

Mayday Notes

Testament of Cardinal Martini

Shortly before he died on August 31st 2012, Cardinal Martini, retired Archbishop of Milan (whose fourth-century predecessor St Ambrose was elected by popular acclaim), gave a final interview to fellow Jesuit Georg Sporschill. He then read and approved the text, which was published the day after his death in the *Corriere della Sera*. Martini was a distinguished New Testament scholar and his name appears as one of the editors on the title page of later editions of Nestle-Aland, the most authoritative text of the Greek New Testament.

In this interview the Cardinal said the Church was tired: 'Our culture is outdated, our churches are huge, our religious houses are empty, the Church's bureaucratic apparatus keeps on growing, our ceremonies and costumes are pompous... I know we can't just leave it all easily. At least we could seek out people who are free and closer to their neighbours. People like Archbishop Romero and the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador.'

He continued: 'Karl Rahner liked to use the image of embers hidden under ashes. In the Church today I see so much ash over the embers that I sometimes feel powerless... I advise the Pope and bishops to seek out for posts of leadership twelve persons who are not on the usual track. Persons who are close to the poorest and surrounded by young people who are willing to try out new ideas... The Church must recognise its own errors and set out on a radical road of change, beginning with Pope and bishops. The paedophile scandals force us to follow the road of conversion.'

Then he asked: 'Who are the sacraments for? The sacraments are not an instrument of discipline, but a help for people on their journey and in their weaknesses. Do we bring the sacraments to those who need new strength? I am thinking of all those who are divorced, remarried couples and extended families. These people need special protection... The question of whether the divorced may receive Communion ought to be reversed. How can the Church bring the power of the sacraments to help those with complex family situations?' In conclusion he said: 'The Church is 200 years out of date. Why doesn't it give itself a good shake? Are we afraid?..'

Editor's version of Italian original quotations, who also translated: Carlo-Maria Martini *In the Thick of His Ministry*, a reflection on 2 Corinthians, (St Paul Publications, Slough 1990).

Pussy Riot

According to the website of the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the Pope agrees with him in condemning the female pop group Pussy Riot, for performing a protest song in the Moscow Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour. 'Pope Benedict XVI expressed his solidarity with the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on this issue and ... also wished Patriarch Kirill God's help and success.' To the satisfaction of Patriarch and Pope, two members of the group have been sent to prison in Siberia. Terrible old men are not uncommon in positions of power in religious organisations. One wonders if this is an example of a residual lust for human sacrifice.



Meanwhile on October 14th 2012, the anniversary of the Occupy London camp outside St Paul's Cathedral in London, four women members of Occupy, wearing thin white dresses, chained themselves to the cathedral pulpit at Sunday evensong saying: 'Jesus threw the money changers out of the temple, but you invited them in.' The Dean of St Paul's ascended the pulpit steps to give his sermon, mildly joking that he now had a 'captive audience'. This felt like a very English occasion. However, the Dean did rather spoil things by writing a pompous and complacent letter to the press next day, which did not address the Occupy challenge at all.

The Eschatological Dimension

To return briefly to eschatology or the 'last world' mentioned in the Editorial, a Church Father whom we enjoyed in our Friday Group discussions of the 'kingdom' and the good society was Origen. He famously held that at the end, the Devil would be saved. In 1968, the year of the Paris *événements* and the huge anti-war demonstration in Grosvenor Square in London, two films came out, *Barbarella* and *The Yellow Submarine*, both propounding Origen's theology. At the end of one film the good Barbarella saves the Wicked Queen and in the finale of *The Yellow Submarine* the baddies, the Blue Meanies, join the dance. There was the feeling that somehow 'Love and peace, man!' would prevail by its own natural moral force.



Sea of Faith Network 26th Annual Conference
23rd - 25th July 2013

For the Common Good

Do we want the common good?

What is it?

How can we achieve it?

Can people with different beliefs make common cause?

That is the theme of next year's conference, and one we will explore as usual through the contributions of visiting speakers, organised workshops and informal conversation.

'Do not live entirely isolated, retreating into yourselves, as if you were already justified, but gather instead to seek the common good together.' – Epistle of Barnabas, c.130 AD

Please note the dates and join us at the Gilbert Murray Hall of the University of Leicester.
More information and booking forms will be included in the next edition of *Sofia*.

Origen also believed that at the general resurrection at the end, our glorified bodies would be spherical, like the heavenly spheres. I remember writing a poem about being massively pregnant, called 'The Eschatological Dimension'. It concluded:

On a good day she can understand
the astonishing thought
that Origen taught
that glorified bodies are perfectly round.

Edinburgh

Scotland has not been short of fierce clergymen and it was in Edinburgh that in 1558 John Knox published his *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

At a recent Board Meeting of SOF Trustees there was some talk about SOF having a possible presence at the Edinburgh Fringe. This reminded me of a love poem by the Italian poet Eugenio Montale, 'Wind on the Crescent', set in Edinburgh. The poem has a preacher in it who is 'raptured' into who knows where.

Wind on the Crescent

Edinburgh

The great bridge did not lead to you.
I would have reached you, even sailing
the sewers, at your slightest command.
But strength, with the sun on the glass-paned
verandas, was already draining away.

The man preaching on the Crescent
asked me: 'Do you know where God is?' I did
and I told him so. He shook his head. Vanished
in the whirlwind, which snatched people and houses
and lifted them up into pitch-black dark.

Eugenio Montale
translated by Dinah Livingstone

This poem was first published in its Italian original as 'Vento sulla Mezzaluna' in *La bufera e altro* (Venice 1956). The anti-fascist poet Eugenio Montale (1896–1981) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1975.