CHAPTER 1

Why Roger Garaudy Still Matters

Introduction—Marxism and Christianity

This book sets out to analyse the project to establish the mutual dependence of Marxism and Christianity espoused, for a time, by a leading French intellectual of the twentieth century, Roger Garaudy: to take Garaudy's project seriously as the basis of a future relationship between Marxism and Christianity. I believe that this investigation is of deep and persistent importance, for three reasons.

First, I agree with one leading scholar of Marxism that religion is a deep and enduring part of humanity which is highly likely to continue at least into the near future (McLellan 1987, 5). This is despite the fact that pinning down a precise definition of religion has proved enduringly elusive. Religion is perhaps not unique in being gifted with almost as many definitions as there are people who have tried to define it (Smith 1998, 281). Scholars have variously sought to define religion: either functionally, in terms of its capacity to meet fundamental social and individual human needs (Arnal 2000, 24–25), ostensibly by practices and demonstrations (Spiro 1966, 87); or by a set of beliefs, however different between religions (Spiro 1966, 91), for example in a particular supernatural ontology or in a code of ethics, an approach that I suggest could be better described as a faith. Perhaps, as has even been argued for many decades, the whole attempt to define religion should be given up not just an intractable problem, but as one without any kind of solution at all (Ferré 1970, 4; Braun 2000). I am not willing to go down this defeatist path, but the alternative does appear to me to avoid insisting on one definition, and instead recognises an 'anti-essentialist, anti-hegemonic and multi-dimensional approach' (Platvoet and Molendijk 1999, ix), that is, the immense variety and complexity of religious

phenomena and the need for analysis that draws on different perspectives and academic disciplines. It may not therefore be necessary to reach a particular definition of religion.

Difficulties of definition notwithstanding, there can be fewer issues of importance for the future of civilisation as a whole than the choice of religious faith and political ideology. Whether the claim that 'At the core of every culture and every civilisation lies its religion' (Swidler and Mojzes 2000, 1) is fair, it is certainly plausible to suggest that 'if we wish to understand human life in general and our specific culture and history, it is vital to gain an understanding of religion and its role' (Swidler and Mojzes 2000, 1). It also seems right to observe that, at least in Western countries, 'at times of political and economic turmoil, the Bible and theology become favoured zones for debate' (Boer 2014, 28). Moreover, Boer's further point—that the rationalist anti-religious position of dogmatic atheists is indissolubly linked with a Western economic and political dominance that he alleges is being eclipsed (Boer 2014, 38)—at the very least places faith at centre stage in a combat between economic systems. At most, it may eventually involve the identification of particular faiths with economic systems themselves, as Max Weber (1906 [2001]) argued. So, it is short-sighted for the Left to ignore, or worse, reject religions, as this will result in the political Right exercising domination within them. And indeed, this has arguably been exactly the trajectory of the Left in recent times, to a lesser or greater extent, as writers have tried to show for Australia (Maddox 2005) and perhaps above all the United States (George 2008).

Second, Christianity and Marxism were the two leading doctrines of the twentieth-century West that promised a better life, whether in a spiritual or a temporal hereafter. So what shall I take for the meaning of 'Christianity'? A religion, but without unanimity of belief, doctrine, or practice; an almost Wittgensteinian 'game,' with a multitude of different institutional settings over history. Certainly, 'a religion such as Christianity is not merely a collection of ideas and beliefs; it also includes social, institutional and economic elements, often difficult to separate clearly from one another' (Boer 2014, 168). To focus exclusively on the Bible as the exclusive revelation of God in the world, or on the preoccupations of individual theologians, is a very different task than to study Christianity as a faith through history. Consequently, although it has often been theologians who have spoken for Christianity in the Marxist-Christian dialogue, or who have sought to adopt elements of Marxism, theology is only one part of Christianity. There is wider ground to be covered and I wish to include all those who identify as Christians: not only Catholics and Protestants of the main Churches as part of Christianity, but those outside these Churches as well.

Likewise, Marxism cannot—or at least I believe ought not—be reduced to Marx's own thought as evidenced by the original texts and their interpretation. This is a contention for which there is support from at least one leading theological analysis of Marxism (Lash, 1981), as well as from many other scholars, both within and outside the Marxist tradition (e.g. Labedz 1962; Girardi 1966; Kolakowski 1981; Molyneux 1983; Carver 2011; Boer 2019). Indeed, the words of Marx have even been described as 'unimportant' for Marxism (Turner 1983, 3), which may be regarded as understandable, given the diversity of Marxist thought and practice (Gouldner 1980; Kolakowski 1981). It was Pope Paul VI who noted that whereas, for many, Marxism was class struggle, one-party rule, and atheism, 'At other times . . . it presents itself in a more attenuated form, one also more attractive to the modern mind: as a scientific activity, as a rigorous method of examining social and political reality, and as the rational link, tested by history, between theoretical knowledge and the practice of revolutionary transformation' (Pope Paul VI 1971, 33). At its core, however, what is generally understood is the capacity to understand history generally, the primacy of work, and perhaps above all, 'the essentially transitory nature of capitalism' (Sève 2004, 8).

In the twenty-first century Christianity still retains its followers in the billions, whilst Marxism has largely retreated to the academy. Yet both doctrines remain of contemporary significance, although in the short term at least, it has been claimed, albeit perhaps contentiously, that 'few would dispute that there is a better future for religion than for Marxism' (McLellan 1987, 172). If by the late twentieth century it was already being argued that Marxism had become 'as bewilderingly pluralistic as has Christianity' (Lash 1981, 26), perhaps in the twenty-first century it really is sufficient for a person to be 'deeply inspired by Marx' (Ojoy 2001, 343) or 'to think with Marx' (Sève 2008, 1) to be labelled a Marxist. At least in this sense, Marxism has proved more enduring than the regimes that professed to adhere to its tenets, albeit only in the academy, and even there, it is not widespread. But as one scholar who sought to be both a Christian and a Marxist was well qualified to remark, 'fashion is no guide to truth' (Collier 2001, 1).

And what of the relationship between them, which has been described as 'the tradition of engagement between Marxism and theology' (Boer 2014, 28)? Neither mutual amity nor enmity should be presumed. To start with two analogies. Roland Boer says that:

> I have come to see the relation between Marxism and theology as a difficult and tempestuous love affair, with a good mix of

> lust, affection, argument and profound differences of opinion. Even though they may go their own way for years at a time, they always return to renew their engagement. (Boer 2014, xi)

I see their historical relationship somewhat more conventionally as two wary boxers in the ring: familiar opponents, each seeking to land a knockout blow, but never succeeding, at the most hoping for the end of the match when they might put aside their enmity, but with a fickle audience that leans first this way, then that (significantly, there are only two parties in Boer's metaphor), occasionally applauding both sides as blows rain in, yet increasingly otherwise preoccupied during the match.

Such a view is not uncommon: from the Philippines comes the 'recognition of a perception of mutual antagonism' (Ojoy 2001, 1), echoing the view that for the most part it has been a relationship between 'two mutually hostile social forces' (Hornosty 1976, 1):

> since its inception Marxism has appeared to be the very antithesis of Christianity. It seemed clear that its atheism scorned God and religion. Its materialism denied the soul and after-life. Its determinism negated free will. Its revolutionary strategy promoted class antagonisms and violent overthrow of the state. Its socialism would take away the right to private property, and with it, all incentive to work. (McGovern 1980, 1).

So, it was 'this mutual regard for one another as a deadly virus that enabled the Christian-Marxist dialogue to have its own history of being repudiated in both camps' (Ojoy 2001, 4). There even seemed to be an unbridgeable gulf between a critical theology and what has been characterised as 'the critique of heaven and earth as projected by Karl Marx' (Van Leeuwen 1974, 262). Whilst one author could suggest that the dialogue 'remains a permanent fixture on the horizon of mankind's hopes' (Vree 1974, 50), another observed more soberly that 'there must be a reconciliation, or both will perish' (Lauer 1968, 48). To put it more mildly, 'The mutual suspicion of an irreducible atheism on one side and complicity with the rulers of the world on the other have not helped matters' (Boer 2007, 4). Cholvy and Hilaire (1988) went further, and blamed 'the love affair of many radical Catholics with Marxism' (McLeod 2007, 11), amongst other factors, for the decline of the Catholic Church, not just in France but globally. 'The results included bitter internal divisions, a weakening of the rhythms and disciplines of Catholic life, and disillusion when the unrealistic hopes of those

years inevitably came to nothing' (McLeod 2007, 11; Cholvy and Hilaire 1988, 287–330). The persistence of the Catholic faith and the eclipse of liberation theology in Latin American countries might suggest that it may be unwise to base any policy on this argument, but it is evidently both sincerely held and worth consideration.

On the other hand, it could be argued that if adherents of these two very significant sets of ideas could never work together on anything other than the most temporary basis of dialogue or an uneasy, temporary alliance possible, and that any closer relationship could only be harmful to either or both, then the prospect of any further alternative society would then have to rest on one or the other, or as seems currently likely, neither, but definitely not on any close relationship between them. Their mutual downfall could even perhaps be inevitable.

Others have investigated the relationship between Christianity and Marxism with a more synthetic inclination—most notably Andrew Collier (2001), Alastair MacIntyre (1953 [1968], 1995 [2008]), John Macmurray (1933, 1935, 1938), David McLellan (1987), and Denys Turner (1983). It has even been pointed out that that between Marxism and Christianity 'there are certain similarities in their respective patterns of unity and diversity' (Lash 1981, 35)—cults and schisms, loyalty to certain texts, and internationalism, to name only a few. If Christianity is without doubt a significant continuing part of the history of the world, and if Marxism represents at least one serious attempt to understand how the world works, then solutions to this impasse are surely still worth serious study. But there is very little work in the Anglosphere on whether Continental thought, Garaudy in particular, has been a different or in any way more satisfactory attempt to solve the same potential impasse.

Who Was Roger Garaudy?

André Dupleix pointed out that one does not dialogue with ideas, not with Marxism, capitalism, or Christianity, but with people with beliefs, who must therefore listen and make themselves heard (Dupleix 1971, 11). I therefore argue that, thirdly, this subject is worth studying because of Garaudy himself. Roger Garaudy was a principal exponent of both Marxism and Christianity, yet his project to bring the two into a closer relationship has received scant attention. There are several probable reasons. One may be because Garaudy's project emerged in the shadow of an immediately prior, very public, involvement in Marxist-Christian dialogue; and it ended when it eventually failed to satisfy its

author. The reasons for Garaudy's conversion to Islam and its dramatic eventual consequences for his reputation have been discussed elsewhere (Fleury 2004; Minard and Prazan 2006; Prazan and Minard 2007; Minard 2019). I will myself address his conversion in chapter six, although from the standpoint of why the project ended, as this book is not primarily to tell the story again in more detail or from a different perspective. No doubt, however, biographical information and background is especially important in the context of an individual who was frequently portrayed by his numerous critics as changing his views with such alarming frequency that his commitment to any of them could reasonably be brought into doubt simply on the grounds of their lack of durability. Garaudy's trajectory was certainly one of significant change in views over time. Yet he also had the experience of living through what were undoubtedly tumultuous times: in his own view, more change took place in the twentieth century than in the previous five thousand years of written history (Garaudy 1989, 9).

In a long life, the periods when he considered himself as both a Christian and a Marxist were quite brief. Roger Garaudy was born in Marseille on 17 July 1913. From his childhood, he says in his autobiography, he derived inspiration from the love of his mother and grandmother (Garaudy 1989, 13). He further says that his identification as a Christian at the age of sixteen (Garaudy 1973a, 398)—as a Protestant, more accurately—was a reaction, or perhaps a compromise, with the Catholicism of his mother's side of the family and the atheism of his father, whose faith was shattered by the First World War. After finishing several terms in a local lycée, Garaudy transferred to the prestigious Lycée Henri IV in Paris (McClain 1972, 162). The young Garaudy held a strong Christian faith: he led a young Christian organisation in Marseille as a student. This did not prevent him, however, from joining the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) in 1933. On the contrary, 'In such a context, he could not conceive of limiting the love he felt to his own immediate circle. Rather, he sought to transpose this feeling into a great project in which all humanity could share' (Fleury 2004, 94).

He was not alone: it has been contended that the historically most outstanding thinkers of French Marxism in the twentieth century, Roger Garaudy and Louis Althusser—and Henri Lefebvre also—came to Marx from a religious background (Sève 2008, 402). At university in Aix-en-Provence, Garaudy attended the last lectures of Maurice Blondel and also mingled with evangelical theologians enamoured of Karl Barth and Søren Kierkegaard, going on to receive his agrégation in philosophy at Strasbourg in 1936. He then became a philosophy teacher at a lycée in the Tarn region. His rapid rise in the equally ascendent PCF then saw him become an aide to the party's secretary general, Maurice Thorez, the originator of the policy of the 'outstretched hand' towards

French working-class Christians (Mauriac 1936, 1; Bustros 1976, xiii). At this time Garaudy considered himself both aCommunist and a militant Christian, so his writing from these early years may be of more than tangential interest for this book.

Three years later came World War II, and Garaudy was conscripted. He distinguished himself by his bravery, earning the Croix de Guerre with two citations during the fall of France in 1940. In September of that year, after trying to re-establish the PCF clandestinely in the Tarn, he was arrested and deported to the Djelfa camp in Algeria. Released in 1943, he worked briefly for Radio France in Algiers, and then for the communist journal *Liberté*. It was in 1945 that he wrote his autobiographical novel *Antée* (Garaudy 1945), which was followed by another the following year (Garaudy 1946). Once back in France, his political career took off: in 1945 he was elected as a provisional member of the PCF Central Committee, and as a full member in 1947, already occupying 'the first rank (or almost) amongst the theoreticians of the Party' (BEIPI 1952, 2). He became a provisional member of the Politburo of the PCF in 1956 and, finally, a full member in 1961 (Robrieux 1984, 253). Electorally, he served as PCF deputy for Tarn (1945–51) in the provisional National Assembly and then the first Assembly of the Fourth Republic, actively participating in the miners' strikes of 1947–48, then as PCF deputy for the Seine (1956–58) (Assemblée Nationale 2020), eventually becoming vice president of the National Assembly, and then briefly, the PCF senator for Paris (1959–62). With the expulsion of the PCF from the National Assembly, Garaudy quit professional politics to lecture in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Clermont-Ferrand from 1962, allegedly 'over the protests of the faculty' (Hughes 1970, 26) but left after disagreements with Michel Foucault, who detested him, 'partly because of his Stalinist past, partly because of his "soft" humanism' (Macey 2019, 110). He transferred to Poitiers, where he stayed until 1973 (Prazan and Minard 2007, 92).

Garaudy's political practice was intertwined with political theory. His rise to political prominence within the PCF was accompanied by an increasing intellectual dominance within the party. At some point—it is not clear exactly when, he himself says only 'some years' after joining the party (Garaudy 1975, 96)—Garaudy seems to have started to identify as an atheist and provider of intellectual support for Stalin against critics such as Arthur Koestler, André Marty, and Henri Lefebvre (Garaudy 1953, 1955a). In 1948 he published a study on Vatican policy towards communism (Garaudy 1948) and in the following year, he began a long association with Latin America with a tour and subsequent report to the PCF on prospects for revolution there (Bustros 1976, xiv). Having obtained his *doctorat ès lettres* in philosophy from the Sorbonne in

1953 with a thesis on the materialist theory of knowledge, examined by a jury chaired by Gaston Bachelard, he spent a year in the Soviet Union, at the end of which he defended another thesis, this time on 'Liberty' before the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Garaudy 1955).

Then, at the beginning of 1956, the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) occurred. It was little wonder that Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech denouncing Stalin's crimes shook Garaudy to his core; he recounted weeping uncontrollably at his desk as the revelations tumbled out and the images of Stalin were torn down (Garaudy 1989, 161). Garaudy himself then paid tribute to Khrushchev for having 'fundamentally challenged, in the eyes of the whole world, an image and method that have led a socialist regime to commit crimes against socialism' (Garaudy 1966 [1970, 19]) and for pointing out how dogmatic dialectical and historical materialism had been used ideologically to justify these crimes (Garaudy 1966 [1970, 17]). As he admitted, the events of 1956 were psychologically catastrophic. A decade later he confessed that:

> For a soul, the fear of death is the fear of losing its motives for living and acting: and there is no reason why one should not admit that for a moment, on the morrow of the Twentieth Congress, one understood just what this utter vital bewilderment could be. (Garaudy 1966 [1970, 18])

His sternest critic agreed:

> The effect on Roger Garaudy was devastating: was it then for these horrors that he had believed it necessary to repress the religious aspiration in himself? In what he himself called the vacillation of his communist faith, the road to Christian faith was re-opened. (Sève 2008, 402)

And, Sève intimates, so too was Garaudy's road away from Marxism. Certainly, the events of 1956 were of huge significance for Garaudy, as they were for every intellectual within the PCF and the widerCommunist movement. But unlike others (e.g. MacIntyre 1953 [1968]), Garaudy did not leave the PCF over the Hungarian invasion of the same year. For the time being at least, if the choice were between Soviet rule and the restoration of capitalism, Garaudy would support the former. It was perhaps little wonder, after more than two decades as a PCF loyalist, that 'his break with the Stalinist heritage, like his party's, was a slow and cautious process' (McClain 1972, 226).

From the collapse of Stalinism, however, Garaudy steadily emerged as 'one of the French Communist Party's leading theoreticians, a respected philosopher and authority on Hegel, and an author of dozens of scholarly works' (O'Keefe 1999, 31). Although he wrote few academic articles, Garaudy excelled in the book form. They included *La Liberté* (Garaudy 1955), his doctoral thesis from the Soviet Union, and also probably his most significant philosophical work during this period *Perspectives de l'homme* (Garaudy 1959 [1969]). In that work, the evolution of his thought in the direction of openness towards Christianity was already evident (Robrieux 1984, 253). He also published *Dieu est mort* (Garaudy 1962 [1970]), a study on Hegel. As if this were not sufficient, he also published critical aesthetics: *Du surréalisme au monde réel. L'itinéraire d'Aragon* (1961), *D'un Réalisme sans rivages. Picasso, St. John Perse, Kafka* (1963), and *Pour un réalisme due XX^{o} siècle. Dialogue posthume avec Fernard Léger* (1968).

Scholars suggested that Garaudy's aim after 1956 was to demonstrate 'how Marxism is not only a humanism but a theory of human liberation compatible with Judeo-Christian notions of emancipation' (Lewis 2005, 162), whilst at the same time noting his 'will to syncretism' (Prazan and Minard 2007, 99) and that the 'union of Marxism and Christianity [would] remain the great objective of Garaudy's life and work' (Bustros 1976, xiii). How differently these last words read in the light of Garaudy's eventual conversion to Islam.

One key point often lost in subsequent criticism of Garaudy was his 'broad reputation beyond the confines of the PCF as a party spokesman on ideological and cultural matters' (McClain 1972, 174), that 'his views carried weight well beyond party circles' (O'Keefe 1999, 31). He was in held in high repute as a philosopher during his period in the PCF—not just by Communists, but by significant Western philosophers outside, or almost outside, the movement. Notably for example by Jean-Paul Sartre, who in an exchange regarding existentialism and Marxism paid Garaudy the compliment of engaging with him as the intellectual voice of Marxism in France (Sartre 1960). Certainly 'It is really difficult today to convey the authority exercised by Roger Garaudy over the postwar years' (Prazan and Minard 2007, 53), but by way of further illustration, he was mentioned alongside such Marxist greats as György Lukács and Ernst Fischer as a 'critical luminary' (Versluys 1978, 608), whilst one Catholic theologian writer even referred to 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty to Mounier in the past, *to Garaudy himself*' (Sommet 1973, 543—my emphasis). Garaudy's own photographic album, from which he extracted priceless examples of his own fame (Garaudy 1985), is testimony to the extent of his travels, the breadth of his contacts (Sartre, Castro, Picasso, Ben Bella, Nasser, and Khrushchev, amongst many others) and the extent of his influence: 'his impact was massive and his

contribution substantive' (Swidler 1990, 35). No doubt his skill at languages in a pre-Internet age was part of his success.

But under the surface, all was not well within the PCF almost from the beginning. It was evident as the years passed that Garaudy was experiencing increasing difficulties with the party line. Intellectual debate had broken out throughout the PCF along with destalinisation, and Garaudy, and his principal ally, the poet Louis Aragon, soon found themselves confronted with ideological enemies not only outside the party, but within it. These included notably the anti-humanists Louis Althusser and his younger adherents such as Pierre Macherey and Étienne Balibar, but also those opposed to Marxist humanism and anti-humanism alike, such as Lucien Sève, Michel Verret, and Michel Simon (Pudal 2006, 55). Garaudy's critics rejected principally his adoption and development of 'Marxist humanism.'

The sequence of Garaudy's works during this subsequent period is an indication of his increasingly defensive intellectual focus: a biography of Karl Marx (1964), *Marxisme du XXe siècle* (Garaudy 1966 [1970]), *Le problème chinois* (Garaudy 1967), *Lénine* (Garaudy 1968a), *Peut-on être communiste aujourd'hui?* (Garaudy 1968b), reformulated as *Pour un modèle francais de socialisme* (Garaudy 1968c), and *Le grand tournant du socialisme* (Garaudy 1970). He also came in for internal criticism within the PCF for his enthusiastic support of Marxist-Christian dialogue, of which Garaudy was one of the leading Marxist participants during the 1950s and 1960s (Garaudy 1965 [1967]), in a party that has been described as riven with vanity and rivalry (Verdès-Leroux 1981, 54). After the death of his mentor Thorez, Garaudy found himself increasingly isolated politically from his comrades in the PCF. Disagreements were not only theoretical, about humanism and religion, but also practical, concerning attitudes towards the Soviet Union and the correct political path for the PCF (Garaudy 1968b). There was an increasing disparity of views between Garaudy and most PCF Central Committee members, not only in respect of relations between Christians and Marxists, and the status of faith itself within Marxism, but also his reluctance to continue to place the traditional proletariat at the centre of political action for Marxism in France (Garaudy 1970, 25–41). This became a gulf that was too wide to be bridged as Garaudy struggled, and eventually failed, to keep ideological control of the party. Finally, following his outspoken criticism of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, about which comrades in the party such as Sève and even the de facto leader Georges Marchais had remained tellingly silent, Garaudy was dramatically expelled from the PCF at the Nineteenth Party Congress, held at the Palais des Sports in Nanterre, in February 1970. He described the shock

of the event: 'for the first time in my life, I was tempted to suicide' (Garaudy 1975, 22).

His actual reaction was the opposite: to capitalise on his reputation as a public intellectual by explaining the events that had led to his expulsion (Garaudy 1970a, 1970b), and to call for more radical politics based on 'self-management' [*l'autogestion*] (Bustros 1976, xvii; Garaudy 1972, 1975) outside and beyond conventional political parties. Amongst his intellectual allies was the Abbé Pierre, who supported Garaudy much later when he became famous for Holocaust denial. The 1970s were undoubtedly a very difficult period for a man who had spent almost four decades inside an institution—the PCF—which although it had now rejected him, seemed to Garaudy now in apparently terminal decline. Confronted by the evident failure of Marxist practice, he invoked now a strong environmentalism, supported liberation theology and began to embrace a much wider religious perspective than hitherto. He eventually announced that he was a Christian.[1] His publications from the 1970s chart both the continued progress of his intellectual odyssey and the increasing importance of religion within his worldview. From his espousal of faith in humanity, and what has been described (Norris 1974, 11) as the integration of love, sin, and even grace into the Marxist perspective in *Reconquête de l'espoir* (Garaudy 1971), his enthusiastic adoption of revolutionary youth in *L'Alternative* (Garaudy 1972 [1976]), aesthetics in *Danser sa vie* (Garaudy 1973), to the personal expression of faith and policy which he concluded by announcing his Christianity in *Parole d'homme* (Garaudy 1975). Onward again to overtly religious political manifestos for the coming century: *Le projet espérance* (Garaudy 1976), a tour of worldwide human and religious development, *Comment l'homme devint humain* (Garaudy 1978), and finally the best-selling *Appel aux vivants* (Garaudy 1979).

However much sympathy for Islam and other religions is evident from these books, as late as 1980 Garaudy is reported as having answered a question as to whether he was already Muslim 'scathingly' and that Marxism remained his creed, adding that nothing that had happened intellectual or politically had shaken his view of the dangers of religion (Mekki 2012). Nor apparently of the merits and importance of feminism (Garaudy 1975, 29, 1981). For this book, the importance of his biography must be that which he left behind at this point in his writing and actions, not what lay ahead.

1 His conversion specifically to Catholicism, claimed by Collès (2014), was denied by his daughter in a post on the same blog.

Yet it is impossible to ignore his subsequent trajectory. For in fact, the position of a powerless Western Marxist left-wing intellectual outside the Communist Party, which for example eventually became that of his younger PCF colleague Lucien Sève—in fact, outside any party, as not for a moment did either of them consider joining the Socialists—was not one with which Garaudy himself could ever feel especially satisfied. Neither did standing for the Presidency of the Republic in 1981 bring any solace (Garaudy 1981a). Instead, for reasons that will be discussed in chapter six, Garaudy dramatically converted to Islam in 1982. From then on, everything changed. For his critics, his conversion to Islam was just one in a series of reversals and betrayals that eventually culminated in antisemitism and Holocaust denial. His change of beliefs was indicative of 'a certain breed of Western intellectuals who play with ideas and concepts just as they play golf or poker on a weekend . . . [and] shows how irrelevant political religious and moral issues have become to a certain intelligentsia that treats politics, religion and ethics as consumer goods' (Taheri 2007, n.p.). Garaudy himself strenuously denied the charge, as he had equally done almost three decades earlier when he proclaimed Marxist humanist credentials, and for much the same reason. Conversion to Islam, he maintained, was a change of community, not of faith, just as he had maintained earlier that Marxist humanism was a different, more likely way than Stalinism to achieve the same communist goal that he had always espoused.

As a Muslim, he adopted the name Ragaa; and once again he emerged as a force, this time as a prominent Muslim intellectual, continuing to support the Palestinian cause. Most notably he became embroiled in Holocaust denial after publishing a strongly anti-Zionist book *Les mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Garaudy 1995). For this he was in 1998 prosecuted by the French state, sentenced on 27 February 1998 for challenging crimes against humanity and racial defamation, and given a suspended jail sentence. In its judgement, the tribunal emphasised that 'far from being limited to a criticism of Zionism . . . Roger Garaudy has engaged in a virulent and systematic challenge to the crimes against humanity committed against the Jewish community' (European Court of Human Rights 2003).[2] Despite numerous appeals on his part, including to the European Court of Human Rights, his conviction was upheld. His reputation lay in tatters in France, and it has never recovered.

It would however certainly be a mistake to judge Garaudy's long period as a Muslim solely on the basis of Holocaust denial. He continued to make

2 See Garaudy v. France, case no. 65831/01 (4th section, 2003), accessed March 11, 2023, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-23829%22]}.

intellectual contributions—some of them quite radical, and consistent with his own previous contentions, on occasion startlingly so (Garaudy 1992), others much more conventionally Islamic, especially during the early years after his conversion (Garaudy 1981b, 1981c, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1987). As a result of these endeavours, he was widely appreciated, as well as applauded, in the Islamic world. The stark disparity of his reputation is illustrated by the comparison of a retold anecdote to the effect that French intellectuals would not even sit next to him in a café (Taheri 2007, n.p.), whilst during the same period Garaudy was invited to Tehran as a guest of the President, receiving honours reserved for visiting heads of state. In June 1999, Jordanian intellectuals named Garaudy 'the most important international cultural personality of the 20th Century,' whilst former Syrian Vice President Abdul-Halim Khaddam called Garaudy 'the greatest contemporary Western philosopher,' and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddhafi even called him 'Europe's greater philosopher since Plato and Aristotle' (Homa 2018, 42n). He eventually settled in Cordoba in Spain, living relatively quietly, and establishing a Foundation dedicated to research into Islamic influence in Spain.

Garaudy's death aged ninety-eight at Chennevières-sur-Marne, east of Paris, on 13 June 2012, during a period which can undoubtedly be characterised as one of deteriorating international relations between OECD countries and much of Islam, therefore predictably occasioned very different reactions in Paris and in the Islamic world. His story continues to generate strong, mainly adverse responses, amongst those few Western intellectuals who engage with him; in France, 'the figure of Roger Garaudy has sunk into oblivion very rapidly' (Michaël Prazan, personal communication, 28 March 2018). But on the contrary, his death occasioned respect in Islam (MEMRI 2012), his role in Holocaust denial especially noted. What few denied was either his ability to reach a wide audience through his writing, which enjoyed far more sales than his philosophical contemporaries, even Althusser or Foucault, let alone his capacity for controversy.

Very recently the faintest traces of revisionist appreciation of Garaudy may be discerned in France and even more widely. Adrien Minard delivered a paper on his conversion to Islam as part of a conference on the subject (Minard 2019), Roland Boer has reached back to his contribution to the Marxist-Christian dialogue of the 1960s (Boer 2019, 123), Gerard Ronge has presented Garaudy's theory of aesthetics from a Polish perspective (Garaudy 1963; Ronge 2019) whilst Didier Gauvin (2018) has written a thesis on Garaudy as a 'disruptive' French intellectual, presenting the case that even before his conversion to Islam, his refusal to adhere to 'conventional' Marxism and his support for

religious ideals marked him out as ideologically unacceptable to the majority of the strongly anti-clerical French intellectual Left (Gauvin 2018).

Organisation of the Book

I have chosen to write this book in eight chapters, including the Conclusion. This first chapter has set the scene, explained the issues involved, provided a biographical sketch of the author of this project concerning Christianity and Marxism, and explains how I shall go about the task.

Chapter two is a literature review, examining the existing literature on Garaudy, but focusing on what has been written about his Marxism, his Christianity and especially on that little written surrounding his concurrent espousal of both, seeking thereby to place both him and his work in historical and theological context.

The core of the book lies in the three succeeding chapters. Chapter three presents what Garaudy concluded of his work after leaving the PCF in one key text, that it was 'a project. That is to say the start of an action' (Garaudy 1976, 217), as evidenced in the evolution of his views through published books and articles, correspondence, and the media. It is this project, its components and construction, how it compares and contrasts with other work in the same tradition of engagement between Marxism and Christianity, perspectives on other religions, and its significance—past, present, and perhaps future—which is the core set of views that is the subject of this book. Some of the project I will argue was long established by the time he announced his renewed Christianity (Garaudy 1975). Other parts—not only in respect of his reasons for converting to Islam, common themes throughout his work, or observations about the past—can usefully be derived from his work even after he converted to Islam (e.g. Garaudy 1992).

Having established what the project is in general terms, the following two chapters focus in turn on the two key areas that Garaudy believed Christianity had most to offer Marxism: subjectivity and transcendence. A contemporary commentator recognised the importance that Garaudy attached to both in the Marxist-Christian dialogue: 'Garaudy specifies two themes in regard to which Christianity can amplify Marxism: transcendence and subjectivity. Man can contemplate his own destiny and project imaginatively future possibilities that qualitatively surpass his present constrictions' (Moellering 1971, 40). Throughout his work, Garaudy insisted on the importance of the role that both must play in the construction of socialist society (Bustros 1976, xv). The succeeding two chapters therefore address each of these in turn.

Chapter four analyses Garaudy's concepts of subjectivity and the individual, their connection with relativity and openness in his thought in the context of Marxist humanism and Christianity, and their importance for the consistency of Marxism with Christianity in Garaudy's thought. It also attempts to place Garaudy's approach to the individual and subjectivity in relation to both Marxism and Christianity in the context of the views of a range of other authors on the same subjects.

Chapter five likewise focuses on definitions of transcendence, Garaudy's own concept of the term, the role he believed it played in the consistency of Marxism with Christianity, and the relationship between Garaudy's own views and those of others, notably leading theologians who have grappled with this subject. Chapter five also therefore analyses the broader eschatological relationship between Christianity and Marxism that Garaudy espoused, and again how it compares to other writers on the same subject.

If Garaudy's intellectual odyssey had abruptly ended before his conversion to Islam, there would not be a need for the following chapters. But it dramatically did not, and so we have the advantage of a kind of having all of its author's subsequent views on which to draw as part of a critique, or even a contribution, to his project. The subsequent chapter six therefore reviews Garaudy's project in relation to his evident eventual dissatisfaction with it himself, the political issues that caused him to focus increasingly on Islam, his eventual conversion itself, and its consequences.

Garaudy left the task of his project in pieces on the floor. And yet, the possibility and even the need for consistency between Marxism and Christian faith, the task of building a faith-based alternative to capitalist hegemony, which Garaudy asserts is perhaps one of the major conditions of the transformation of the world and its survival (Garaudy 1975) remains as important as ever to the Left of politics and many of Christian faith. Few have taken up the task. In chapter seven I therefore go further, to present the questions, and cover the subject areas, both those that I contend Garaudy missed, and those that have come to light as a result of developments, both theological and political, since he converted to Islam. I seek too to elucidate the extent to which anyone seeking to establish the mutual dependence of contemporary Marxism and Christianity might provide different answers to those Garaudy himself gave. From this exchange I have boldly attempted to move Garaudy's project on from where he left it, to a position that may be more appropriate for a fresh audience and changed economic and political conditions. I will also make an attempt to identify and reflect upon the kind of intellectual coherence and strength for such a new mutual dependence that might reasonably be required to claim plausibility.

I then conclude the principal argument of this book. Did the failure of the project to establish the wide acceptance of mutual dependence between Christianity and Marxism have any practical significance? What is of contemporary relevance from the story of Garaudy's short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful project? Was there something of genuine and lasting worth—a combination of ideas, politics and personality—that we can glean from *taking Garaudy's project seriously*? Did Garaudy in fact throw away an achievement of great merit: a work in progress, for sure, but his own, and reach out, however understandably, to a ready-made alternative. Or did he simply stop attempting the impossible?

Reading Garaudy

This is not a straightforward task, for many reasons. In common with all historical writing, events at the time must be recalled. The comment that 'The popular misconception of communism which has formed a basis for much anti-communist propaganda—that human value must be sacrificed on the altar of the state—is the misconception Garaudy fights' (Ratliff 1975, 21) serves as a reminder to the political reality under which Garaudy wrote much of his work.

Secondly, Garaudy was not—and never claimed to be—an 'original' thinker, in the way that for example Ernest Bloch, Henri Lefebvre, or György Lukács might reasonably have be claimed to be. Whatever value lies in his work must be sought elsewhere than in originality: in its ability to synthesise the work of others, to persuade, or both. This results in a further problem with reading Garaudy, it must be admitted. On the one hand Garaudy read the work of others prolifically. His project, I will argue, created an original mutual dependence between Marxism and Christianity. He never hesitated not only to refer to and promote the work of others, but to weave them into a view of the world that he, at least, regarded as consistent. He was in that sense a compulsive system-builder. Those on whom he drew ranged from Rabindranath Tagore, whose commitment to love and beauty as proof of the divine future of humanity Garaudy celebrated (Garaudy 1935) to Karl Barth, Maurice Blondel, Ernest Bloch, Karl Rahner, Josef Hromádka, Jan Lochman, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Lacroix, Emmanuel Mounier, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, amongst others. Jürgen Moltmann wrote to him that Garaudy's project between socialism and Christianity 'is also my own 'Project'' (Moltmann 1977, n.p.). On the other hand, especially during his 'prophetic period' (Da Costa Pinto 2017, 451) during which he developed his project, he was writing polemically, and certainly not academically. He did not—in his defence, perhaps wisely, given his

audience—provide overmuch in the way of academic references to others' work, or even indexes. But whilst even some academic texts from the 1970s often do not quite match up to contemporary standards for referencing or even plagiarism, Garaudy scarcely excelled in that department even amongst his contemporaries. One reviewer lamented that 'a work of this magnitude [Garaudy 1979] deserved a rich bibliography, but it is missing' (Thomas 1980, 200), whilst a less tolerant more recent reviewer commented acidly that the bibliography of one of his books [Garaudy 1990] was confined to his own work (Poulat 1991). Assembling intellectual contributions to his project of establishing mutual dependence between Marxism and Christianity is therefore of necessity something of an exercise in detection, comparison, and analysis, both from the Marxist and the Christian perspective.

Conclusion

Conviction for Holocaust denial may, and arguably should, prevent any wholescale posthumous rehabilitation of Roger Garaudy in the West. It must also be recognised that Garaudy's later conversion to Islam and involvement in Holocaust denial has overshadowed his earlier reputation in the West as a radical of immense note. It also no doubt goes some way to explaining why his earlier work is now largely ignored.

My central argument will therefore be this: if Garaudy's earlier views were plausible as a position that others could adopt, then they should be examined on their own merits, despite the fact that their author subsequently changed his mind. Many individuals do change their minds (Pettinger 2013). And as human lives lengthen, spanning longer periods of socioeconomic change as well as more events of personal biography, we should perhaps expect more evidence of individuals doing so, even on fundamental issues. But equally, no one is obliged to agree with them when they do. So, was the collapse of his project inevitable, and if so, was it so for Garaudy alone? Does his experience provide some form of guidance, or even proof, of the inevitable failure of such attempts? Or alternatively, was there any direction in which he could have turned that might have placed in question his own perceived necessity to convert? Was there merit in his project for the relationship between Marxism and Christianity, even under the very different circumstances of the twenty-first century?

If my argument that there is such merit were accepted, there may be some hope that the very length of his intellectual career and the different positions he adopted may give rise to separate evaluations of his contribution to an

important debate at different times. Therefore, our view of the Muslim Ragaa Garaudy, convicted of Holocaust denial, should only be allowed to inform, not completely eclipse, that of the influential Marxist and Christian intellectual Roger Garaudy. Finally, then, let there be no doubt: this book is an attempt at a revival, and tentative development, of Roger Garaudy's project of mutual dependence between Marxism and Christianity.