

The

Ellul Studies

Bulletin

A Forum for Scholarship on Theology and Technology

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Welcome

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Ellul Studies Bulletin*. Thanks to the organizational work of Dan Clendenin, Ellul scholars from around the country (and even beyond its borders) met for the first time at the American Academy of Religion convention in Boston last December. At that meeting I indicated that I would be willing to edit a newsletter which could serve as a communications link among us. This letter fulfills that commitment.

Jacques Ellul's "contribution to contemporary theology is monumental... a comprehensive *tour de force*." This conclusion from my book, *The Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Mellen Press, 1981), has been criticized as perhaps too strong a claim. However I remain unrepentant. As the *Epilogue* (177ff) in which this statement appeared made clear, his work is monumental not because he is right in every respect but because of its unique focus and comprehensiveness. The depth and breadth of his work "culminates in a thorough sociological analysis of the technological society and its religiosity in such a way as to directly lay bare the ethical and theological issues surrounding human freedom and the future in our technological civilization."

Ellul has helped theologians to see that technology is not just one more thing to think about but rather has replaced "nature" as the new all-encompassing context in which theology is done. "Perhaps the most important contribution of Jacques Ellul to the future agenda of theology is not the *answers* he offers to the questions he raises (although his *answers* are not insignificant, he would not think of them as *solutions*) but the questions themselves." Through his sociological analysis of the sacralization of technology placed in dialectical confrontation with the Biblical witness to the Holy, Ellul has taught us how to raise the question of technology in such a way as to be appropriated for theological reflection and ethical considera-

tion." He has taught us how to think critically, creatively and constructively about technology in a way no one else has managed to do. Barth may be his equal, indeed his mentor, in theology. Lewis Mumford may approach his status as a sociological and historical critic of technology, but no one has brought these two disciplines (theology and sociology) together in such a way as to define the theological and ethical agenda as Ellul has. "Thus even where Ellul may be thought in error by some, I believe he will be seen as having advanced our understanding of the issues, for his bold formulations provoke further investigation, further dialogue, further insight. He is a man who has done his homework to our benefit." One may not agree with Ellul but there is no way to responsibly do theology in our technological civilization without taking his work into account. There is no way around him, only through him. That is what makes his work monumental.

It is appropriate therefore that this publication bear Ellul's name. It is my hope that *The Ellul Studies Bulletin* will live up to Ellul's dialectical and dialogical standards. Nothing would be more embarrassing and disappointing to Ellul than to have this *Bulletin* be the vehicle for *true disciples*, *Ellul groupies*, or a *cult of Jacques Ellul*. The whole thrust of Ellul's theological ethics has been to force Christians to think for themselves and *invent* their own responses. Although the *Bulletin* will review and discuss Ellul's work, it should not be our purpose to turn Ellul's scholarship into a body of *sacred* literature to be endlessly dissected. The appropriate tribute of the *Bulletin* to Ellul's work will be to carry forward its spirit, its agenda for the critical analysis of our technological civilization. Ellul invites us to think new thoughts and enact new deeds. The *Bulletin* should be a vehicle for carrying out that challenge, hence the tag line of the *Bulletin*, "A Forum for Scholarship on Theology and Technology."

I debated about what to call this publication. At first I thought perhaps *The Ellul*

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Studies Newsletter. But I wanted it to be something more than a newsletter and yet something less than a journal. I hope the *Bulletin* will create such a niche for itself. It should be a vehicle for the exchange of information on conferences, publications, etc. But I also hope that it will be a forum for the exchange of ideas. I would like to invite you to submit short position papers (up to ten double spaced pages) for open discussion. Responses would be invited and printed in the next issue. Sometimes when we are working on ideas but are not quite ready to put them in final form it would be helpful to be able to send up a *trial balloon* and see how it flies. *The Forum*, I hope, will serve that purpose.

The Ellul Studies Bulletin will be published twice a year in late Spring and again in late Fall (about a month before the AAR meeting). This first issue is free and I encourage you to duplicate it and send it to interested friends or send me their addresses and I will put them on the mailing list. If you decide you wish to receive the *Bulletin* you will need to fill out the subscription form on the last page of this issue and mail it in with your check. Within the United States subscriptions are \$4.00 per year. Outside the U.S. subscriptions are \$6.00. These rates will have to be reviewed after our first year of operation but I want to keep the cost as low as possible.

Finally, this is an experimental publication. If it is to work everyone who subscribes needs to participate by sending position papers for the *Forum*, annotated bibliographic information on books or articles you have published, reviews of relevant books you have read, announcements of conferences and calls for papers on relevant topics, etc. *The Bulletin* should function as a communications network. If you don't send me submissions it is an indication that there is no need for the network. So let the experiment begin.

Darrell J. Fasching, Editor

Nota Bene

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is October 15, 1988. See instructions on the last inside page for details.

Book Reviews

Theological Method in Jacques Ellul by Daniel B. Clendenin (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987). pp. xvii + 145

Reviewed by Marva Dawn,
Vancouver, Washington

(Marva is a Ph.D candidate in Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame and a founder of *Christians Equipped for Ministry* in Vancouver.)

Dan Clendenin's well-researched and balanced study develops the thesis that "Ellul's theological method revolves around one key theme or kernel idea, the dialectical interplay between freedom and necessity, .. a gold thread ... which serves as a sort of hermeneutical key to his thinking" (xi). This revised doctoral dissertation contributes immensely to the possibility that more scholars and lay readers can properly understand Jacques Ellul and let his thinking stimulate, rather than alienate, their own. Since most of us reading this publication believe that Ellul's prophetic voice needs to be heard in our world, we can all be grateful that Dan Clendenin has provided such a useful tool for listening to him appropriately.

Clendenin's own method is illustrated best by three concentric circles, the largest of which describes four methodological interpretations of Ellul: as theological positivist, existentialist, prophet, and dialectician. His second chapter analyzes the more narrow circle of Ellul's dialectical method, which "operates as a description of reality [the phenomenological], an epistemological orientation to understand this reality, and as a Biblical-theological framework by which to read the Bible and craft a peculiarly Christian style of life [existential]" (xvi). Then, chapters three and four explicate Ellul's central dialectic between freedom and necessity, the innermost circle and the "controlling idea in all of Ellul's work" (59).

The final chapter analyzes four weaknesses and three strengths of Ellul's method. Clendenin's "internal" criticisms are the best part of the book, for he aptly demonstrates that Ellul's

works contain definite non-dialectical tendencies which are inconsistent with his avowed method (129). First of all, Ellul's unclear or caustic use of language often invites antagonism rather than dialogue. Secondly, his theme that freedom is not just a virtue of the Christian life, but rather its *sine qua non*, is undeniably reductionistic. Ellul is right to emphasize this aspect because of the social circumstances of contemporary Christianity, but his overstatement denies the dialectical interplay of other factors in discipleship. Most helpful of Clendenin's critiques is his analysis of the inconsistency of Ellul's universalism in its selective reading of Biblical texts, its negation of human free will, and its negation of the individual (pp 135-141).

I disagree, however, with Clendenin's third alleged weakness in Ellul's; method - viz., his conception of "power as the enemy of God." Utilizing the Biblical notion of *exousiai*, Ellul has maintained a dialectical tension in his understanding of power, though his latest work, *The Subversion of Christianity*, contradicts some of his earlier statements about the nature of "the Powers." Furthermore, Clendenin himself must be criticized for his own overstatement that "Ellul never comes close to incorporating the use of power into his dialectic" [134, emphasis mine], and he himself is inconsistent when he asks Ellul to give "clear guidelines" for "non-power use," since a few pages later he cites as a first strength in Ellul's method his deliberate refusal to provide solutions in order to obligate readers to think beyond him (133 and 142). His claim that Ellul "gives us no help here with his rather unrealistic picture" (133) overlooks the prophetic nature of Ellul's language, designed to raise awareness of the subtlety of the demonic aspects of power.

Clendenin also cites as strengths that Ellul effectively combines theology from above (revelation) and below (practical concern for the world) and that his theology truly offers hope and freedom to the person on the street. That, of course, is a main reason why all of us care so much about his work.

Freedom and Universal Salvation: Ellul and Origen

In some ways no two theologians in the history of Christianity could be farther apart than Jacques Ellul and Origen, the Neo-Platonic theologian from the 3rd century. If one were to classify them using H. Richard Niebuhr's five types of Christ and culture relationships, Origen would probably fall under the *Christ of Culture* type and Ellul would stand probably be found somewhere between *Christ Against Culture* and *Christ and Culture in Paradox*. In many ways Tertullian rather than Origen would seem to be the theologian who might have the most in common with Ellul. And yet on two themes very much at the heart of Ellul's thought, *freedom* and *universal salvation*, it is in fact Origen who is his kindred spirit. Although its hard to believe, Origen is even more radical on these two themes. On universal salvation it seems that he held that all creatures would eventually be saved, even the devil, and on freedom he thought that because God gave us the capacity to be free, even after universal salvation is achieved, the fall could happen again, should some creature choose to rebel against God. Ellul would not go quite that far on either count but he certainly goes further than most theologians in the Christian tradition have. In the *Forum* column for this issue a case is made for the ethical importance of universal salvation. But to refresh our minds on Ellul's stand the following excerpt from Dan Clendenin's recent interview with Ellul is quoted from *Media Development* (2/1988, p. 29).

Interview

Clendenin: You have been a strong advocate of universal salvation, which you seem to support by at least five ideas: distinction between judgment-condemnation; between salvation-freedom; priority and triumph of God's love (Jonah's hard lesson); your robust/high Christology; scriptural references to perdition - 'God's pedagogy' - only of heuristic value.

Ellul: Exactly. This is a part of Karl Barth. Barth liked very much to make a joke. One day he explained the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian in this way: everyone has received a sealed letter from God, but a Christian is the one who has opened it and read it. That's the way it is in reality. Every person is loved by God, but Christians are the only ones who know it.

Clendenin: And experience the joy, hope and freedom.

Ellul: Yes, and that changes completely one's perspective on mission. Because toward pagan people, for example, we do not say to them, 'Be converted or, you will be damned', but rather, 'I'm telling you that you are loved by God.'

Clendenin: That was Jonah's hard lesson, that God loved even the Ninevites! No one is excluded.

Ellul: Yes.

Clendenin: You said with Karl Barth that a person must be crazy to teach universalism, but impious not to believe it.

Ellul: Yes, I like very much this phrase of Barth's. For me, obviously, there are biblical texts which seem to go against the idea of universalism, but I really don't understand them very well. That's why I say very often that for me universal salvation is in the realm of faith, but I cannot present it as a dogma.

Clendenin: Would it be fair to call your belief in universal salvation a pious hope but not an absolute conviction?

Ellul: No, it's an absolute conviction.

Clendenin: Universal salvation sounds very un-Kierkegaardian!

Ellul: Yes, this is exactly the place where I part company from Kierkegaard.

Clendenin: But what about his question: does this do away with Christianity by making everyone a Christian?

Ellul: No, it does not make everyone Christian.

Clendenin: They are not hidden Christians?

Ellul: No, that's right. To teach people that they are loved by God is to start them on the path of being converted to Jesus Christ. But it's not at all what Kierkegaard justly criticized as a 'Christian' society.

Clendenin: Yes, this latter theme you pick up in *The Subversion of Christianity*. What about divine coercion in universal salvation, especially given your very strong emphasis on the absolute importance of human decisions/choices.

Ellul: This is really a story of love between God and man. I don't believe that the human being is completely independent before God.

Clendenin: And here we've begun to ask the metaphysical question which we can never answer.

Ellul: When the Word of God addresses a person it liberates him or her, but this free person has heard a word from God. Often I ask my students and the people to whom I'm preaching, 'Do you understand that what you're hearing right now is a word from God?' Thus there is human responsibility, and one can never say that God does not speak. Yes, He does speak now.

Call for Manuscripts

Peter Lang Publishing (New York/Bern) is searching for bold and creative manuscripts for their new monograph series on *Religion, Ethics and Social Policy* edited by Darrell Fasching. Scholars from the Humanities and Social Sciences are invited to submit book-length manuscripts which deal with the shaping of social policy in a religiously and culturally pluralistic world. We are especially interested in creative approaches to the problems of ethical and cultural relativism in a world divided by ideological conflicts. Manuscripts which utilize the work of Jacques Ellul would be most welcome as well as manuscripts taking other approaches. A two page brief on the series is available. For more information, or to submit a manuscript, contact the series editor, Darrell J. Fasching, Cooper Hall 317, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620. Phone (813) 974-2221 or residence (813) 963-2968.

Fasching is also Associate Editor for *U.S.F. Monographs in Religion and Public Policy* which accepts manuscripts on religion and public policy which are too long for journals but too short for a book. If you care to submit a manuscript in that category you may also send that to the above address. Be sure to indicate the monograph series to which you wish to submit your manuscript.

Paper Exchange

One service the *Bulletin* might be able to perform is providing a bulletin board for the exchange of papers delivered at academic conferences. If you have papers you have delivered on Ellul or on the general topic of theology and technology and are willing to make them available, send the title with a brief annotation and your name and address, and indicate whether there is a fee per copy. These will be listed on the bulletin board and anyone interested can write you for a copy.

Volunteers Needed

If you would be interested in assisting in the production of the *Ellul Studies Bulletin* please contact Darrell Fasching, CPR 317, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620. Undoubtedly we will need a book review editor, a bibliographic editor, etc. It is essential that you have access to a computer to prepare copy.

2nd Ellul Consultation Scheduled for November AAR

by Dan Clendenin

The *American Academy of Religion* will sponsor the second Consultation on Jacques Ellul at its annual meeting in Chicago this November.

Last year's meeting attracted over 40 participants. Three papers were presented.

Marva J. Dawn, *The Importance of the Concept of the "Powers" in Jacques Ellul's Work*

Darrell J. Fasching, *The Dialectic of Apocalypse and Utopia in the Theological Ethics of Jacques Ellul*

David Lovekin, *Jacques Ellul and his Dialectical Understanding*

The respondents for the first session were: David W. Gill, Joyce Main Hanks and Charles Mabee.

This year we will have three papers and a single respondent for our 2 1/2 hour session:

Clifford G. Christians: *Ellul's Sociology*

Joyce M. Hanks, *The Kingdom in Ellul's Thought*

David W. Gill *The Dialectical Relationship Between Ellul's Theology and Sociology*

Gary Lee, Respondent

For those interested, the pertinent information for the second consultation is as follows:

AAR Annual Meeting
November 19-22, 1988
Chicago Hilton and Towers
Chicago

For further information, you can contact the chairperson of the consultation:

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William Tyndale College
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313-553-7200/9516

Bibliography

Each issue the *Bulletin* will print bibliographical references to articles and books either on Ellul or using Ellul's work as well as other publications of interest in the area of theology and technology. If you have written such books or articles, please submit the bibliographic information preferably with a sentence or two of annotation. You may also submit articles written by others which you believe your colleagues should know about. A few articles by Dan Clendenin and Darrell Fasching are listed below to start things off.

Clendenin, Daniel.

Theological Method in Jacques Ellul. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987.

"Will the Real Ellul Please Stand Up? A Bibliographic Survey," *The Trinity Journal* 6.2 (Autumn 1985): 176-183.

"The View from Bordeaux: An Interview with Jacques Ellul," *Media Development* 2/1988.

Fasching, Darrell J.

The Thought of Jacques Ellul. New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981. *A comprehensive analysis of Ellul's sociology and theological ethics. (225pp.)*

"Technology as Utopian Technique of the Human," *Soundings*, Vol. LXII, #2, Summer 1980.

Utilizes Ellul's work in a broader thesis about the utopian and anti-utopian elements in modern technology.

"Jacques Ellul as a Theologian of Culture," *Cross Currents*, xxxv #1, Spring 1985. *Interprets Ellul's work in the light of Tillich's idea of theology of culture with a focus on Ellul's books *The New Demons* and *Apocalypse*.*

"Theology and Public Policy: Reflections on Method in the Work of Juan Luis Segundo, Jacques Ellul and Robert Doran," *Method*, Vol. 5, #1, March, 1987.

An critical comparative analysis of the role theological/sociological method in the critique of ideology as an element in the shaping of public policy.

"The Dialectic of Apocalypse and Utopia in the Theological Ethics of Jacques Ellul" in *Research in Philosophy and Technology* Greenwich: JAI Press, 1988.

An attempt to show that Ellul's dialectic leads to a more positive evaluation of utopianism than he explicitly allows. The complexity of Ellul's dialectic is unraveled using H. Richard Niebuhr's typology of "Christ and Culture."

"Mass Media, Ethical Paradox and Democratic Freedom: Jacques Ellul's Ethic of the Word," in *Research in Philosophy and Technology*. Greenwich: JAI Press, 1989

An attempt to suggest an ethic for Journalists based on Ellul's analysis of media and propaganda which relates Ellul's work to the work of Eric Voegelin and the ethics of Martin Luther as well as the Anabaptist tradition.

"The Liberating Paradox of the Word," in *Media Development* 2/1988.

*Relates Ellul's work on media and propaganda and especially his *The Humiliation of the Word* to the implicit concern the professional fields of communication (especially journalism) have with theology and the explicit concern theology has with communications.*

Forum

The Ethical Importance of Universal Salvation

by
Darrell J. Fasching, University of South Florida

The purpose of the *Forum* is to provoke discussion. To further that goal, let me state the thesis of this position paper bluntly. In Dan Clendenin's book, *Theological Method in Jacques Ellul*, (University Press of America, 1987), he offers as one of his most devastating critiques of Ellul the following: "The most glaring inconsistency in Ellul's theological dialectic is his nearly unqualified affirmation of the universal salvation of all peoples beyond history." (Clendenin, 135) According to Clendenin this dissolves the dialectical tension that Ellul otherwise maintains throughout his theology, the tension between No and Yes, between the Judgment and Promise of God. Moreover he argues that by insisting on universal salvation Ellul in fact commits the sin of collectivization (treating humanity as a mass) which he otherwise condemns in his dialectical critique of the technological society. My thesis is quite simple - Dan Clendenin is wrong. (1) Ellul's affirmation of universal salvation has not broken the consistency of his Biblical and Barthian dialectic nor has it succumbed to collectivization. On the contrary, (2) the notion of universal salvation is a necessary pre-condition for the ethic of freedom Ellul develops precisely to protest the collectivization of human behavior in a technological society. Finally (3) Clendenin's failure to understand this linkage between ethical freedom and universal salvation is complemented by his failure to understand the relationship of both to *power*. This leads to another questionable criticism central to his final critique of Ellul, namely that Ellul allows no positive place for the use of power within a Christian ethic.

(1) First, let's be clear, Ellul is not professing some general philosophical dialectic. He explicitly states that he is affirming the Biblical dialectic of judgment and promise. This biblical dialectic is eschatological. That is, the Biblical literature itself, whether the prophets of the Old Testament or the Gospels of the New Testament, limits this dialectic to history. Clendenin wants Ellul to be "consistent" and carry this dialectic "beyond history." But that is precisely what would be inconsistent. Clendenin suggests that one strategy that Ellul could take in response to his criticism would be to "be explicit about what he implicitly affirms, that his concept of dialectic is limited to history, and that there is no reason for this dialectic to continue after this life. I have found only one place where he hints at such (*The Humiliation of the Word*, 269)." Clendenin acts as if this were a matter for speculation on which he is inviting Ellul to take a stand and is puzzled that he cannot find explicit references by Ellul to the issue. I submit that this is not hard to understand. Since Ellul explicitly subscribes to the Biblical dialectic which is limited to history I doubt that he ever thought that the matter needed further comment. Ellul remains consistently faithful to the Biblical dialectic.

(2) Second, Ellul's insistence on universal salvation (a) is not an instance of the collectivization which he otherwise criticizes in a technological society but rather (b) is a precondition for an ethic of freedom which is able to combat such collectivization.

Let me address point (2a) first. For Ellul collectivization is a sin which has to do with the limits of human consciousness. Human beings, he argues, (in *False Presence of the Kingdom* for instance) are not capable of loving the whole human race. Individuals can only love individuals, the neighbor who crosses one's path and is in need. Mass media seduce us into trying to love everyone. The media evoke com-

passion in us for those in distress half way around the world who we can only know abstractly and collectively. In the process we become diverted from caring for the neighbor we can personally know and help. Intent on changing the world, we become swept up in mass movements and bureaucratic structures which rob us of our individuality while at the same time we end up neglecting our neighbor. Such collectivization is a function of our being limited finite beings. As such we can neither know nor relate to all individuals personally and individually. Universal salvation on the other hand has nothing to do with this human limitation. Universal salvation is about God's capacity, not our human capacity. Unlike ourselves, God's knowing and caring are not limited. Only God could conceivably know, love and save the whole human race and do so without collectivization. Only God could love the whole human race by loving each individual as an individual. Therefore Clendenin is quite wrong to say that universal salvation is inconsistent with Ellul's dialectical critique of collectivization.

Now let me turn to point (2b). In fact, the case is quite the contrary of the one Clendenin suggests. Universal salvation actually plays a central role in making possible Ellul's ethic of freedom and its protest against collectivization by undermining the theological rational which has historically promoted Christianity as a collectivizing religion, one which produces an ethic of conformity to the world. To make my case I wish to appeal to arguments advanced not by Ellul himself, although I believe they are presupposed in his work, but by two of his theological contemporaries, John Howard Yoder and Juan Luis Segundo. These are an unlikely pair of names to link together. Yoder champions the Anabaptist tradition while Segundo is an advocate of liberation theology. But on one issue both agree, namely that as soon as Christianity came to view its message as something everyone must accept in order to be saved, Christianity began to be "watered down" and abandoned its "ethic of discipleship" for a Constantinian ethic of "Christian civilization." [see chapter 8 in Segundo's *The Liberation of Theology*, (Orbis Books, 1976) and chapter 7 in Yoder's *The Priestly Kingdom*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984)].

Both argue that the sociological pressure of preaching a Christianity for everyone leads to the compromising of the Gospel ethic and ends up legitimating a "Christian civilization" whose final outcome is the Inquisition. Both argue that the core of this betrayal of the Gospel lies in assuming everyone has to be Christian in order to be saved. At this point Segundo makes the same move that Ellul does. That is, he appeals to Barth's teaching on universal salvation. Only in this way, he argues, can the drive toward collectivization be broken in Christianity and its function as a minority "leaven" within society be recovered. Yoder is more suggestive and less explicit but he too insists that we have to get rid of the notion that everyone needs to be Christian, and implies that the separateness of Christians has as its goal the "whole world's salvation" (12). Both of these theologians share Ellul's conviction that Christians are and should be a minority in the world and that the desire to be otherwise leads to the "betrayal of Christianity". All three are intent upon recovering an important element of prophetic faith, namely, the insistence that *election* is a call to *vocation* (i.e., being a light to the nations) and not to a status of special privilege. To put it in New Testament terms, conversion as a response to the call or election to faith is not a privileged guarantee of salvation but rather a call

to be a leaven for the transformation of the world into a new creation. When Jesus tells his disciples that they are to be the "salt of the earth" the metaphor is quite deliberate. Who in his right mind would sit down to a meal of salt. On the other hand a little salt brings out the true flavor, the best flavor of any plate of food.

Those who admire Ellul's prophetic ethical critique of our technological civilization but who would choose to deny his position on universal salvation need to ask themselves whether these two can really be separated. As Yoder and Segundo argue, the weight of Christian history suggests otherwise. For Ellul faith is a call to vocation. It is what some are called to do for God's world in history. Salvation on the other hand is what God has done for the whole human race in Christ. The good news of the latter frees Christians to assume the task of the former. Faith is not a work that earns one a ticket to "heaven". But faith does make a difference, precisely where it should - in history as the freedom to struggle against the demonic forces of necessity, of collectivization and dehumanization. Faith inserts the freedom of God into history to the benefit of the rest of the world.

Clendenin's presuppositions become clear when he accuses Ellul of making everyone into a Christian as a consequence of universal salvation (at the very least he seems to think Ellul must believe them to be "hidden Christians"). Clendenin cannot imagine that anyone can be saved unless he or she is a Christian. This never occurs to Ellul. In Clendenin's interview Ellul explicitly denies this interpretation. Ellul is not playing games with Clendenin. It is simply that he can conceive of non-Christians being saved. For Ellul "being saved" and "being Christian" are overlapping categories, for Clendenin they are one and the same category.

(3) Let me turn to my final point, Clendenin's critique of Ellul's treatment of "power." That he should criticize Ellul for holding a view of universal salvation and also for not advocating a "positive" use of power is rather telling. At least from the point of view of John Howard Yoder's theology. For Yoder thinks that it is significant that as soon as Christianity decided everybody had to be Christian it gave up the way of non-violence for the way of power and coercion. Where Christians of the first centuries refused to serve in the military, Constantinian Christians made serving the state into a Christian duty. Where Christian's of the first centuries practiced the Judaic ethic of welcoming the stranger, Constantinian Christianity made being a stranger, one of another faith, illegal. By force of law, and arms if necessary, being a citizen required being a Christian. Yoder and Ellul understand that if you give power an inch it will take a mile - it will take over the whole world. To give power an inch is to compromise the Gospel as embodied in the Sermon on the Mount.

It is interesting that Segundo recognizes this but argues that not even Jesus could live in the world without compromising this message and so suggests that the Gospel must be compromised and the use of force must be baptized by the Gospel. Ellul does not make that mistake. He too recognizes that no one can live in the world without the use of power but he refuses to baptize it. Power may be necessary but necessity belongs to the realm of sin. To use the Gospel to condone power is to do the devils work. Even the power of a benevolent state rests on power as coercion which will never be used only for just purposes. For Ellul, Christians can hold positions of power but they must never succumb to the illusion that their use of power is blessed by the Gospel - rather they must learn to live with the dialectical tension and paradox of being both saints and sinners at the same time. Clendenin's critique of Ellul on power is wide of the mark. For Ellul power is used positively when the Christian, like the yachtsman, welcomes the conflicting forces of power or necessity that impinge upon him or her and uses them against each other even as the yachtsman tacks against the wind. The only thing to be feared is the calm, for then he or she can do nothing. For Ellul, there is no freedom without power and necessity but as soon as we bless necessity we turn it into a demonic fatality and the positive becomes negative.

The question of the use of power is the most troubling question that Christian ethicists face. I continue to wrestle with this issue myself. There is room for positions on the "positive use of power" in the ethical dialogue and I hope we will hear more from Dan Clendenin on this matter. But such positions need to take seriously the challenge of Ellul and Yoder (and we could add Stanley Hauerwas to this camp) who insist that Christians have got to stop thinking of themselves as having to "be in charge." The motivation to baptize power does not come from within the Gospel but from the outside, namely, from desire of Christians to run the world. This desire is closely tied to the presupposition that the whole world ought to be Christian, indeed must be Christian, in order to be saved. That is a dangerous pattern of reasoning and motivation and one which Ellul undercuts, severing the traditional link of Constantinian Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) between election and salvation. Since all are saved through Christ's death and resurrection that task is already accomplished. What remains unfinished is the struggle with the demonic dehumanization and collectivization which occurs in history. It is to that struggle that the elect are called. Ellul's insistence on universal salvation serves to rechannel the energy of Christians in the direction which is most needed in our time, the ethical direction. Far from capitulating to collectivization in any way, it is rather a most potent force against it.

Clendenin has two other aspects to his argument with Ellul that I have not focused on. One is the charge that universal salvation violates human freedom. But universal salvation does not violate free will. It is not about human freedom at all but about divine freedom. It insists that no matter what humans may do God remains free to accept them in his reconciling love - that his love, like the rain, falls on the just and the unjust alike. Rather than reject those who reject him, he chooses to take the consequences of that rejection upon himself in an act of suffering reconciliation. As Paul puts it, prior to any act of repentance, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us... when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son..." (Romans 5:8&10)

Clendenin puts his objection another way by arguing that the problem with Ellul's position is that human "actions no longer have ultimate soteriological value." He is quite right and that is as it should be. The act that has "ultimate soteriological value" is the sacrifice of Christ, an act of grace. On this too Ellul is surely right. Human acts are restricted to the plane of penultimate value, the plane of history where they can make a difference.

Finally Clendenin argues that universal salvation cannot be scripturally maintained. In this position paper I have not tried to show that universal salvation is true or consistent with scripture. I have simply tried to argue that to remove it from Ellul's position effectively undermines the potency of the prophetic ethic he is so much admired for. In fact, however, I am largely persuaded by Ellul's arguments in this area as well.

Clendenin seems to imply that the Biblical dialectic of "judgment and promise" should finally result in a division of the world into the *saved* and the *damned*. Such a conclusion however assimilates the "Good News" to the historical and dialectical categories of the *sacred* and *profane*. It is the power of the demonic (the *diabolos* or divider) over that dialectic which creates dualistic division, strife and chaos. But Ellul correctly perceives that that dialectical dualism is relativized by the Biblical (eschatological/apocalyptic) dialectic between the Sacred and the Holy, in which the Holy unites what the sacred once divided. Hence the love of God transcends the categories of the sacred and profane (the saved and the damned) and falls upon the *just* and the *unjust* alike.

Clendenin also accuses Ellul of a "selective reading of the Biblical texts" but this surely begs the question, since the opposing view selectively reads the Biblical text as well, ignoring precisely those elements Ellul would emphasize. But more to the point every theological position selectively reads the text. After all, (as Krister Stendahl and others

A Visit with Jacques Ellul

Pessac, France, June 27, 1987

by Marva Dawn

Jacques Ellul and his wife are very gracious people! They welcomed me kindly and even served raspberries from their garden. Through the excellent translating of Philip Adams, we held a far-ranging conversation for almost two hours. Prof. Ellul asked questions about my work, too - especially about some articles on teaching ethics to children. This stands out in my memory because Ellul serves as an excellent model of a profound scholar who is also able to relate well to other people. Concerning the common split in theologians between the head and the heart he said, "it is contrary to the Gospel."

We talked about many practical issues that day - the situation in South Africa, the ecology movement, U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, caring for the poor and the handicapped, euthanasia. As would be expected, Ellul stressed the importance of avoiding propaganda and political games, of thinking about each problem as a whole (thinking globally), and of seeing what we can modify practically in our own communities. He urged the U.S. to fight communism with economic justice rather than armies and to help the poor not only materially but also with fellowship, spiritual security and support in their anguish.

Regarding his efforts to reform the Church, Ellul criticized a "whole generation of liberal pastors" who "don't believe in anything so they have nothing to say." He said that most of the renewal in France is taking place beside the churches (except for the charismatics), rather than in them. Now he belongs to a small transdenominational group trying to listen to laypeople, but this "scares the authorities." Ellul feels his most important insight for the Church has been his emphasis on hope. Secondly, against the particular French problem of 200,000 people (including many intellectuals) becoming Muslim, he stresses, "our God is a Trinity." This led to a discussion of universalism; had

I already read Dan Clendenin's book (see review) I could have been more able to press him further about the inconsistencies of his views.

The other major doctrinal topic was his concept of "the powers," the subject of my dissertation. When I questioned certain inconsistencies in his writings, he stressed that the powers must be understood dialectically - that they can't be personalized, and yet that there is a Power beyond what can be explained, that every human rupture is a *diabolos*, the Separator.

Most helpful for me were Ellul's comments about practical issues in writing and teaching, such as creating the necessary balance of preparing for one's Bible studies while yet dealing with all the people who want to speak with us when we are leading retreats. He stressed the importance of the Holy Spirit in helping us to find the time to do both. When I thanked him for taking the time to talk with me in spite of all he has to do, he answered, "I'm almost done with what I want to write." Even as *The Presence of the Kingdom* was the introduction to his corpus, his recently complete commentary on Ecclesiastes is its conclusion. He said that he continues to write, but without a tight program. His *Ethics of Holiness* is written, but he doubts whether it will ever be published because it is too long - which led to a discussion of presenting our work in publishable ways. He said that he had created his own market, but that it had taken a long time. When I responded that I'm too impatient, he replied, "you must always be impatient."

I wanted to know Ellul as a person, encountering typical obstacles in the struggle to live out his faith and ministry. He revealed himself as I expected - a wonderful model of a gracious man incarnating the Gospel in practical ways, a brilliant man choosing carefully the values of the kingdom of God.

Media Development Devotes Issue to Ellul

Media Development: Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication has just devoted most of its 2/1988 (vol XXXV) issue to *Perspectives on Jacques Ellul*. Many of you who are receiving this first issue of *The Ellul Studies Bulletin* have also received a copy since I supplied Michael Traber, the editor, with a copy of our mailing list. However a number of you who have been added to the list since then will not have received it. You may want to write for a copy. The address is *Media Development*, 357 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5QY England (Telephone 01-582 9139).

The collection of articles is impressive. The table of contents is listed below for your information.

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by Gary Lee, Editor,
Eerdmans Publishing Co.

It is difficult to keep up with the work of a prolific author like Ellul — he seems to write more quickly than most of us can read! This difficulty is compounded when the work has to be translated. But it is worth the effort (and the wait, for those who do not read French).

I will begin by just mentioning Eerdmans two most recent translations of Ellul titles: In 1985 we published *The Humiliation of the Word* (285 pages, \$14.95), a translation by Joyce Hanks of *La Parole humiliée*. In 1986 we published *The Subversion of Christianity* (224 pages, \$9.95), translated by Geoffrey Bromiley from *La Subversion du christianisme*.

In July of 1988 we will publish *Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology* (200 pages, \$12.95), translated by Joyce Hanks from *L'Idéologie marxiste Chrétienne*. From both a biblical-theological and a socio-political perspective Ellul examines the attempts to relate Christianity to Marxism (e.g., liberation theology, Marxist Christianity). He describes the challenges that Marxist Christianity presents to traditional Christianity (the former practices some goals that the latter talks about but too often fails to do), and he discusses the roots and development of Marxist Christianity. He then reviews in detail some key Marxist-Christian books, exposing the weaknesses of so-called Marxist Christianity (which is neither Marxist nor Christian!). He argues that the biblical perspective takes exception to all political power; hence he concludes that Christian anarchism is the realistic revolutionary option. The preface by Joyce Hanks provides an excellent introduction to the book, for she shows how it relates to his previous work.

Early in 1989 we will publish Geoffrey Bromiley's translation of *Ce que je crois* (the French edition, published in 1987, is 290 pages; the English edition will probably be less than 200 pages), tentatively titled *What I Believe*. In this book Ellul outlines his beliefs about life, the world, history, and Christianity. In the first part of the book he discusses, among other things, the meaningfulness of life, the dialectic, evil, and love. In the second part he surveys history from Paleolithic times to the present. In the third part he discusses his religious beliefs, including his views on providence, universalism, and recapitulation. The book is thus a convenient summary of Ellul's beliefs and will

serve as an excellent introduction to his thought, for he states succinctly and provocatively his views on many crucial topics.

Later in 1989 we will publish Joyce Hanks' translation of *La raison d'être: Méditation sur l'Écclésiaste* (French edition, 1987, 318 pages) (English title uncertain). Here Ellul offers another of his stimulating biblical studies, on a book that has been central to his thinking for fifty years. He begins by discussing his approach to Ecclesiastes and his general view of the book. He then takes up various themes of Ecclesiastes (power, money, work, the good). Next he discusses the role of wisdom in Ecclesiastes and its relation to philosophy. Finally, he examines the references to God in Ecclesiastes, especially in chapter 12. Throughout, Ellul interacts with biblical-theological scholarship, though this is not a verse-by-verse commentary but more a thematic meditation.

We are considering the translation of *Un chrétien pour Israël*; I have written to Ellul requesting a slight update, and he has agreed to write a postscript concerning the recent turmoil in Israel. In this book Ellul gives a biblical-theological analysis of Israel, then a historical, sociopolitical analysis, in which he examines the propaganda about Israel and considers the complexities of this difficult situation.

I have also just received from the French publisher *Hachette* a copy of *Le bluff technologique*, Ellul's latest book, so that we can consider it for translation. This, his third volume on technique (*The Technological Society* and *The Technological System* being the first two), builds on the previous ones and is similarly massive (489 pages in the French edition). Though we are primarily a religious publisher and this, like the other volumes, is a sociological rather than a theological study, we are pursuing the translation rights.

In addition, we are considering a proposal by Marva Dawn for a translation of six key early articles by Ellul, which, along with Marva's comments, would serve as an introduction to Ellul's thought.

Several years ago Ellul told me that he had written a manuscript on *Technique et Théologie*, but that he could not find a French publisher for it, since he already had so many books in the works. I urged him to send it to me, even though it was handwrit-

ten, but he declined. I have asked him again, also for any other material he has, in whatever form. In his recent letter he stated that he has written both this work and his *Ethique de la Sainteté* (which is 1000 pages) but that both need to be updated and revised. In addition, he is currently working on or has plans for three other books, including one on the suffering of Christ, which we will surely pursue.

But Ellul's writing career may be nearing its end. Who will pick up his mantle? Who will carry on in the tradition of Kierkegaard, Barth, Ellul, Stringfellow, etc.? Who will be our next prophet to provoke us to think deeply about our faith and our life?

Addendum

by Dan Clendenin

(Editors Note: Some time ago I asked Dan Clendenin to give me an update on Ellul's publication plans based on his interview with Ellul last April. Then just before press time I got in touch with Gary Lee to update me on what Eerdmans was planning to publish. Since there was a good deal of duplication between these reports and Gary's was more recent, I am appending here, only those comments from Dan which add something to Gary's report.)

Technology and Theology is done but needs to be "greatly revised and rewritten." When I asked Ellul just how close he was to final completion he remarked, "Right now I don't have any desire to write ... I'm not writing anymore right now. Maybe later, but not now. Above all, I feel free."

....As for *The Ethics of Love* and the second half of his prolegomena to ethics, he said he has notes, but they need to be written... Finally, I asked him about his two-volume autobiography which is already written. Would it be published? "No, I gave it to my wife. She will do what she wishes with it. If she wants to publish it, she will, if not, she will keep it."

As for other items (not based on my interview). Publisher Donald Simpson of Halmers and Howard (PO Box 7407, Colorado Spring, CO 80933) has been corresponding with Ellul and by now should have finalized a contract to bring back into print *Presence of the Kingdom*.... Also a secondary work on Ellul by David Lovekin is due out soon, published by Lehigh University Press.

Universal Salvation (cont..)

have shown) "Justification by faith" is not the dominant theme in Paul's thought and yet Luther made it the criterion by which all other scriptural statements were to be judged and forged it into the pillar of Protestant faith. Until I read Ellul's brilliant exegesis of the Book of Revelation I remained skeptical that universal salvation could be scripturally maintained. I came away with my mind decisively changed. It seems to me that Ellul does with the Book of Revelation what Luther did with "justification by faith." Clendenin may disagree with Ellul's reading of the Biblical texts but I doubt that he can show that his own alternative reading is any less selective. In the end I am inclined to accept the Pauline advice to Timothy, "We have put our trust in the living God and he is the Saviour of the whole human race but particularly of all believers. This is what you are to enforce in your teaching." (1 Timothy 4:10)

Ellul and Propaganda Review

A new journal, *Propaganda Review* has crossed the editor's desk. Some of you are probably familiar with it. Its editorial page indicates that the goal is to move "away from narrow definitions of propaganda toward a concept of a socially pervasive 'propaganda environment'." It is a view on the subject which is certainly shared with Ellul and appears to owe a certain debt to his thought. It may depart from Ellul somewhat in advocating the use of counter-propaganda to undermine the propaganda environment. Issue number 2 contains an article on Ellul, entitled *Jacques Ellul: Quirky Trailblazer of Propaganda Theory* by Claude Steiner and Charles Rappleye. The short article, which contains some fine photo's of Ellul, praises him for his pioneering efforts in studying propaganda but seems to treat him as an "oddball" (i.e., "quirky") in his appeal to Christian faith as a response to the propaganda environment. The article does not adequately illuminate how this faith response relates to the propaganda environment and thus makes the response seem somewhat arbitrary and quixotic.

The difficulty in fighting propaganda however is well illustrated in an excerpt from

an interview with Ellul conducted by Claude Steiner, in which Ellul states:

Sometime ago I was teaching a course on propaganda techniques. I wasn't studying the principles of propaganda as I do in my book; I was trying to teach my students about propaganda techniques in various countries so they could recognize them. At that time, I discovered that a French officer had been arrested in the Algerian War and imprisoned because he was in possession of secret documents which belonged to the Fifth Office, the office for propaganda during the Algerian War. I tried to contact this prisoner and to get hold of his secret documents because I hoped I could use them in my study. When I finally managed to obtain them, I found that they were notes from my course. The Fifth Office had taken my classwork to conduct their propaganda in Algeria. I decided never to write anything on propaganda techniques again" (Issue #2, p.33).

If you are interested in subscribing to *Propaganda Review*, the price is \$20.00 for four issues. Make checks payable to *Propaganda Review* and mail to Media Alliance, Building D, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123.

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