covet his neighbour's goods. Any effort to achieve social equality without respect for this commandment lays open the way for contravention of the entire Decalogue. Truth is transformed into falsehood as wealth ceases to be a resource for generosity and creative investment, and poverty is no longer a source of hope and a gift, but a veritable curse.

However, something should also be said about those rare cases where social equality is sought without ulterior motive, by peaceful and morally irreproachable means. Our Lord said that the poor would always be with us, and sharply repudiated the proposal that he should turn stones into bread. This is a clear indication of the scope of our discipleship, and the limits beyond which our efforts become misdirected as, in our pride, we seek to frustrate God's plan. Of course, we should work towards the elimination and mitigation of social inequality; of course we should give alms and share our wealth; but the emphasis should be on the act, not on the ideal. The road to hell is paved with ideals as much as with good intentions, and the social equality ideal is particularly dangerous if only for the reason that it contradicts Christ's promise to be with us until the end of time in the shape of the poor and those who suffer. Far from being a neglected Christian duty, social equality is one of the great temptations which the Father of Lies places in our path. "You have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, now eat also of the Tree of Life", he would say. "Then you will be like gods. You will eliminate poverty from the earth, and you will become greater than God, for you will show that you have the power to correct His creation and redeem it from the curse of original sin."

Ideals are universally respected, and the ideal of social equality appears so unarguably praiseworthy that it might seem a scandal to discredit its validity. Nevertheless, since Christ was crucified it has been a Christian prerogative to do just that, and two thousand years on we should surely have learned to do so without resort to a language which caters to the public appeal of the day.

"Deep Calleth Unto Deep" — A Dialogue About Faith

We publish below a few abridged extracts from a lengthy correspondence between Fr Josef Zvěřina and the writer Eva Kantůrková. Fr Zvěřina, a signatory of Charter 77, is a Roman Catholic priest and theologian who spent 14 years in prison in Czechoslovakia during the repression of the 1950s and later; the parochial duties which he assumed on release are now prohibited to him by the authorities, and he is often harassed and publicly attacked. The dissident novelist Eva Kantůrková was detained "for investigation" in 1981 and held for 11 months without trial in Ruzyně prison before being released without any retraction of the charges against her; proceedings can thus be renewed whenever the authorities see fit.

This correspondence began soon after Kantůrková's arrest. As is clear from several passages in the letters, they were incorporated into those written to or by her husband — otherwise they could never have reached their destination. The correspondence continued after Kantůrková's release in 1982. Starting as philosophical questions put to a respected friend (using the polite "you" form) the letters gradually assumed a more personal and affectionate note, and the "thou" customary between close friends replaced the "you".

The correspondence circulates in Czechoslovakia as a samizdat *booklet under the title* Deep calleth unto deep . . . A dialogue about Faith. *It was published in Czech by Opus Bonum (Munich) in 1985. The full text in English is available from Keston College for the cost of photocopying and postage.*

Ruzyně 15.10.81

. . . It occurred to me during the night that people who do not believe in God have the wrong idea of him. They think of him as a moral or philosophical concept, a commandment personalised — and this personalisation is just what seems naïve and a bit ridiculous — a commandment with an independent existence quite detached from

those who believe. People who do not believe think of God objectively, like another person, a tree or Pythagoras's theorem . . . something that exists outside and beyond man and influences him through the fact of his belief. I wondered whether this was not a profound mistake, due to superficial thinking. Those who do not believe can hardly think otherwise than superficially about those who do, and the reverse is equally true. Trying to imagine what different people feel about this — my present vulnerable position predisposes me to wonder — I've been trying to feel as a Christian, and I think that for those who believe in him God is not an objectively distinct concept — his ubiquitous presence and the fact that they feel him everywhere is not a divine quality (which would be simple naïvety on the part of the believer) but *the fact that the believer feels it so:* God is within him, constantly, and *therefore* sees everything and is present everywhere. My "discovery" gave me a good feeling, I like to think I have understood other people. But please ask Father — whose faith is genuine — whether I'm not wrong. [. . .]

Eva

6.12.81

My dear,

I was delighted by your "discovery", but I had to smile at your remark about my "genuine" faith. You can't put it like that. You feel faith as a struggle, as trust, as love. A struggle: I'm never sure whether my belief is strong enough for this unbelieving world. I'm always trying to find a new content, and a new way of expressing it. Anxiety is always with me, that I should not let people down, and thus do faith a bad service. And so faith, for me, is also trust, the trust I feel in the tension between the objective content and the subjective experience, between life and faith. That's linked with anxiety for faith to grow. To grow means combining what is unchanging with that which changes and must necessarily change. Growth has its constant moments and its changeful ones. I need to seek out the constant moments, with hope in my heart, but I must also discover the changes faith can undergo. So that I don't dash from pillar to post, from nothing to nothing — nor do I set stiff into spiritual sclerosis, Phariseeism and legalism. But for me, faith is a form of love. If I didn't trust you, if I believed and trusted in nothing and nobody, life would be unbearable. In faith and trust I recognise the value of the other person; in faith in God I recognise his absoluteness. I arrive at a more profound conception of faith, though, through love than by these other approaches (at least, that is my goal): "though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13.2). You yourself know, from the arts, how poverty-stricken is "knowledge gained by reason alone" (if such a thing exists!). You yourself have experienced real inward knowledge, acquired through complete understanding. The path to faith through love, in love and for love, is something of a similar approach.

Yes, your diagnosis of the errors in the mind of those who do not believe in God was quite right, but I would not like to hurt their feelings — that would indeed be doing faith a disservice. I will only agree with you, with rejoicing, that God is Emmanuel, that is, the God of our faith is God truly present, at the same time transcendent and immanent: above us (as absolute and objective reality) and also within us, with us, among us, behind us and before us (more essentially us than we are ourselves). He is fullness, so that all our ideas and concepts are but partially true (they are erroneous, too, at times), always fall short, and therefore are always open to more and newer — asymptotic — attempts to come closer. This is what we call the divine mystery, or God constantly "drawing close" (though it is we who draw closer to Him, isn't it?). [. . .]

Your
Father J.

14.5.82

My Josef,

Thank you for your letters — I still owe you an answer. For the moment, being at liberty robbed me of the chance to meditate. I shall be writing, as soon as I can go forward "along our path". For the moment what sticks in my mind is the image of the fork, the branching of the ways between the human and the divine. I am on the human branch, I see the divine one, but cannot experience it. And yet! There is something I must confess.

. . . I did so want to bring you your gift on Maundy Thursday — it is one of your great days, and I did so want to give you pleasure. Yet at the same time I had something selfish in mind — I don't know how to tell you, without feeling ashamed. When friends ask me what was the worst thing in jail, there

are so many possible answers: the cold, the hunger, the loneliness . . . but I think that worst of all was the coarseness. After I got home, what I needed most was the feeling of cleanliness, purity. Cleanliness takes many forms, and although you cannot know it, you made it possible for me to experience the purity of faith.

I felt like a parasite at Mass in the cathedral. There were a few elderly priests round me, and I could see you; the ritual as such did not move me, but I could see that you were moved. Forgive me, I am a curious Eve. But thanks to you I was able to wash away so much of the filth that imprisonment pressed on me. So you see where things stand. [. . .]

Greetings!
Eva

My dear Eva,

Yesterday was one of the loveliest feasts — the Ascension of our Lord. You surely know it from art rather than life, but that doesn't matter. There are two paths: that of art, and that of faith. The apostles "looked steadfastly toward heaven", and the "men in white apparel" said, "why stand ye gazing up to heaven?" Then they returned gladly to their daily life. It is true that my gaze is not upwards all the time, but even the horizontal view of things here below is no always as compassionate as it should be. I am upset by the one, as by the other. And there is yet another reason why I write to you today.

You see, you felt the purity of our Maundy Thursday in the cathedral — I am so grateful that you came, a gift even more precious than the bell you brought. You say, rightly, that purity takes many different forms. And I must say that this is the feeling I get when we write to each other. Not that this is pure faith — we have not got so far, yet; but it is a deep, calm purity. I have just been reading Teilhard de Chardin:

> I have often met with people whose ideas and way of life would have placed them in the opposite camp. According to all the rules, mistrust, if not repulsion, should have been felt. Yet at first sight we felt such warm sympathy (instead of chilly mistrust), such sympathy as grows and lives for ever between comrades in arms. All the rules suggested that we should be enemies, yet at first sight we felt such warm sympathy as between brothers. Why? Simply because they and I, each in his own way, were trying to help and unite our Earth. We all felt that our contradictions were of minor importance, not at all permanent, something that time would put right, and it would disappear. What was important was the knowledge that from then on we would meet in an atmosphere and in the light of the same ideals.

So, you see, I have set no full stop to our dialogue. I can see that it is not easy for you to talk about the "faith" — and in that sense, it is not easy for me, either. But the "fork" you write about is not quite as you see it, either. It is rather a question of joined vessels — for me they are absolutely joined! The divine without the human is an abstraction, while the human without the divine has lost something, has lost many dimensions, many values, and much to look forward to. That we humans have never fulfilled what we could is a call for serious and ever renewed discussion. [. . .]

Your J.
13.9.82

My dear Josef,

I am in a strange mood: when one is directly threatened, perhaps the frontiers are clearly marked, one's thoughts are clear and unalloyed. Now, set free, I seem to be looking for complications which — since everything is so confused and contrary — I find difficult to deal with.

I must just tell you what occurred to me as I thought over your last two letters. . . .

You distinguished between several concepts, step by step: the absoluteness of man, the absolute in man, the relatively "human" absolute and the absolute Absolute of God. You wrote: "If it is possible to speak of the absoluteness of man, then I can — *a fortiori* — speak of the absoluteness of the existence of God. In Him absolute and absoluteness are one". Thus, God is the absolute Absolute. And — since man is made in the image of God — in man something of the divine absolute is to be found. Fair enough. . .

When I told you I had a sense of the absolute, I meant that I feel able to trace in myself the degree and the existence of that which enables man to "transcend" his normal life, that which we may call "god within us". This is where the ways of the human and the divine fork: my interest goes no

further than to man (and thus to myself), while the divine absolute of those who believe in God goes beyond the bounds of human existence.

When I think about God, I really try to determine the origin of God, and I can feel two gods: the one man has been imagining for millions of years, the "god within us", and the one which in the mind of His believers represents the essential value of values, that which was, is and ever more will be, whatever happens to man — a fundamental value which exists, objectively, outside man. I can imagine both these gods, but not as reality: simply as ideas in men's minds. The world, for me, is determined by man alone. And God is a subjective value in the mind of men, not an objective existence outside that mind. It is what man thinks about God, what he feels and experiences as ennobling, it is part of our culture and civilisation, it is also something unknown, a mystery, but always within the context of the human mind. And when I use the words "god" or "divine", it is simply applying a name, which could just well be any other.

There is no other way of referring to the absolute objectively existing God: he is GOD. Yet just using His name does not bring me any closer to faith in Him. And that's the real point. [. . .]

Eva

[. . .]

My dear Josef,

Anyone who relies on man for his attitude has no certainty in anything. This uncertainty, this constant movement of the search, is full of anxiety but it also provokes, questions the most fundamental things. A person can find certainty for himself only by ceaselessly confronting the changing world; and when in that striving to be part of the world and yet remain himself he gets a sudden glimpse of reality, he may find that he is wrong, and his uncertainty will be all the greater. Or he may experience such violent change in the world, unexpectedly, and find himself back at the beginning again in his search.

If one believes in God, one has certainty; and one is never alone. Man without God, though, finds himself terribly alone in the face of the world. In times of stress I found myself freeing myself as an individual, as the only viable way to knowledge and to action. So it is individualism that I profess, that I confess, and what I mean here by individualism is the naked human being, with no carapace to protect him (neither God nor the human crowd), and his willingness to be active in the world. It is both an adventure and a torment; the world punishes the bold for what they take to be arrogance, and the bold in return feel that they too help the ungrateful world to move and to know itself. This is leaving oneself open to a degree I have never seen surpassed.

If I have no god, what have I that is firm, clear, to be guided by? Looking at the world and all the terrible things that happen in it, the world tells me that God does not exist. There is only man, living at his own expense and by his own endeavour. The terrible yet beautiful world of man. Yet where, if this is my grim view of the world, do I get my thirst for life? From what fundamental standpoint do I decide what is good and what is evil? What can I see in human beings that is optimistic enough for them to interest me? Where is the mystery of the world that I am always talking about, and that takes the place, for me, of your God? [. . .]

When I look at the extraordinarily varied existence of the human race, alternating tropical heat with the ice ages, the civilisations that rose and fell, the laborious toiling forward from the Stone Age — then, besides the amazing sight of evolutionary changes and leaps, what I see is something that has accompanied man always and still is with him: the fact that man has never succeeded in destroying man. There was the Stone Age — and now we are here. We are here now — and there will be something after us. Civilisations passed away when they had exhausted their opportunities, and new civilisations arose beside them. In the course of this succession of civilisations man created his moral code, a code for which there has always been, even to our own day, someone who saw and retreated from evil. You call this human inclination to the good the voice of God, a proof that God Is. Forgive me, but the idea of Man always finding within the mass of humanity and the convolutions of history some way out so that humanity is not destroyed — that seems to me just as magnificent. [. . .]

From your last letter I could feel how harmonious your life is, how firmly based, and — seen by other eyes — how magnificent. God is a refuge from uncertainty. God is a refuge from filth. Sometimes I have the feeling that I am knee-deep in filth, and like a creature that has only its own skin to protect it, and to proffer. I can only retreat towards equally helpless fellow creatures —

or to you, strong in your faith. Now you can say that God thus reaches out to me, and you would be right. For, as you wrote, and as I have somewhat rewritten from the Psalmist's original, deep calleth unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts. Not only does man call unto God, but man comes into contact with man.

Thus I greet you,

Eva

[. . .]

Prague, 19.12.82

As you see, my dear Eva, I am back in Prague again, and can go on with our dialogue — although not without interruptions, as you know, due to the abnormalities of our situation. Well, I am so accustomed to them that they simply seem ridiculous. [. . .]

When I wrote that I thought you had "parted with ideology", in the back of my mind I distinguished between Marx, Marxism and Marxist (or the so-called Marxist) ideology. But you answered that you would not say that you had "parted with" ideology, and a little further you say that . . . "the ideological way of thinking falls away from a thoughtful mind, quite naturally; it does not have to be given up, because it only gets hold of those minds that do not think enough." I do not know how you let it get hold of you, but I do not believe that it fell away from you automatically, as it were. I believe, on the contrary, that it cost you a great deal of thought, a great struggle. I liked your remark that even the opponents of Marxism may be guilty of ideological thinking. I accept your statement that Marxism is part of your cultural background, that "Marx's *Capital* taught you to think, his essays taught you to write". And that the 19th century was your first, elementary, school, as it were. Yet I think, myself, that the fact that someone knows the works of Marx, or has him as part of his cultural background, does not necessarily make him a Marxist, just as you did not become a Stendhalist nor do you preach the gospel of Dostoyevsky, although both have left their mark on you. You went further — as you yourself admit.

My development was different — if I may be allowed to confess my own cultural background, I was given a thorough classical education, and to this day I am enchanted by the Greek lyric poets and especially by Greek drama. But that did not make me a philologist, but a theologian — and that opened before me a literature almost 2,000 years old. When communism came to our country I felt it was my moral duty to become thoroughly acquainted with the works of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin. At that time there was only one critical edition of the works of Marx and Engels in the University Library, that of Ryazanov, and I spent three weeks absorbed in it — not that any other living soul showed any interest at all! I was writing a thesis on Marxism and religion, a thesis that was not accepted, for political reasons. I praised Marx so highly that one of my judges found it too much. I was particularly fascinated by his *Jugendschriften*. *Capital* did not attract me, because I knew too little about the economic situation of England during the 19th century. Engels seemed to me a clever publicist, but Lenin wounded my tendency to try to understand my enemy, and my dislike of bludgeoning arguments. Stalin's brochure appeared to me as clever, but naïve and rather unprincipled. Our native writers (Hrubý-Vlk, Nejedlý etc.) made me feel unhappy and worried. To complete my "cultural background" I must mention Růžena Vacková, to whom I owe a wartime seminar on the history and theory of art that was excellent. And so, my dear Eva, I don't think we are so far apart in our ideas, there is no ideological "strip-tease" and I fall neither for ideology nor for anti-ideology. If the things of God do not come between us, why should human matters divide us? [. . .]

Your

Josef

Prague, 27.12.82

Dear Eva

[. . .] In one of your letters you wrote, "Looking at the world, and all the terrible things that happen in it, the world tells me that God does not exist." It tells me, on the contrary, that God does exist, otherwise this world would long ago have ceased to exist. Of course I — again like you — also see in this world much that is fine and beautiful, admirable and incomprehensible — and that again makes me feel sure that God does exist. That in all the horrors, the evil forces, the changes and uncertainties, the misery and terror, an order prevails; an order that ensures survival, beauty; an order that tells us to rejoice and be glad, and much more; an order that is the expression of a mysterious Presence and gives the world its final meaning, its truth, its reality. [. . .]

I do not feel horrified as I look at the world you describe. Sometimes I look at it coldly, sometimes with sympathy, sometimes critically and sometimes humbly and even with love. It doesn't always work out, and I am never so sure that my senses and my reason are functioning with precision. My experience as one who believes in God is more complicated than yours, because in addition to all those human uncertainties I ask myself what is God's place in all this. It is not what you think: "if one believes in God, one has certainty." Indeed no! One has uncertainty, made even worse by the incomprehensibility of Love, Wisdom and Strength. Of course what you say further on is true: "one is never alone" — and even better said: "God is a refuge from filth." That is an observation worthy of a great theologian! So you, too, are at an "ideological crossroads"!

May God (or the god) of the absolute, The Absolute, no longer haunt you! God is an incomprehensible mystery, yet He became man. He does not force us, he does not ravish us, he does not teach us, he does not brainwash us — he simply gives himself, devotes himself to us in infinite love. This is laying Himself open far more than the human being who moves the world, as you put it. [. . .]

You go on, "Yet where, if this is my grim view of the world, do I get my thirst for life? From what fundamental standpoint do I decide what is good and what is evil? What can I see in human beings that is optimistic enough for them to interest me? Where is the mystery of the world that I am always talking about, and that takes the place, for me, of your God?"

Each question lovelier than the next. I could not have formulated my questions to you better! Indeed, I would have been afraid to press you so hard. You yourself give the answers in two ways. First, the question you go on to put: "If I have no God, what have I that is firm, clear, to be guided by?"' And then, your evolutionary theory of man and god (not God). Well, I must say that the second answer does not seem convincing, to me. Here you remained faithful to your "Marxist schooling". This is a bit of "historical materialism". From the paleontological point of view it has long been refuted. And what of the theological aspect?

As far as I know, Marx never spoke of God, but criticised religion as a social phenomenon. In order to keep his clients, his father had become a Protestant, but only *pro forma*: at home they joked about his "conversion". Nevertheless Marx's criticism should still be taken seriously: he was looking at the Prussian Protestantism and the vague Catholicism of the late 19th century. But his atheism and "pan-economism" offered no real solution.

The appropriate scientific schools have already dismissed, one by one, the ideas Engels put forward about the origin of the idea of God, the origin of religion, and of Christianity in particular. Lenin did speak of God, but it always led him to hysterical nonsense.

Yesterday an idea on the "dialectical method" struck me, so you must listen to the outcome: We were reading from the Epistle to the Colossians (3, 12-21). You can find it for yourself, there is no need for me to quote in full. Take it as the thesis, and here is the antithesis:

> Whatever you do, show no mercy or kindness, humility is something the priests have invented to make you amenable, charity is counter-revolutionary, patience is already exhausted. Be intolerant, and forgive nothing. Above all, prize not charity but class hatred, etc. etc.

Where will this anti-gospel lead us? Where has it led and is it leading? But there remains the third law of dialectics: the negation of negation. What can the negation of this demonical negation be? A vague humanism? Christianity robbed of its essence? Militant atheism? Nihilism? Murder or suicide? I leave the question open . . .

But I clasp your hand sincerely and joyfully, Eva, and wish you Godspeed on your journey!

Josef

Father Zvěřina writes to New Slovak Cardinal

One of the four new Cardinals from Eastern Europe recently appointed by the Vatican is Cardinal Jozef Tomko, from Slovakia (see Chronicle *section, pp. 336-37, for further de-*