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July 2022

Box 09, Folder 36 - "A Quaker Turned Catholic Replies to a Catholic Turned Quaker" (E.M.S.)

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Recommended Citation

Standing, Edwin Mortimer, "Box 09, Folder 36 - "A Quaker Turned Catholic Replies to a Catholic Turned Quaker" (E.M.S.)" (2022). *Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing*. 87. <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/standing-manuscripts/87>

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A QUAKER TURNED CATHOLIC REPLIES TO

A CATHOLIC TURNED QUAKER.

A friend of mine - an old pupil at one of the four Quaker schools at which I taught in far -off days - has sent me a copy of The Friend of July 28th, 1961 . In doing so he drew my attention in particular to two contributions , one the editorial , the other a Letter by Helen F. Cambell .

May I be allowed to comment on some of the points raised . The first is a quotation about "mortal sins" which are described as "dirty marks on your soul that can never be rubbed out ". This is not the Catholic teaching at all . The Catholic Doctrine is that, where there is true repentance , both venial and mortal sins can be "rubbed out" . In fact "though your sins be as scarlet etc.... "

The Editorial objects to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in very strong terms , as "grotesque , ridiculous , obscene and blasphemous ! "

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is one of those ideas which can only be thoroughly appreciated by going beneath it to something deeper and more fundamental ; - in this case the Doctrine of Original Sin .

For those who believe in the authority of the Scriptures there is plenty of evidence for this "It was through one man that guilt came into the world, and since death came

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owing to guilt , death was handed on to all mankind by one man " (Romans V. 12). Or again later on in the same chapter , (verse 18) we read "Well, then, one man commits a fault, and it brings condemnation upon all : one man makes amends , and it brings to all justification, that is, life . A multitude will become acceptable to God through one man's obedience , just as a multitude , through one man's disobedience, became guilty ." () .

But even for those who do not accept the authority of the scriptures there is ample evidence for original sin and its effects in the Fall of Man , if only they will admit it ; but it is internal evidence . Here again it is St. Paul who has portrayed for all time the anguish of the human soul divided against itself :-

" Of this I am certain that no principle of good dwells in me , that is, in my natural self ; praiseworthy intentions are always ready to hand , but I cannot find my way to the performance of them ; it is not the good my will prefers , but the evil my will disapproves, that I find myself doing . And if what I do is something I have not the will to do, it cannot be I that bring it about , it must be the sinful principle that dwells in me

Pitiable creature that I am , who is to set me free from a nature thus doomed to death ? . Nothing else than the grace of God , through Jesus Christ Our Lord . If I am left to myself , by conscience is at God's disposition , but my natural powers are at the disposition of sin . "

Is there one of us who can say , as Our Lord did to his bitterest enemies, the Pharisees , "Which of you can convict me of sin ?" . We know all too well that "we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God " .

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It is contrary to both reason and reverence to imagine that the awful and supreme Being, "who sits above the Abyss" - He before Whom the Angels veil their faces as they cry "Holy ! Holy ! Holy !", - it is unbelievable that when God assumed to Himself a human nature that he should take it from a tainted

source ; or , to use Wordsworth's phrase , when he speaks of Our Lady as " Our tainted nature's solitary boast " .

To come now to the last point indicated by my friend , -Helen Campbell's Letter from Pendle Hill . Quoting from a Catholic priest who has become a Quaker she says " If Catholics can forgive Quakers for believing so little, perhaps Quakers can forgive Catholics for believing so much " . Surely there is no question here of anyone forgiving anyone . The real issue is not the quantity of what we believe but the nature of our belief and its object .

Faith for a Catholic is in the first place a supernatural gift , something we are not born with . It is the gift which enables us to believe without doubting what has been revealed .

There arises of course at once the question - " if revealed , then by whom, to whom, when and how?" . This brings us finally to an equally fundamental question , one which Helen Campbell herself states clearly at the end of her letter , when she says " What are the grounds of our beliefs ? What and where

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is our authority ? " . But she gives no answer .
It was in trying to find the answer to this last
question that the writer of this letter came
eventually to believe in , and submit to the one
Authority which , both to reason as well as to faith ,
is able to justify its claim to be the true one .

S. Mortimer Standing

We were not able to use this article
and are very sorry not to have
returned it to you before.

Bernard Canter, Editor. 26/6/62

*With the Editor's
Compliments*

From THE FRIEND, The Quaker Weekly Journal
Drayton House, Gordon Street, London, W.C.1.
EUSton 7549