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## Box 09, Folder 33 - "The Point of Contact and the Liturgy" (draft section from "The Child in the Church") (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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## THE POINT OF CONTACT AND THE LITURGY

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It only remains to add a few paragraphs underling the points of similarity which arise in the mind when one appliesthe Montessori doctrine of the Centre and the <sup>periphery</sup> and the Point of Contact to the Catholic Liturgy . In those parts of the Mass where the Priest reads the Epistle and the Gospel aloud in the vernacular ,or when he is giving a sermon ,he apeals directly to our intelligences , to the "centre "( see above ) This is the predominant state of things we might note in passing in many Protestant forms of worship , where everything is more or less determined by the minister ,and where the sermon is the piece de résistance of the whole service .

But there are many other times during the celebration of the Mass ,and other liturgical functions , when what is going on makes its appeal to us in a more indirect manner .All through the Holy Sacrifice we find a great variety of symbolical actions - signs of the cross , beating of the breast , genuflections , special postures for the hands , wahsing of the hands , raising of the eyes , kissing on the altar or the Missal and many others besides . Some of these actions are for the Priest only to perform , as for instance that ~~xxx~~ striking gesture when he holds his hands stretched out over the elements on the alter about to be offerred up as was done by the priests in the Old Dispensation ; or when he kisses the altar - over the relics of the saints in the altar - stone -on his first appraoch to it ,or before saying the Dominus Vobiscum and the <sup>orate</sup> <sup>ratres</sup> . But in many of these actions the Faithful are also invited to participate , such as the signof the cross at the beginning of Mass or three times on forehead , lips and breast ,before the reading of the Gospel: the beating of the breast at the Confiteor and the Dominus no sum Dignus ;or the genuflections in the Creed and <sup>last</sup>

Gospel . Similar

Similar actions , often symbolic , accompany most other Catholic devotions , such as the Stations of the Cross , the recitation of the Rosary , even the lighting of a candle by a child to place before the image of the Madonna or other saint that too is a liturgical action . In the Sacraments as we all know there are material elements and strictly prescribed actions . Take Baptism , for example , with its carefully ordained ritual actions and its use of water , salt and oil ; or again we call to mind the use of the ring in marriage or at the profession of a nun ; or the solemn binding of the hands of the ordinand by the Bishop at the rite of Ordination .

All these external actions ( which are anathema to the good Quakers ) these signs , symbols , postures , movements , make their appeal to our souls indirectly at the "periphery " of our personality : they are in fact "points of contact " between them and the great world of spiritual realities outside us .

As the Christian Year revolves Holy Church in Her divine wisdom places before us a whole series of such " sensible signs " often accompanied by our own actions . For the Church , like the Montessori Method , realises that for children "visual aids " are not enough they need " sensory - motor aids " For are we not all children in the eyes of the Church -her Children of Light ; and as such in need of actions as well as material aids .

How deeply are our hearts touched at Christmas time as we kneel before the Crib and ponder the ineffable presentation of the Lord of the Universe lying helpless and dependent <sup>utterly</sup> in the manger ! As we ponder the mystery of the mother who created her son and the Son who created His Mother are not our minds stirred with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls . Again how sig-