is quite a good analogy for what happens in Confession, where the stains of sin are removed from the white robe of our Baptism, and it is restored to brilliance and newness. ‘The grace that is infused into us in the Sacrament of Penance gives to our souls a dazzling splendor which is beautiful to the eyes of God the Father because it is the very life of His Son.'
The white christening robe reminds us that it is always important to be in a state of grace before receiving other Sacraments. Children making their First Communion and Confirmation also dress in white, which symbolises the state of grace received when they were made living Temples of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism, and restored, if lost, in the Sacrament of Penance. Traditionally brides also wear white for their weddings, reminding us how crucial it is for both parties to be in a state of grace to benefit from the blessings being bestowed in that great Sacrament.

The image of the marriage feast holds great importance for all Christians. Once baptised into the Church, we are members of the Bride of Christ. At Mass, we all stand together as we pray towards the East 'Thy Kingdom come.' We, the Church, are the Bride, awaiting the return of the Bridegroom whose presence will fill the skies from East to West when He comes again in majesty and power to judge the living and the dead. We wait for that day in joyful expectation. We do not know when it will be. It could be soon, or it might be many millennia in the future. Meanwhile it is our job to beautify the marriage garments of the Bride of Christ with our humility, our chastity, and our charity, so that when He does return He finds His Bride radiant and prepared.

The Provost

TO LINGER IN the domain of Mary is a divinely great thing. One does not ask about the utility of truly noble things, because they have their meaning within themselves. So it is of infinite meaning to draw a deep breath of this purity, to be secure in the peace of this union with God. ...

Man needs a place of holy tranquility that the breath of God pervades and where he meets the great figures of the Faith. This place is the inaccessibility of God himself, which only Christ opens to man.

All prayer begins by man becoming silent—recollecting his scattered thoughts, feeling remorse at his trespasses, and directing his thoughts toward God. If man does all this, this place is thrown open, not only as a domain of spiritual tranquility and mental concentration, but as something that comes from God.

We are always in need of this place, especially when the convulsions of the times make clear something that has always existed but which is sometimes hidden by outward well-being and a prevailing peace of mind: namely, the homelessness of our lives. In such times, a great courage is demanded from us; not only a readiness to dispense with more and to accomplish more than usual, but to persevere in a vacuum we do not otherwise notice. So we require more than ever this place of which we speak, not to creep into as a hiding place, but as a place to find the core of things, to become calm and confident once more.

For this reason the rosary is so important in times like ours—assuming, of course, that all slackness and exaggeration are done away with, and that it is used in its clear and original forcefulness. This is all the more important because the rosary does not require any special preparation, and the petitioner does not need to generate thoughts of which he is not capable at the moment or at any other time. Rather, he steps into a well-ordered world, meets familiar images, and finds roads that lead him to the essential.

Monsignor Romano Guardini

\* Msgr Guardini (1885-1968) was a German priest and theologian, and longtime lecturer at Munich. In 2017 that archdiocese opened his cause for canonization. This excerpt is taken from The Rosary of Our Lady, published in 1998 by Sophia Institute Press.
INSTEAD OF COMMENTARY

Informed by the official teachings of the Catholic Church, much of what issues from the American Catholic press on the subject of race relations is indistinguishable from the competing perspectives on offer in secular media, with some Catholic liberals uncritically endorsing organizations such as Black Lives Matter, which has called for the displacement of the traditional nuclear family, and some on the right employing ca

suistry in defense of Mr. Floyd’s murder. This is the case despite the fact that on race and so many other issues, it is clear that distinctly Catholic positions—which is to say, responses formed by papal encyclicals, the lives and writings of the saints, the traditions of academic theology and natural law philosophy—do not line up with the mainstream of either progressive or conservative opinion in this country.

This is why pronouncements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops often appear to those unfamiliar with the church’s social teaching as if they were the work of two very different entities: in favor of looser immigration policies, prudent stewardship of the environment and criminal sentencing reform, yet opposed to abortion, same-sex marriage and divorce. While it is certainly true that the relative weight assigned to each of these issues by individuals within the American episcopate varies, even the most “conservative” and “liberal” bishops are more likely to agree with one another than they are with prominent politicians in either of our two major political parties.

I express these concerns about the integrity of the church’s public witness because I believe that a thoughtfully articulated Catholic politics has a great deal to offer our officially secular republic. After all, ever since St. John XXIII’s encyclical “Pacem in Terris” was addressed in 1963 to “all men of good will,” the implied audience for Catholic social teaching has extended well beyond the Catholic faithful, not least because the church has always maintained that moral truth is available to all men and women by the light of reason alone.

Today, perhaps more than ever, the church presents a refreshing response to our nation’s enforced ideological bifurcation. Polling suggests that about 75 percent of Americans have moderate to progressive views on economic questions and slightly more than half are socially conservative. The median voter has both of these traits, and there are good reasons to think that it was this unnamed coalition of anti-libertarians who decided the outcomes of the last two presidential elections.

Both of our major political parties try to placate voters by triangulating occasionally, tactically co-opting stances from the other side. But the most striking thing about both parties is the wide range of positions they share that are at odds with the enthusiasms of the median voter: a bellicose foreign policy, free trade, social libertinism and the financialization of the economy.

In contrast, the church offers a consistent ethic of solidarity: against pre-emptive war of any kind (which the church tells us cannot be waged in a just manner under modern conditions), against the enrichment of the wealthy in poor and rich nations alike at the expense of the working and middle classes, against the increasingly nebulous claims of academic progressives and activists about the nature of the human person and against the pursuit of maximal shareholder value to the detriment of virtually every other meaningful consideration.

Matthew Walther

†In an article published in The New York Times (Sunday, August 1, 2021) titled “America Needs Catholicism,” the writer promotes the social teaching of the Catholic Church as inspiration for secular politics. The author is editor of The Lamp, a Catholic literary journal.

SAINTS SIMON AND JUDE

Feast Day Saturday October 28

WE KNOW LITTLE about either of these apostles. Simon was called “the Zealot” and this may indicate he had previously been a member of a nationalist party which sought for independence from Rome. Judas is called “not Iscariot” and perhaps because of the obscurity of his life and having the same name as the traitor, he became a very popular patron of the hopeless and lost causes.
JESUS IS WITH YOU

May Jesus continue to grant you his holy love; may he increase it in your heart, transforming it completely in him.

What should I say to you in the name of this most sweet God become Man? I repeat, a thousand times and I will always repeat what I have always said to you: Do not fear. Jesus is with you. He is working within you, and is pleased with you, and you are entirely and always in him.

This is the entire and only truth. Who assures you of this? The very authority that God himself has constituted as your guide; the authority that loves you, which does not want to and cannot misguide you, the authority that represents God and who speaks to you in the name of the same God. ...

You are right to complain at finding yourself more often than not in darkness. You seek your God, you sigh for him, you call him and cannot always find him. Then it seems to you that God hides himself, that he has abandoned you! But I repeat, do not fear. Jesus is with you and you are with him. In darkness, times of tribulation, and spiritual anxiety, Jesus is with you. In that state, you see nothing but darkness in your spirit, but I assure you on behalf of God, that the light of the Lord invades and surrounds your entire spirit. You see yourself in tribulations and God repeats to you through the mouth of his prophet and that of authority: I am with the troubled soul. You see yourself in a state of abandonment, but I assure you that Jesus holds you more tightly than ever to his divine Heart. Even our Lord on the cross complained of the Father’s abandonment. But did the Father ever and could he ever abandon his Son, the only object of his divine pleasure?

There are the extreme trials of the spirit. Jesus wants it so. Fiat! Pronounce this fiat in a resigned manner and do not fear. By all means complain to Jesus as you like: Pray to him as you wish, but adhere firmly to the words of him who speaks to you in the name of God.

St Pius of Pietrelcina

† An excerpt from Letters, Vol. III: Correspondence with His Spiritual Daughters (1915-1923) Geraldine Nolan, tr. 1994, Our Lady of Grace Capuchin Friary, San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. Padre Pio (1887-1968) was an Italian priest renowned for sanctity and spiritual direction. He was canonized by Pope St John Paul II in 2002. His Feast day is September 23rd.
St. Lawrence Church  
774 Boylston Street (Route 9)  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Parking is in the church parking lot behind the Church. Use 30 Reservoir Road, Chestnut Hill 02467 for your GPS.

Directions by Car from the North or South:
Route 128(95) to Route 9 east. At the signal for Reservoir Road, take the right; the Church parking lot is a short distance on the left.

Directions by Car from Boston:
From Stuart/Kneeland St, turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles. Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route 9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. The parking lot is on your right.

Directions by Public Transportation:
From Kenmore Square station, board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C branch.

Contra Mundum  
The Congregation of St. Athanasius  
10 St. Theresa Avenue  
West Roxbury, MA 02132