

'A model of the way in which a dialogue between believers and non-believers should be conducted.'

KAREN ARMSTRONG, *THE INDEPENDENT*

UMBERTO ECO and CARDINAL MARTINI

BELIEF
or
NON-BELIEF?

A CONFRONTATION



Belief
or
Nonbelief?

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Or
Nonbelief
A Confrontation

UMBERTO ECO

CARDINAL CARLO
MARIA MARTINI

Translated from the Italian by
Minna Procter

Introduction by Harvey Cox

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Introduction

by Harvey Cox

When the Italian newspaper *La Correra de la Serra* invited novelist-scholar Umberto Eco and bishop-scholar Carlo Maria Martini to engage in an exchange of views on its pages, the editors had obviously hit on a fresh and imaginative idea. But I doubt they could possibly have foreseen how brilliant the result of their conception would turn out to be. The Eco-Martini correspondence lifts the possibility of intelligent conversation on religion to a new level. It proves that the partners in such a discussion can probe and challenge and still remain respectful, even congenial. These letters are now being translated into a number of languages and will appear all over the world. It is all for the good. For English-

language readers, it might be helpful to know a bit more about the participants in the argument.

In Eco's labyrinthine novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, one character says to another, "I was born in Milan, but my family came from Val d'Aosta."

"Nonsense," the other replies, "You can always tell a genuine Piedmontese immediately by his skepticism."

"I'm a skeptic," says the first.

"No," replies his interlocutor, "you're only incredulous, a doubter, and that's different."

The reader has to wait a few more pages for Eco to pick up this twisted thread. But he does. And what he says might have served as a foreword to this remarkable correspondence.

Not that the incredulous person doesn't believe in anything. It's just that he doesn't believe in everything. Or he believes in one thing at a time. He believes in one thing only if it somehow follows from the first thing. He is near-sighted and methodical, avoiding wide horizons. If two things don't fit, but you