'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

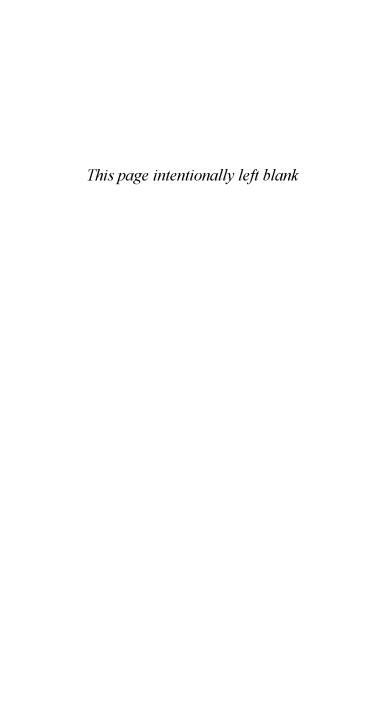
or

NON-BELIEF?

A CONFRONTATION



Belief or Nonbelief?



Belief 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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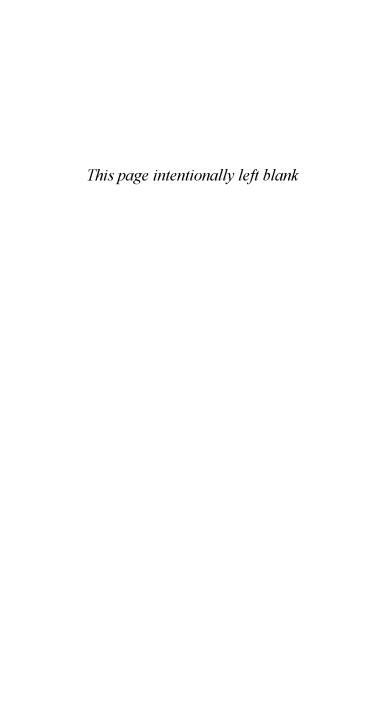
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Belief or Nonbelief?



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 Englishlanguage 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