

# The

# Ellul Studies

# Forum

A Forum for Scholarship on Theology in a Technological Civilization

November 1988

Issue #2

Department of Religious Studies,

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620

**2nd Annual Ellul Consultation to be held at AAR on Nov. 21st**

(See page 2 for details)

## From the Editor

by Darrell J. Fasching

Welcome to the second issue of the *Ellul Studies Forum*. For those of you who read issue #1, the first thing you may notice is a name change. The first issue was entitled *The Ellul Studies Bulletin*. Even after I chose the name "Bulletin" I was not entirely comfortable with it but it took me a while to figure out why. "Bulletin" reminds me of *the latest breaking headline* and the effects of *propaganda*. "Forum," on the other hand, suggests dialogue and discussion which focuses on the power of the word. The model of a "Forum" therefore is more in keeping with the spirit of Ellul's work and shall henceforth be displayed on the masthead of this publication.

In this issue you will find an excellent review of Willem Vanderburg's *The Growth of Minds and Cultures* by Katherine Temple. Vandenburg is strongly influenced by Ellul and his work deserves our attention. You will probably find the *Forum* position paper by Michael Bauman to be a rather harsh critique of Ellul's *Jesus and Marx*. But since the purpose of the *Forum* is to stimulate debate and discussion, this should motivate some interesting responses for the next issue. There are also two responses to my essay "The Ethical Importance of Universal Salvation" which appeared in the *Forum* of our first issue. Both Ken Morris and Marva Dawn have some thoughts on my statement.

I am grateful to Dan Clendenin for assuming the responsibilities of *Book Review Editor*. If you are willing to review books or have a specific book you would like to review, contact Dan at William Tyndale College, 35700 West 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48018. I am also grateful to Carl Mitcham and Jim Grote who have agreed to be *Bibliographic Editors*. If you have materials for the ongoing bibliography, send them to Carl Mitcham, Philosophy & Technology Studies Center, Polytechnic University, 333 Jay Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

*The Ellul Studies Forum* is meant to foster a communications network among scholars who are interested in the work of Jacques Ellul and in the general area of theology and technology. I want to encourage all readers to send contributions and make suggestions and I hope I will see many of you at the Ellul consultation in Chicago.

Finally, I should mention that I sent Ellul the first issue without advance warning. He responded that he was "happy and surprised at the creation of the *Ellul Studies Bulletin*" and he promises to respond to my request for a short essay to be published in a future issue.

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## 2nd Ellul Consultation Scheduled for November AAR

by Dan Clendenin

The second consultation on the significance of Jacques Ellul's thought for the study of religion will be held at the annual meeting of the *American Academy of Religion* in Chicago. The AAR meets from November 18th to the 22nd, 1988 at the Chicago Hilton and Towers. The session on Ellul will be held Monday, Nov. 21st, from 1 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. in conference room 4K on the 4th floor.

This year we will have three papers and a single respondent for our 2 1/2 hour session. The papers are as follows:

**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**

There will be a late night opportunity for all Ellul scholars to get acquainted over a beer (or whatever you prefer). If you are interested please join us. We will meet at the AAR registration desk at 10 p.m. on Sunday evening and promptly adjourn to the nearest "watering hole" for "serious" discussion.

For further information on the Ellul consultation, contact the chairperson:

**Daniel B. Clendenin**

William Tyndale College

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## First Inter-American Congress on Philosophy and Technology

by Carl Mitcham

The first Inter-American Congress on Philosophy and Technology was held in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Oct. 5-8th, 1988. The Congress was organized by the Center for the Philosophy and History of Science and Technology of the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez, with some assistance from the Philosophy and Technology Studies Center of Brooklyn Polytechnic University.

The congress was attended by approximately 25 scholars from throughout Latin America, 20 from north America and 5 from Europe. It was conducted mostly in Spanish, with some papers being presented in English. Proceedings will be published in both languages.

The themes that emerged from the conference included the issue of the relationship between religion and technology. A number of what might be called conservative Catholics from various countries (including the US) defended traditional views of the Christianity-technology relationship, i.e., that a recovery of a sense of the sacred or of God is necessary to place technology in proper balance.

Other themes focused on technology and culture, STS (science-technology-society) education, the science-technology relationship, and ethics and technology.

## Conference on Democracy and Technology

The Fifth Biennial International Conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology will be held at the University of Bordeaux in France from June 29th to July 1st 1989. The theme of the conference is "Technology and Democracy." Health permitting, Jacques Ellul is expected to participate. For more information on the conference contact Stanley Carpenter, Social Sciences, Georgia Tech, Atlanta GA 30332 or Langdon Winner, Dept. of Science & Tech. Studies, Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst., Troy, NY 12180-3590.

## Paper Exchange

(Readers are invited to make available relevant papers they have read (or will, read) at conferences. Please provide title, address and cost.)

Darrell Fasching will deliver a paper on "Mass Media, Ethical Paradox and Democratic Freedom: Jacques Ellul's Ethic of the Word" at the international conference on "Democracy and Technology" to be held at the University of Bordeaux next summer. Anyone desiring a copy should write to Fasching at the Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620 and enclose one dollar to cover the cost of postage and duplication.

## Thanks for the Help

A special note of thanks is due to David Gill and Dan Clendenin who shared with me the expense of producing the 1st issue of *The Ellul Studies Forum* which was distributed free of charge in order to generate interest in this enterprise.- *The Editor*

## Apologies

Those of you who have sent in checks subscribing to the *Ellul Studies Bulletin* may have noticed that your checks have not yet cleared. I apologize for the delay but I have encountered some bureaucratic tangles which delayed establishing an account to which these checks could be deposited. It appears that I have finally resolved all the problems and you should be getting your canceled checks soon.

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# Book Review

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***The Growth of Minds and Cultures*** by Willem Vanderburg, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Reviewed by Katharine Temple

[The following review is excerpted from the winter issue of *Cross Currents* 1985-1986. We are grateful to Katharine Temple and to *Cross Currents* for permission to reprint. - *The Editor*]

A cursory glance at the table of contents might leave the impression that here we have one more introductory textbook in sociology or anthropology. But this would be a mistake. Early on (p.9), Vanderburg tells us this is the first volume in a projected trilogy - *Technique and Culture*, a title which sharpens the focus. I have to admit it is daunting to pick up a 300-plus page book, only to find out there are two more yet to come. Since, however the task is enormous, I also have to conclude that the effort is worth it. In this case, it is important to pay closer attention than usual to the Preface and Introduction, which serve to clarify the end-point.

I have the profound sense that our present concepts allow us to see the mystery of human life only through a dark glass.... But the very process of asking new questions and not absolutizing reality as we know it is vital not only to keep scientific debates in their proper context, but also to guarantee a genuine intellectual life for us and the generations to come.... If these reflections can contribute to giving new energy to a dialogue within the multi-versity and among intellectuals around science, technology and technique and their influence on human life, my audacity in attempting a synthesis on such a vast scope will have been worthwhile (pp. 302-303).

At no point is Vanderburg preaching to the converted. He is speaking to people who have to be lured into the discussion in the first place - natural scientists and engineers who, by and large, consider the social sciences beneath them, and those in other disciplines who are thoroughly intimidated by "the hard sciences." As he has to start from square one on both fronts, it is a difficult mix, especially when he wants to promote dialogue, and critical dialogue at that. Then, even apart from his pedagogical pursuits, his own research breaks out of the accepted positivist molds. His conceptual framework is grounded in the dialectical thought of Jacques Ellul ( who has written an incisive foreword that puts the methodology into perspective). Vanderburg has commented elsewhere about the influence.

In rethinking Marx... Ellul centered on technique, a much broader phenomenon than technology in the engineering sense. Indeed without recognition of this, much of what Ellul says may appear to be overstatement or exaggeration. It was this which struck me most when I first encountered it in *The Technological Society*, and called forth in me a desire to work through this concept from an engineer's point of view (*Cross Currents*, Spring 1985).

Ellul is indeed one of the most brilliant interpreters of our century, but he is an inspiration others have found difficult to swallow, and so he is out of favor in the official groves of academe. Vanderburg has undertaken to introduce a recalcitrant crowd with uneven sophistication to controversial arguments based on highly sophisticated concepts. Perhaps this is as good a definition of formal teaching as any.

Having said that, let me also stress that *The Growth of Minds and Cultures* is not a re-hash of Ellul's insights brought into the classroom. Both are sociologists who view the world very much alike and the Ellul imprint is clear. Nevertheless, they are sociologists who work differently. Just as Ellul is an analyst (in the etymological sense "to loosen," "to unpack," "to dissect") starting from the whole, so Vanderburg remains

an engineer, examining the parts to see what makes the system tick and then working toward putting those parts together into a synthesis. One example. This book starts with the irreducible social unit, the individual, and follows how he or she is "enfolded" into the pre-existent web of culture. Ellul, by contrast, tends to start with a definition of *technique* itself. The two approaches are complementary, not interchangeable. The very lack of acceptance Ellul's work has encountered may indicate that the more nuts-and-bolts description is very much in order.

Every once in a while, it also occurred to me that there is not a single topic in the book that won't be old hat to someone and long since rejected by someone else. I cannot say, however, that I wasn't warned.

I have assumed that most of my readers, like myself, will have an expertise in some areas covered in these essays and not in others.... In all of this, I am keenly aware of the fact that both the frontier-type of highly specialized knowledge and the intellectual-reflective kind of knowledge have their own lacunae (p. xxv).

The whole point of a synthesis is not to come up with brand-new separate parts; it is to look at what we think is obvious with new lenses, to show new configurations and relationships. Of course, there is sometimes bound to be a *deja-vue* quality, as well as disagreement, partly because of the range of separate parts and partly because Vanderburg presents his case without being easily side-tracked. We are sadly unused to this way of thinking. The question is whether this sociological synthesis promotes clarity. I would say that it does. With both scientific coolness and passion, he succeeds in a synthesis that lays the foundation for his next work on technique.

Because he has made such a considerable sociological contribution, I feel churlish in asking questions perhaps better put to the discipline itself. My hesitations come at both ends of its spectrum. First, I think certain biological inquiries deserve greater weight; in particular, genetics and the implications of maleness and femaleness. Second, at the other end stands philosophy. Although the book is deliberately non-philosophical, many of the key concepts carry over from that tradition: mind, will, being, freedom, even culture itself. Such reservations probably would not come to mind if it were not for the overwhelming denial of biology and philosophy in technical civilization at large. Such may be the nature of the beast; nevertheless, from a book that carefully delineates terms, one is tempted to ask for more.

What heartens me the most about this book is the way it re-asserts common sense as a criterion, even as the discarded disciplines once did. Now, "common sense" is an elusive term both philosophically and in common parlance. The only consensus about it is that common sense is never very common. Yet, it is the best expression I know to describe the strength of Vanderburg's argument. By it, I mean a practical wisdom and judgment that rely on perceptions and experience as the touchstones to shake us out of our tendencies to fantasize, objectify, trivialize and distort. People do not initially perceive themselves either genetically or statistically or philosophically and, strange or shaky as it may sound as a theoretical principle, Vanderburg is actually on solid ground when he builds on common perceptions. There will still be disagreements, but the stage is set for discourse based on actual experience, even on the widest conceptual plane.

Vanderburg has concerned himself with technological advances and what they might mean for our life. *The Growth of Minds and Cultures* leads us to see how hard it is to dissociate ourselves from a "star wars" mentality, in which our culture is deeply and almost inextricably embedded. Nevertheless, Vanderburg shows that we can think about this civilization in other than logistical terms or science fiction.

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# Forum

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## Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology: A Critique

By Michael Bauman

(Michael Bauman is Director of Christian Studies and Associate Professor of Theology of Culture at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI.)

The following was submitted as a book review of *Jesus and Marx: From the Gospel to Ideology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), pp. xvi + 187. However, I thought it provocative enough to merit featuring as the *Forum* statement for this issue. Readers are invited to respond for the next issue. *The Editor*.

The first task of an academic author is to understand his subject. The second is to make himself understood. Though it may be offensive to say so in a forum like this, I do not believe that in *Jesus and Marx* Jacques Ellul has succeeded well on either count. Because it often takes longer to correct an error than to make it, and because this book contains a surprisingly large number of errors of fact and errors of interpretation, I must content myself, within the small scope afforded a book review, to mention but a few of the most flagrant or most easily noted shortcomings.

First, I deny that Christians ought to feel any pangs of guilt "because of what the searching gaze of socialism revealed about them, their church, or even Christianity itself" (p.5). Socialism, for one thing, says nothing about anything. Only socialists do. What they say, I am convinced, is philosophically sloppy and historically incorrect. The guilt revealed by "socialism" should be guilt felt by socialists. I can not countenance Ellul's irresponsible assertions that Marxist criticisms are "obviously based on justice" or that "in every respect our society is unjust for both individuals and groups" (p. 6, emphasis added). Nor will I countenance Ellul's unproven (and unprovable) assumption that justice means equality. One must not say, with Ellul and the Communists that our "unjust society results from twenty centuries of Christianity" or that "neither churches nor Christians are doing anything to improve the situation (p.6). All I will admit is that books and ideas like Ellul's will not work and that his last statement is a refutation of his own book, written as it is by a Christian and clearly intended as an aid.

What is one to make of the scandalous assertion that "no matter what kind of poverty the poor suffer, the Communists are on their side, and the Communists alone are with them" (p. 6)? I can only say "God help those with whom the Communists stand." Obvious examples like Mother Teresa aside, one need only look at the years since WWII to see that Communism is the major perpetrator of poverty and not its solution. The Japanese, for instance, were on the losing side of the war effort and suffered nuclear destruction twice. They occupy a land not great in size or in natural resources. Nevertheless, their economy and their standard of living far outstrip that of the Soviet Union, which was on the winning side of the war, which was given all of Eastern Europe as a gift, and which has more people, more land and more natural resources than Japan. A similar comparison could be made between North and South Korea, East and West German, and mainland China and Hong Kong. Capitalism, not socialism, has unlocked the secrets of wealth and sustained growth. Capitalism, not socialism, has been the better friend of the poor. Socialists, not capitalists, ought to feel the pangs of guilt revealed by Socialism. Poverty circles around socialist ideas and socialist ideologues wherever they come to power. Shocking as it is to some, by the 1980's the average Black's per capita annual income under apartheid in South Africa was higher than that of the

average white under Communism in the Soviet Union. In short, while capitalism and the Church are not perfect, neither are they what Ellul describes. Nor is Socialism.

Despite Ellul's groundless claim that communist tactics are consistent with communist goals, it is obvious that communists preach liberation and practice enslavement. As long as the same band of happy thugs continues to occupy the Kremlin and to sustain the Gulag, we must not say, as Ellul does that "they accomplish what Christianity preaches but fails to practice" (p. 6). Such ideas are scandalous and reprehensible. Have we forgotten Solzhenitsyn so soon?

That is why Ellul must not say, as he does say with regard to Fernando Belo's communism, that he respects the choice of others to be Communists and does not question it (p. 86). Nor should one say, with Ellul, that Belo's leftist revolutionism is a "perfectly respectable" choice. It is not. But, Ellul's muddled sense of Christianity and of Communism permits him to make these and other such abhorrent assertions, such as that Belo's view of the "radical opposition between God and Money, God and the State" and "God and Caesar" are not only true, but "truly evangelical" (p. 89). In other words, because of his partial acceptance of Communist claims, one can tax Ellul with the same charge with which he taxes Belo: he "appears not to suspect [that] Marx's thought is a whole -- a precise, integrated unit, based on a thorough method. Once one has adopted it, one cannot mix it with other methods and concepts." (p. 94).

Second, Ellul's understanding of history is less than reliable. For example, he tells us that "often an ideology springs up to parry an ideology-free practice" and that "capitalism is a practice with no explicitly formulated ideology; socialist ideology arises to oppose it. Afterward, capitalism will produce a 'defense'" (p. 1). Not only is it a highly debatable (if not downright mistaken) notion that there is any such thing as an "ideology-free practice" or that capitalism, when it emerged, was one, it is patently false to claim that its ideology developed in response to Socialism. Karl Marx and *Das Kapital*, after all, come after Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations*, not before.

Such errors seem to arise from Ellul's peculiar view of ideology, a view wherein he tries to separate the inseparable. Contrary to Ellul, one cannot readily distinguish theology from ideology because the former category is a subset of the latter. To distinguish theology from ideology is no 'more useful than to distinguish Irishmen from humanity. One might well distinguish good theology from bad ideology, or good theology from bad, but one need not do what Ellul tries to do. His attempt is based upon a definition of "ideology" so fully idiosyncratic that if one looked only at his definition, one could not guess the word it was intended to define. Flying in the face of every dictionary known to me in any language, Ellul defines ideology as "the popularized sentimental degeneration of a political doctrine or worldview; it involves a mixture of passions and rather incoherent intellectual elements, always related to present realities: (p.1). A large number of Ellul's conclusions are based upon this monstrous and unjustifiable definition. When the foundation is tilted, how can the superstructure stand straight?

Bauman, continued page 7

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# Forum Response

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## The Importance of Eschatology for Ellul's Ethics and Soteriology: A Response to Darrell Fasching

By Ken Morris

Dan Clendenin has strongly criticized Jacques Ellul for his affirmation of universal salvation. Darrell Fasching's position paper on "The Ethical Importance of Universal Salvation" took Dan Clendenin to task over his failure to recognize universal salvation as an integral part of Ellul's ethic of freedom, yet it must be pointed out that Ellul himself has said that one need not accept his universalism along with the main body of his approach to ethics.<sup>1</sup> Even though Fasching has made a helpful critique of Clendenin's analysis, he has failed to uncover the root of both Ellul's optimistic soteriology and his ethics. In order to understand, and indeed, not be distracted by Ellul's affirmation of universal salvation, we must grasp the centrality of Biblical eschatology to Ellul's thought. We must understand what Ellul means by "the presence of the Kingdom," an apt title for his seminal work.

Fasching sees universal salvation as "a necessary precondition for the ethic of freedom Ellul develops precisely to protest the collectivization of human behavior in a technology society." He uses the theologies of John Howard Yoder and Juan Luis Segundo to argue that universalism, by undermining the theological rationale and ethical motivation which have historically promoted Christianity as a collectivizing religion, serves to free up the church from its worries about converting the world and "rechannel(s) the energy of Christians in the direction which is most needed in our time, the ethical direction." Fasching draws on the assertion shared by Yoder and Segundo that the Gospel was betrayed when the church came to view its message as something everyone had to accept in order to be saved. The immediate result of this assumption was that the boundaries of salvation got drawn (and redrawn) in such a way that the greatest possible number of people could be included. Christianity abandoned its "ethic of discipleship" for an ethic of "Christian civilization." This shift failed to preserve the central biblical perspective of election as a call to vocation, and, instead promoted election as a special privilege. But the greatest significance of this move was that the emphasis in theology was shifted off of discipleship and onto salvation. Central to this shift was the definition of the boundaries of salvation *according to, and for the sake of, human understanding.*

While it is true that the contemporary church, especially the conservative wing, has a preoccupation with personal, future salvation, and while it is also true that an affirmation of universal salvation effectively undermines this emphasis on soteriology, it does not necessarily follow that Ellul's universalism and his ethics of freedom are inseparable. Both Ellul's ethics of freedom and his soteriology are rooted in his eschatology. One must understand this if one is not to be distracted by his universalism.

Ellul claims that Romans 8, which he feels is a fundamentally universalistic proclamation, has indirectly inspired all the research and writing he has done over the last fifty years.<sup>2</sup> A specific reading of Romans 8 was the final stage in what Ellul elusively refers to as "a very brutal and very sudden conversion to faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> He identifies three essential and interdependent themes in Romans 8: the salvation of the world, the suffering of the present time, and freedom. These three themes became the basis of all of his life's study and proclamation.

According to Ellul's exegesis of Romans 8, every individual is in solidarity with the whole of creation: "The creation's suffering, (Paul) tells us, arises out of human sin - out of my sin." Therefore, if one per-

son can be saved out of their sin, then the whole creation is concerned. "I can't be liberated or emancipated by myself.... All creation - humans, animals, things - all are promised salvation, reconciliation, new birth, new creation."

The second theme in Romans 8 is the suffering of the present time. These sufferings are the inevitable subjection to "the law of sin and death" (8:2) which Ellul understands as bondage, obligation, fatality and biological, cultural, social, economic and political conditioning. The work of God in Jesus Christ ruptures these inescapable necessities by introducing hope. Hope, central to Ellul's theology, is defined as the immediate expression of the eschatological and freedom is the ethical expression of hope.<sup>4</sup>

Freedom from necessity and fate is only possible in "the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ." Not only have we all been set free, all creation will be set free. There is a Now of that liberation as well as a Not Yet. Salvation is "a liberation that puts me on the path of freedom." In Ellul's personal discipleship under Christ both Christian hope, which is expressed in his ethics of freedom, and universal salvation are rooted in the Eschaton. "I go through all the miseries of the world carried by this hope, writes Ellul, "because I know that both those who know of it and those who don't are walking together to meet their Lord and Savior."<sup>5</sup>

Given the historically soteriological focus of Christian theology, it is understandable that Fasching would argue for a direct connection between Ellul's theology and ethics. Both Clendenin and Fasching grasp the significance of Ellul's eschatological approach to theology and ethics, the same eschatological approach which gave rise to his universalism, but neither has stepped back far enough from the context of their thinking to recognize the effect that this traditional preoccupation with soteriology has had on their own theologies. For that matter, neither has Ellul.

Clendenin betrays his preoccupation with soteriology by choosing this area to mount "one of his most devastating critiques of Ellul." Fasching is correct in questioning the consistency of Clendenin's stance that adopts the ethics of freedom that are generated by Ellul's eschatology yet rejects the soteriology that issues from the same. Even so, Fasching falls short of ridding himself of a soteriological tendency by affirming, after Ellul, that in the apocalyptic/eschatological resolution of the historical dialectic between sacred and profane *all* persons are saved. The emphasis is still on salvation, in Fasching's case it is simply all inclusive.

One of Clendenin's critiques of Ellul's universalism is that it fails to extend his dialectic beyond history. Fasching is correct in his assertion that this criticism is groundless since Ellul clearly maintains that the Biblical dialectic is eschatological and thus limited to history. But regardless of whether or not this tension, which centers on the soteriological question, is resolved at the Eschaton, an affirmation of universal salvation in the midst of history allows the dialectical tension to collapse. On the whole, however, Ellul grapples with this soteriological tension in a consistent manner, and even when he allows it to collapse at the times he affirms universal salvation he reveals that he is not entirely comfortable in so doing, adding, "I often teach in sermons and public Bible studies, but I never teach universalism. I do believe it, I attest to what I believe, I witness to it, but I don't teach it."<sup>6</sup> To affirm universalism as true, yet to refuse to teach it, is more than simply

a reluctance to be identified as a universalist. This hints at the dialectical tension of a soteriology rooted in eschatology. Geoffrey Bromiley picks up on this soteriological tension when he observes that Ellul's position strives to avoid "either an automatic salvation on the one side or a salvation dependent on giving oneself in faith to Christ on the other."<sup>7</sup> A main theme in *The Meaning of the City* is that God's characteristic love takes into account human free will, all human intentions, even if they are, in fact, revolts against God, and transforms them as material for the New Creation. Ellul recognizes that what he is contending is prone to misuse. The temptation inherent in this theological position of eschatological appropriation of everything and everyone is to give ourselves over to our selfish desires while counting on God's pardon. But he argues that any such misuse is based on the rupture between reality and truth initiated with the Fall. Ellul draws his analysis from the Biblical revelation and therefore he claims it is fundamentally an appeal to those who have already made a decision of faith: "Either we believe that the Bible expresses the revelation of God centered in Jesus Christ... or else we do not believe it. We must not confuse the two positions: asserting that since God pardons in the end we have nothing to worry about and thus can obey our every whim is taking the attitude of one who does not believe in revelation."<sup>8</sup>

The person who claims to both universal salvation and moral license is one who does not understand that truth does not equal reality under the Fall. He thinks he can assert the truth that all will be adopted by God in his love while at the same time be rejecting the Lordship of Christ. It does not occur to him that he is attempting to restrict this word of revelation to pure objectivity. He is separating the word of universal salvation from its necessary context of obedient discipleship and, in so doing, uses it to oppose that discipleship. He wants to separate his life for what he thinks is an objective truth, but the biblical revelation is that "all human speech is intrinsically connected to a person .... (when) someone has tried to separate it from the person who speaks it, it has lost its relationship with truth and has become a lie."<sup>9</sup> Only for the person who lives in the eschatological kingdom, that is, under Christ's Lordship, can this revelation be a reality. Only at the Eschaton are reality and truth reunited.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the present possibility of a situation arises in which two people can assert the truth of universal eschatological salvation but only the one who is in the eschatological kingdom, as demonstrated by his or her submission to the ethics of that kingdom, is speaking of reality in truth. For the other, salvation is not a reality.

In effect, what Ellul accomplishes with his eschatological dialectic is to remove the possibility of answering the soteriological question once and for all: yet he does just that. Ellul has stated that, "the soteriological dimension is diminished with respect to the dimension of the kingdom."<sup>11</sup> With the advent of the Kingdom (though hidden and not yet fulfilled) in the coming of Jesus, the soteriological dimension is completely removed. Therefore, in affirming universal salvation Ellul is taking an unjustifiable liberty with the eschatological dialectic, a liberty that causes more trouble and confusion than it is worth. Especially since the soteriological tension is, in and of itself, sufficient to move our theological focus off of salvation and back onto discipleship and the kingdom of God. Ellul's perspective on salvation and his ethics of freedom share a common root in his eschatology, but they are only indirectly connected.

Vernard Eller (University of La Verne) is a scholar familiar with Ellul who has effectively grasped the importance of retaining a soteriological tension. Eller wants to walk a narrow path in his soteriology, one that most contemporary theologians, with their central focus on salvation, would find difficult to accept. On the one hand, he feels that it is wrong to assert that there will inevitably be some people who will not be saved. On the other hand, contra Ellul, he believes that it is just as wrong to assert that all human beings will ultimately be saved.

Since one cannot be sure of either particularism or universalism, the most one can propose is a "universalistic possibility." This effectively moves our focus off of salvation and onto the ethic of discipleship grounded in our response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Ellers universalistic possibility (see his *Revelation: The Most Revealing Book of the Bible*) is a third soteriological position, and one which moves beyond the particularism/universalism impasse by preserving the tension of the eschatological dialectic. It only becomes an option, however, after we have been able to identify our misleading emphasis on personal, future salvation as unbiblical and heeded Ellul's call for "re-eschatologization" of Christian theology.

Presently we find ourselves trapped in a circle of incriminations. Contemporary scholars and theologians who begin to rediscover the eschatological root of biblical discipleship and begin to tentatively work out their understanding of the soteriological tension, usually, by attempting to balance particularism with a broader sense of God's graceful action, are invariably branded with the scarlet "U" of universalism. A good example is Ellul's predecessor, Karl Barth. In an "evangelical" response to Barth's theology entitled *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (1956), G.C. Berkouwer identified the key element of Barth's theology as the tension between universal election and human decision. Instead of seeing this as a dialectic, however Berkouwer pointed to it as a crossroads and wondered which way Barth would turn: "Probably no one will wish to venture a prophecy as to the direction in which Barth will further develop his thought. It is possible, however, to state in a nutshell his central thesis. This is that the triumph of election means, centrally and determinatively, the *a priori* divine decision of the election of all in the election of Christ."<sup>12</sup>

Barth responded to Berkouwer by attempting to move the emphasis away from the question of salvation and toward a freedom and pursuit of a knowledge of Christ: "I'm a bit startled at the title, *The Triumph...* Of course I used the word and still do. But it makes the whole thing seem so finished, which it isn't for me. *The Freedom...* would have been better. And then instead of... *Grace* I would have preferred ... *Jesus Christ*."<sup>13</sup>

All this is particularly significant for the contemporary church as it grapples with the issues of evangelism and social action. As long as our focus remains on personal, future salvation, we can never be entirely comfortable with a renewed emphasis on an ethic of discipleship. But if soteriology can be grasped in terms of a tension rooted in Biblical eschatology, then we can move beyond the either/or approach (either particularism or universalism) in which the majority of contemporary, orthodox, Christian theology has sunk its roots.

<sup>1</sup> David W. Gill, ed., unpublished interview with Ellul, Bordeaux, France (July 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Ellul, "How I Discovered Hope," *The Other Side* (March 1980), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age* (New York: Seabury, 1971), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment* (New York: Seabury, 1971), p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Gill, Unpublished interview with Ellul (July 1982)

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays, eds. Christians and Van Hook (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 40

<sup>8</sup> Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237-269.

<sup>11</sup> Ellul, *In Season, Out of Season* (Harper & Row, 1982), p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> As quoted in Gregor G. Bolich, *Karl Barth and Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

# A Second Forum Response to Fasching

by Marva J. Dawn

In response Darrell Fasching's article on "The Ethical Importance of Universal Salvation" in the premier issue of *The Ellul Studies Bulletin*: It seems to me that throughout his critique of Clendenin's objections to Ellul's notion of universal salvation Fasching confuses two very important and necessarily distinct issues. Underlying all three points of Fasching's argument is a confusion of evangelistic coercion/Constantinian power and the particularity of the gospel.

John Yoder is right to criticize the Constantinian coercion that demanded conversion (a better choice than losing one's life!) and thereby watered down the ethics of Christian discipleship. But that coercion is not identical to the belief that salvation was made possible for the human race particularly through the gift of Jesus Christ, in whom all human beings are invited to have faith.

Rather than the notion of universal salvation, the idea that Jesus alone is "the way, the truth, and the life" is the necessary pre-condition for an ethic of freedom. Without him a person struggles under the un-freedom of trying to make ones own way, of following all the right steps to find the truth, and of expending great effort to create and justify one's life.

The gift of salvation in Christ is offered freely. God does not coerce us to accept it. Moreover, God's grace sets us free re respond to that salvation with lives that carry on what Fasching calls "the struggle with the demonic dehumanization and collectivization which occurs in history." Consequently, the Christian ought not to use power to coerce others into accepting the good news of God's gift in Jesus. Fasching rightly criticizes Constantinian link with power, but throws the bay out with the bath water when he also rejects the uniqueness of Christ's victory over the powers.

Ellul, Yoder and Hauerwas all are right to condemn the unbiblical notions that Christians are in charge, but this ought not to be confused with the idea the Christians have a great gift to offer the rest of the world - the grace of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Fasching falsely links "the desire to run the world" with the belief that Christ alone is the means to salvation. Unfortunately, throughout history, since Constantine, Christians have used power instead of appeal in their evangelism, but that was not the case in the early church. All its members were both pacifists and also advocates of Peter's confession that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among [humankind] by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

## Fasching's Reply

I very much appreciate the thoughtful responses to my essay by Ken Morris and Marva Dawn. I must say that in many ways I find Ken Morris' essay persuasive. I agree with him that it would be desirable (given the typical narcissistic emphasis on personal future salvation) to remove the issue of "salvation" from the theological vocabulary altogether, replacing it with a focus on eschatology. I find it distracting, and almost embarrassing, to have to spend so much time discussing it when our focus is on the response of theology to a technological civilization. And yet, just because there is such a prevalent misuse of this theme which does distract from the ethical-eschatological dimension, such a discussion is unavoidable. Given this past history I wonder if it is really possible to attempt to sidestep the issue as Mr. Morris seeks to do. I am afraid that Vernard Eller's position, at least as interpreted by Mr. Morris, may not really undercut the motivation to turn the whole world into a collectivist Christian civilization. Agnosticism about salvation, Max Weber argued, actually led Calvinists to be more compulsive in spreading Protestant Christian civilization. If it is true of Ellul's position, as Mr Morris says, that "an affirmation of universal salvation effectively undermines this emphasis on soteriology" it may be (given our past history) the only way to undercut a collectivist ethic and recover an ethic of discipleship. I recognize that Mr. Morris is right to warn that affirming universal salvation in the midst of history may collapse the dialectical tension necessary for an ethic of discipleship. Paul faced the same problem in preaching that in Christ all things are permitted. Some took this as an invitation to license. That is why it is probably good that the scriptures are ambiguous on this matter. No one can reasonably claim certain knowledge on this issue and take things for granted. It is better to have some doubts even as we live by hope.

I am less persuaded by Marva Dawn's position. I do not see how the statement - "the gift of salvation in Christ is offered freely. God does not coerce us to accept it" - can be true if the consequence of refusal is hell and damnation. It is only offered freely if one accepts Ellul's premises concerning universal salvation. Dawn opposes "universal salvation" to the notion that "Jesus alone is the way" but for Ellul this is a false opposition since he affirms both. Dawn concludes her argument with Acts 4:12 (i.e., there is salvation in no other name), apparently to oppose it to my conclusion with 1 Timothy 4:10 (i.e., God is savior of the whole human race, especially all believers). It is interesting, however, that on her premises one is forced to choose between these two scriptures but on Ellul's premises one can consistently affirm the truth of both.

Forum, M. Bauman continued.

Ellul argues that while Christianity is not an ideology, it can degenerate into one as when, for example, it becomes "a means for distinguishing those who are right from those who are wrong [the saved and the damned" (p.2)]. But, Christianity did not become a means for making such determinations; that is something it was from the very beginning. Ellul, one begins to think, does not understand the nature of the very religion he is attempting to promote and to protect. "Christianity," he says, "is the destruction of all religions" and of all "beliefs" (p.2). Because Christianity is, on any common sense view, undeniably a religion and entails beliefs, one cannot but wonder after reading such statements (1) if Christianity is not an enemy to itself, or (2) if Ellul uses language with grotesque imprecision and license. For many, the second option recommends itself most convincingly. So also does the conclusion that imprecise language is inescapably tied to muddled thinking.

This book's muddle is extensive. Ellul's skewed vision of history and of economic principles and reality are sometimes shocking, as when he tells us that Caesar is the creator of money (p. 168). For over 200 years, since Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, economists have known that money *antedates* government and that it arises from human action, not human design. Government recognizes the medium of human exchange and adapts itself to it. Government does not create money. But such ideas are (so far as this book is concerned) unknown to Ellul. He nowhere shows a knowledge or understanding of classical or of Austrian economics. If his index is to be trusted, Hayek, Von Mises, Schumpeter, Ricardo, Hume, Smith, Say, Bastiat, Gilder and Sowell form no part of Ellul's knowledge of economics. I dare say that without knowing them, one could not understand Marx. Perhaps that is why Ellul believes that Marx was "admirably well acquainted" with the problems of his day, that Marx's misdirected and ineffective theories can be labeled "solutions," and that his anti-theism was not an essential part of his ideology (pp. 4, 153).

And what is one to make of the grossly exaggerated assertions that "both the Old and New Testaments take exception to all political power" and that "the state's prosperity always implies the death of innocents" (pp. 171, 172, emphases added)?

In short, I believe Ellul misunderstands history, economics, Communism and even Christianity itself. In this book, Ellul does not adjudicate the Christian tradition, Christian wisdom, or Christian revelation in a capable or well-informed way.

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trusted with the more affirmative views of technology found in Talcott Parsons and Herbert Marcuse and the negative view of technology found in Martin Heidegger in relation to technological time and space (chapter IV) and technological causality and substance (chapter V). The affirmation of technology is coordinate with an autonomous view of the human, the negation of technology with a heteronomous view. The concluding chapter VI sketches a theonomous view of technology. "Human technology is ambiguous (creative and destructive), because human being is estranged from its own ground and source. Autonomous social ethics (Parsons, Marcuse) cannot create an unambiguously good technological society because it cannot overcome the existential situation. Heteronomous social ethics (Heidegger) cannot create the common good because it cannot reimpose the primal relation to origins. And insofar as all of these ethical interpretations are expressed in terms of a self-sufficient finitude, none can grasp either the depth of human estrangement, nor the ultimate source of transcendence required for its fulfillment. Only when human artifice and innovation are seen as derivative and existentially distorted can the ambiguity of the technological era be grasped:

We cannot close our eyes any longer to the fact that every gain produced – for example, by scientific and technical progress – implies a loss; and that every good achieved in history is accompanied by a shadow, an evil which uses the good and distorts it.

Any social ethic which fails to grasp this central reality is doomed to swing with the movements of history between an unwarranted optimism and an equally unwarranted despair over the human condition" (pp. 225-226). A truly theonomous view of technology will affirm its creativity and value production as such but also contain "an element of 'technical self-limitation'" (p. 232). This limitation will be guided by organization under a democratic socialism. Originally a doctoral dissertation directed by Langdon Gilkey.

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