# Correspondence



## Re "The Dialogue"

To the Editors: Dale Vree's apt reading of the latest by and on Roger Garaudy ("Falling Out From the Dialogue," *Worldview*, December) confirms my long-standing suspicion that Garaudy is exactly the *wrong* kind of Marxist for Christians to dialogue with. Beware of sheep in wolves' clothing—and of Marxists who admit to "having a Christian inside them"! Thirteen years ago I lived for a year in Berlin, engaging in some of the first groping attempts toward a "Marxist-Christian" dialogue. A few years later I helped get Garaudy invited for his first visit to America. Even then Garaudy seemed to appeal to that side of Christian Theology which least needed reinforcement; consequently, I soon became more attracted by the tougher and more tactical ways Marxists and Christians conversed in Latin America. There the agenda is not each other's ideas, but how to make a revolution. I believe this agenda—i.e., "what is to be done?"—is the only valid one for the dialogue and that if one pursues it vigorously the real theoretical differences and similarities among the participants will emerge soon enough.

This means the dialogue in America today should focus on how to find an American path to socialism, *not* on such intriguing items as transcendence, theoretical versus functional atheism, subjectivity, etc. As the real discussion proceeds, I am convinced that Christians will begin to find the humanistic, so-called "young Marx" of the Paris manuscripts less helpful and will begin to appreciate the "scientific" Marx of the more mature writings, including *Capital* itself. We will then find theology becoming the critical theory of church and religion in their roles as perpetuators of commodity-consumerist consciousness. When this begins to happen we may also discover that current German theology—which is now in bad odor in America, especially among those who think it stopped with Barth and Bultmann—*can* help us. Some of the younger German theologians—for example, Dorothea Solle—have already begun to move in the direction of "empirical critical" (as opposed to "historical critical") theology. At this point we do not need inspiration from the young Marx, but sharp tools of critical analysis from the older one.

Above all, let us avoid reifications. "Christianity" and "Marxism" do *not* have a dialogue, ever. *Persons* loyal to Christ, influenced by Marx and everywhere in between, are the only possible participants. The "systems" we reify are actually still open, evolving, living—and therefore subject to change and mutation. Garaudy has not produced a "Marxist Christianity," but there is no reason why the next few centuries of theology should not be as influenced by a German Jew as the last were by a Greek philosopher. In any case, the great "crisis of capitalism" that Marxists have been predicting since I was an Old Left student in the late 1940's may now actually be upon us. If so, the USA may be closer to socialism than even Gerry Ford's panicky economists want us to think. So let's not "fall out" of the dialogue now. Contrary to what another French writer was saying three fads ago, we will need *both* Marx *and* Jesus to get through this one.

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