

THE CHURCH, THE POPE & CARDINAL MARTINI

I

“Since he is supremely good, God would not allow something of evil to be in his works were he not good and omnipotent even up to this point, as to bring forth good even from evil.”

St Augustine, *Enchiridion* 11

Can a pope make mistakes ? Contrary to fairly widespread belief among Catholics, he can. A pope is not indefectible. It is precisely because he *can* err that the Church has seen fit to lay down when it is that a pope *cannot*, namely —

- when, carrying out his duty as pastor and teacher of all Christians,
- in accordance with his supreme apostolic authority,
- he explains a doctrine of faith or morals,
- to be held by the universal Church.

(*Vatican Council [I], Decree Pastor Aeternus*, 18th July 1870)

When a pope says something which is difficult to reconcile with Catholic teaching many will ignore it or say the pope has been misquoted or endeavour to explain his words away. Others will assert that the pope’s words indicate the Church’s teaching has changed. The Dominican, Melchior Cano, theologian to the Council of Trent, provides us with a sense of balance :

“Peter has no need of our lies or flattery. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the supreme Pontiff are the very ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations.”¹

Without detracting from the deference owed him, Catholics must adopt a robust attitude towards the pontiff of their day. A Catholic may, as St Paul with St Peter, have to tell a pope that he is wrong. Indeed, he may have a duty to do so.²

All recent popes have made mistakes or errors of judgement. John XXIII erred, in the view of this writer, in calling an ecumenical council without adequate reason and (if the reader should disagree with that judgement) he erred in abandoning, at the instance of an episcopal pressure group, the rules he had promulgated for the council’s conduct. This ensured the council lost direction, became a vehicle for disputation rather than the Church’s good, and added years to its duration and enormously to its expense.

Paul VI erred in forsaking, in an address to the United Nations General Assembly on 4th October 1965, the Church’s infallible teaching against religious freedom. He erred in the dilatoriness with which he dealt with overt and scandalous challenges to the Church’s constant teaching against contraception before confirming that teaching, and in refusing to enforce that teaching in the Washington case.³ John Paul II erred in his dalliance with Feminism which led him to attempt to reconcile sacred

¹ Quoted in *Witness to Hope, The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, George Weigel, New York, 2001, p. 15.

² Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 33, a. 4 ad 2.

³ See George Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic*, New York, 2002, pp. 68-72, 75, 83-4, 86.

scripture with its foolish ideology and to compromise the sacred liturgy by breaking the 2,000 year tradition excluding females from the sanctuary.

Benedict XVI erred in allowing that some good might be done through the use of a condom.⁴ He erred, too, in abdicating the office of the papacy.

These errors will continue to work harm within the body of the faithful until the Church is blessed with a pope who has the wisdom to recognise them and the character and strength to work to reverse their effects.

II

The waters of a river give joy to God's city,
The holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within ; it cannot be shaken :
God will help it at the dawning of the day...
Psalm 45

While a pope is not indefectible, and only episodically infallible, there is yet something which is both :

“One thing in this world is different from all other. It has a personality and a force. It is recognised, and (when recognised) most violently loved or hated. It is the Catholic Church. Within that household the human spirit has roof and hearth. Outside it, is the Night...”⁵

The Church is not a human entity, but a Divine one. Her head is Jesus Christ : her soul is the Holy Spirit : her end is the union of the individual believer with God the Father. She is the spotless bride of Christ. Popes, bishops and priests may commit errors : the Church abides in spite of them, *infallible, indefectible*.

A grasp of this reality was hidden from Carlo Maria Martini, *quondam* Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, who died on 31st August, 2012. His ‘spiritual testament’ published after his death confirmed his loss of faith incurred years earlier and expressed in *Conversazioni Notturme A Gerusalemme—Sul rischio della fede*.⁶

Martini’s position was a logical consequence of the permission given the faithful by the bishops of the Second Vatican Council and confirmed by Pope Paul VI to allow the mixing with the Church’s sacred capital of the secular. Since the City of God and the earthly city are *eo ipso* incompatible it was inevitable the individual Catholic believer would find himself in one of three camps according as he embraced—

1. a wholesale rejection of the secular influence ;
2. an attempt to blend the two involving the inevitable compromise, to a lesser or greater extent, of the sacred ;
3. the complete subjection of the sacred to the secular influence.

⁴ Cf. http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/Pope_and_Condoms_conflated.pdf

⁵ Hilaire Belloc, Letter to Dean Inge published in *The Evening Standard* ; reproduced in Hilaire Belloc, *Essays of a Catholic*, London, 1931. Cf. http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/belloc_inge.pdf

⁶ ‘Night time conversations in Jerusalem : On the risk of faith’. We addressed this work in 2008 in the paper *Cardinal Martini Loses His Way* at http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/martini_theheretic.pdf

This last grounds the heresy identified by Pope Pius X 100 years ago in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis, modernism*.⁷ The faith of one who has embraced this position has metamorphosed : he is, thereafter, a Catholic in name only.

It is because Cardinal Martini's faith was no longer Catholic that he felt free to attack the Church's teachings as out of date, the Church's structure as 'two hundred years behind', as needing 'to undergo a radical journey of change', to become 'democratised'. It is because his faith was no longer Catholic that Martini could say 'you cannot make God Catholic', that he could see no difficulty in authorising the reception of the Blessed Eucharist by those in illicit unions. In this last we see the third category realised, *the sacred made subject to the demands of the secular*.

It was because Martini thought it appropriate to subject the sacred to the secular, that he was the darling of the secular media.

In a recent article on the *Chiesa* website⁸ Sandro Magister exposed Cardinal Martini's influence on Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis, citing as instance the following words of the Pope from an interview with him by Eugenio Scalfari, atheist editor of the Italian journal *La Repubblica* : "I believe in God, not in a Catholic God. There is no Catholic God..."⁹ To which folly one might respond :

There is no God but the Catholic God, just as there is no true religion, no religion inspired and established by God, but the Catholic religion. Contrary to what was implied in various of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, there is no religion worth following but that which God has established. There is no true faith but the Catholic faith. All other religions are human, and chimerical.

III

"[W]ill not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them ? I promise you he will see justice done and done speedily. But when the Son of Man comes will he find any faith left on earth ?"

Luke 18 : 7-8

Cardinal Martini called for 'a synodal' Church. In his last interview he said the pope should surround himself with a coterie of bishops and cardinals if he wanted 'the barque of Peter not to be submerged by internal waves and by a society that no longer believes in it'. Implicit in this advice is the modernist insistence that the Church should not endeavour to convert the world but conform itself to its mores. It seems Pope Francis has followed Martini's exhortation with his appointment of a committee of bishops from around the world to advise him. His initiative, following the first meeting with its members, is to distribute a survey via national bishops conferences seeking the views of the faithful on the effects on the practice of the faith of the problems endemic in societies infected with the secular and atheistic. One can only wonder how such an exercise could be for the Church's good.

⁷ 8th September, 1907. But do not, Dear Reader, look for mention of it in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* !

⁸ *Martini Pope. The Dream Come True*, at <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350623?eng=y>

⁹ Interview published in *La Repubblica* 1st October, 2013.

Pope Francis has already troubled the faithful with comments seemingly dismissive of the moral issues of abortion and homosexuality, effectively mocking the heroic works opposing these evils, not (be it noted) by a largely quiescent clergy but by the Catholic laity, over forty years. One is entitled to ask whether he is contemplating an attempt to amend the Church's teachings to accommodate a majority opinion among the faithful in favour of their relaxation. Let us not forget that the Pope's *eminence grise* rejected two of the Church's infallible teachings, that against contraception (repeated definitively in *Humanae Vitae*, 25th July 1968) and that against the possibility of women ever being ordained to the priesthood (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, 22nd May 1994)¹⁰.

In the Scalfari interview the Pope said —

“Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.”

This is a paraphrase of the foolish opinion of Pope John XXIII in his *Opening Speech* to the fathers of the Second Vatican Council (11th October, 1962). It is not the teaching of the Catholic Church. In a recent article on *The Catholic Thing* website, respected commentator Fr James Schall S.J. compared this statement of Pope Francis with words of Justice Kennedy in a decision of the US Supreme Court, and remarked —

“Both men seem to be looking at the subjective side of a person's interior judgments. The whole objective world that is there and affected by the consequences of these positions is bypassed as irrelevant or immaterial. I cannot see why either Mao or Hitler, let alone Hobbes, would have any problem with these positions as stated...”¹¹

Pope Francis also said in the Scalfari interview : “Proselytism is solemn nonsense. It makes no sense.” With which one may contrast the words of Christ Himself —

“Go out to the whole world ; proclaim the gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved ; he who does not believe will be condemned...”¹²

The Pope's summary dismissal of the work for which Almighty God established his Church must be unique in the history of the papacy.

With his rejection of the papal apartments and regalia and his accentuation of the office of bishop of Rome rather than that of Christ's vicar on earth (including his off-hand dismissal of the faculty of judgement which belongs supremely to the office of Christ's vicar) Pope Francis has exemplified Martini's call for a church in which the pope governs not as monarch but through 'service'. A recent remark of Canadian commentator David Warren, about the lord who disparages the trappings of his office, is to the point —

“[He] may have forgotten that these trappings belong to the office, not to him, & that in the end “dressing down” is like defining deviancy down. It is to call attention to oneself, not the office.”¹³

¹⁰ This latter implicit in Martini's call in *Conversazioni Notturme A Gerusalemme—Sul rischio della fede* for the Church to ordain married men *and women*.

¹¹ *Culture at the “Heart of Liberty”*, 28th October, 2013 at <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/columns/2013/culture-at-the-heart-of-liberty.html>

¹² *Mark* 16 : 16

¹³ Cf. <http://www.davidwarrenonline.com/> ; 15th September 2013, sub cap. *Go forth, anyway*.

Twenty years ago somewhat less than 3% of the Catholic faithful (those who still bothered to attend Sunday Mass) frequented the tridentine rite. This figure has now grown to something approaching 10%. Conscious of this burgeoning attention Pope Benedict XVI endowed the tridentine rite with 'extraordinary' status and gave it general permission. A number of religious congregations, recognising the perennial value of its religious observance and the solemn vigour of its attendant Gregorian chant, have turned to the rite and its liturgical structure as a fit means of excluding the secular influence completely from the sacred.

In an interview with *La Civiltà Cattolica* (19th September, 2013) Pope Francis remarked—

"I think the decision of Pope Benedict [the decision of July 7, 2007, to allow a wider use of the Tridentine Mass] was prudent and motivated by the desire to help people who have this sensitivity. What is worrying, though, is the risk of the ideologization of the *Vetus Ordo*, its exploitation."

Christ's Church is one : the Mass is one—*novus ordo ; vetus ordo*—the sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. How is it possible to *ideologize* the tridentine rite, to *exploit* it ? His remarks seem to reflect a fear over the gravitation to the old rite with its implied condemnation of the abuses that frequently characterise the celebration of the *novus ordo*. David Warren again—

"I have long noticed that as the post-modern (or more precisely, post-conciliar) Church has been putting her legacy out in the trash, the secular world has been picking through the pieces. The incomparably magnificent musical heritage of Holy Church survives, for the most part no longer in the churches, from where it was banished after Vatican II... It has become 'classical' music... Churches that have been emptied out by the liturgical 'reforms', fill up again for secular concerts of the music that was discarded."¹⁴

The Catholic Church is not the church of Pope John XXIII, or of Pope Paul VI, or of Pope John Paul, or of Pope John Paul II, or of Pope Benedict XVI, or of Pope Francis—let alone of the *modernist* Cardinal Martini. It is the Church of Jesus Christ.

We have *Papa Bergoglio* with us until he dies—unless he takes the doubtful course of his predecessor. Should he follow Martini's exhortations to their logical, modernist, conclusion we may find ourselves relieved of the incubus of his reign. For the Holy Spirit will not permit him to abandon the Church's infallible teaching.

Whatever the Pope's intentions it would seem his actions are going to precipitate a major reaction to the modernist evils which have afflicted Christ's faithful people for the best part of 50 years, the *fons et origo* of whose promotion is the Second Vatican Council. Concerning which there is only one thing to be said—

Hasten the day : bring on the time !

Michael Baker

10th November 2013—32nd Sunday of the Church's Year : Memorial of St Leo the Great

¹⁴ Cf. <http://www.davidwarrenonline.com/> ; 2nd November, 2013, sub cap. *Dies Irae*.