

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 re-

mained 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 demonic 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-

tails). *Father Josef Zvěřina, the distinguished Czech Catholic theologian, extracts from whose correspondence are published above, wrote to him in Rome to congratulate him. He also wrote a letter to Katolické noviny (Catholic News), the officially published Catholic weekly in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, to complain that it had made no mention of the elevation of a Slovak to the rank of Cardinal. His letter was not published.*

Letter to Cardinal Tomko

Your Eminence,
I write to you in the Czech language, since this is a familiar and customary form between our nations, because I am overwhelmed with joy. A Cardinal who is a Slovak! In this year of Sts Cyril and Methodius you have become the head of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. What a sign of the times! We understand it well and detect in this the activity of the Holy Spirit. Our Pentecost this year was a great event. We celebrated more devoutly than ever — with great expectation of the power of love, which guarantees eventual victory over the government of atheist hatred and terror.

We call on the Holy Spirit and for the intercession of Mary and Sts Cyril and Methodius to help you in your work. Remember in your apostolic work our Czech and Slovak nations, which suffer the heat and burden of the day for the sake of the kingdom of justice, peace and love.

Yours in the Faith,

Josef Zvěřina
Prague, 28 May 1985

Letter to the editors of Katolické noviny

Every success of your nation fills me and many of my friends with joy as we welcome the recognition of such ability in our fraternal nation and even more in our brothers in the faith of Sts Cyril and Methodius. It is therefore with painful surprise that I must state that *Katolické noviny* has managed to gloss over the fact that a Slovak has become a Cardinal. And yet a son of your nation has been called to contribute to the building of Christ's Kingdom!

The reason for this silence is of course known to me. But I cannot help remembering how the Poles reacted to the election of their compatriot to the Apostolic seat of Peter. Even the Polish government reacted with dignity. Here, however, our ways are different. Recently one of our church dignitaries said, "We play only second fiddle." Well this time — not even that! And when they do play, it's only the prescribed part — and the chords sound false.

I would like to congratulate you on the extent of the religious and editorial freedom you seem to enjoy. My real congratulations, however, go to the Slovak church and nation which have borne such a great son. Our joy is without geographical and ideological limit.

Let the spirit of courage and wisdom guide our and your Cardinal Jozef Tomko for the good of the church and the Slovak nation.

Josef Zvěřina
Prague, 28 May 1985