

The

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Forum

A Forum For Scholarship on Theology in a Technological Civilization

## The Utopian Theology of Gabriel Vahanian, p. 3ff

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Welcome to issue number five of *The Ellul Studies Forum*. Next to Jacques Ellul, probably no theologian has written as consistently and persistently on the theme of theology and technology as Gabriel Vahanian. It is no accident that Ellul sees him as the most important theologian writing in France today and describes his utopian theology as our only hope for the future. From his 1961 book *The Death of God through God and Utopia: The Church in a Technological Civilization* (1977) to his newest *Dieu anonyme, ou la peur des mots* (*God Anonymous, or Fear of Words*, 1989) the singular underlying and unifying theme has been the impact of technological civilization on Christian faith, theology and ethics.

The power of Vahanian's work lies in the fact that he does not simply take technology as one more topic on the agenda of Christian theology but rather explores the way in which technology alters the inner texture of theological thought itself. In so doing he reveals the inner affinity between the utopianism of technology and the eschatological utopianism of Biblical faith – an affinity whose common term is the human capacity for speech, for the word. Exploring the implications of his work is the main theme of this issue and the focus of *Forum I*. This section is introduced with my own brief essay on the significance of Vahanian's work. Then Lonnie Kleiver, of Southern Methodist University, gives us a masterful essay review of Vahanian's book *God and Utopia* and Philippe Aubert, a pastor of the Reformed Church of Alsace, does likewise for Vahanian's new book (not yet released in English) *Dieu anonyme, ou la peur des mots*. This is followed with a short essay by Vahanian on Paul Tillich's ambivalent treatment of the utopian theme. The result, I hope, will be a clearer picture of the significance of Vahanian's utopian theology.

In *Forum II* we have two further essays. The first, by Sylvain Dujancourt (a student of Vahanian's at the University of Strasbourg), outlines the significance of "Law and Ethics in Ellul's Theology." The second, by Sergio Silva, a professor of theology at the Catholic University of Chile, compares the theological understanding of technology in recent Papal pronouncements with the documents of the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. Finally, as usual, thanks to the diligent work of Jim Grote and Carl Mitcham, we have the latest installment in their continuing bibliographical annotation of current work in the area of theology and technology.

I hope all *Forum* readers will find this issue of interest. I wish to express my appreciation to Charles Creegan for his fine translations of two articles for this issue. Finally, please note that there will be a meeting of Ellul scholars on Friday morning preceeding the annual AAR Conference to be held in New Orleans this year. See page 6 for details.

Darrell J. Fasching, Editor

N.B. All essays in this issue have been modified as needed to conform to current standards of inclusive language.

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# Book Reviews

*The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism.* By Robert Wuthnow. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, 189pp., \$16.95 paper.

by David L. Russell

William Tyndale College, Farmington Hills, MI.

The ever growing interest in American Evangelicalism has resulted in a smorgasbord of thought-provoking publications. While many new historiographies continue to be published on evangelicalism and fundamentalism, an impressive number of works are now being produced from within sociological circles. In a review article in the *Evangelical Studies Bulletin* (Fall 1989) historian Mark Noll quips, "It is becoming increasingly difficult for historians of religion to maintain their prejudices against sociologists." The gist of this statement has to do with the positive impression sociologists of religion have been making, not only upon the field of religious history, but upon the varied fields of theology as well.

At the top of the list of impressive publications from a sociological perspective is this most recent work by Robert Wuthnow, professor of sociology at Princeton University. Interestingly, this book follows one year behind his preceding publication, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), considered to be the most concise history of American religion since World War II.

Wuthnow's analysis is centered around the dynamics of two competing groups in American society, conservative evangelicals and religious liberals, both of which are influenced by a seemingly progressive secularism. To begin with, the author identifies three main sectors at work in American society: 1) The public sector, 2) The private sector, and 3) The voluntary sector. While many social theorists identify only two sectors, public and private, it is Wuthnow who opts for the voluntary sector. It is his contention that the voluntary sector possesses aspects of both the public and the private sectors. The Church functions in the voluntary sector, however, the changing dynamics in society are changing the role and relationship of such voluntary organizations to society overall. In light of the relationship of the Church as a voluntary organism in American society there are added dynamics at work within the Church which increasingly make ambiguous and complicate that relationship. Wuthnow identifies it in the historic break between religious conservatives and religious liberals as far back as the years immediately following the Civil War, but perhaps as far back as the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The contested terrain (chapter 3) of conservatives and liberals has continually drawn them "...into the public sphere in recent years" (p.41) yet with little progress in terms of arriving at a common ground.

Ongoing debates continue over the abortion issue, prayer in the public schools, gay and lesbian rights, and the nuclear arms race to mention just a few. Instead of arriving at constructive conclusions conservatives and liberals resort to a tit for tat game of "Argumentum Ad Hominem." What, then, is the end result? According to Wuthnow, it "...has been a travesty of the profession of love, forgiveness, and mutual forbearance" (p.64). Wuthnow uses the Presbyterian Church as an institutional model for the past and present struggles between conservatives and liberals not for the reason that there have been no struggles in any of the other denominations, but mainly because of the magnitude of the strug-

gle for Presbyterians. Division has haunted the Presbyterian Church from the days of the "New Light" versus the "Old Light" controversy during the First Great Awakening to the present day divisions between Presbyterian conservatives and Presbyterian liberals. The possibility of reconciliation, while hoped for by some, is in Wuthnow's opinion, slim to none. He in fact argues that the cleavage between these two warring parties is unfortunate for the reason that the conflict is skewing efforts to reconcile and more clearly see the biblical mandates for love and understanding.

In part II Wuthnow turns his attention to the "Dynamics of the Secular." The focus of this section deals with the ways in which the state, the media, and education all effect the function and role of religion in American society. In particular is the concern for the tendency of the state to drive individuals into various forms of civil privatism.

Conversely, there has been a privatization of America's faith attributable to many factors, including the increasingly pluralistic nature of American religion, and the greater identification of personal faith with the private sector. Interestingly enough Wuthnow accuses the widening appeal of the religious mass media of contributing to the privatization of faith. The televised religious format becomes a surrogate for the real thing. In other words, who needs the First Baptist Church down the road when you can tune into the "Glass Cathedral" on the tube? In this sense the religious couch-potato can receive dynamic Bible teaching and words of encouragement while maintaining a detached commitment obliging themselves only to mailing in an occasional check.

The battle between "Science and the Sacred" (chapter 7) has also been a contributing factor in the divisions between conservatives and liberals. For this study, the presumption that science is a contributing factor in the advancement of secularism seems to be refuted by the evidence that Wuthnow presents. The available evidence appears to indicate that there is a greater likelihood of secularization within the disciplines of the social sciences and the humanities.

In summary, Wuthnow poses a challenge to the evangelical academic community to continue working at developing credible scholarship and the utilization of the resources at their disposal. According to Wuthnow, "the intellectual community and the public at large have a tremendous interest in knowing more about evangelical Christianity" (p.175). So what seems to be the problem in achieving greater goals in the evangelical community? Wuthnow seems to indicate that more reconciliation needs to take place between evangelical Christians and liberal Christians.

Overall, I found this work well reasoned and adequate in its analysis of evangelicals and liberals. However, at times I got the sense that Wuthnow failed to clearly discriminate between fundamentalists and evangelicals and as a result he seemed to define conservative evangelicals as fundamentalists. I do believe that Wuthnow made periodic attempts to distinguish between the two (e.g., pp. 43 and 171). It should also be understood that the terms evangelical and fundamentalist are ambiguous and not so easily defined. It will be interesting to see what Wuthnow may produce in the future, but this work is bound to be one of his best.

## The Utopian Theology of Gabriel Vahanian

### Gabriel Vahanian's "Utopian Connection" -- Speaking of God, the Human and Technology

by Darrell J. Fasching

All too typically contemporary theological reflection on technology seems awkward and inept, as if we are stumbling around looking for a handle on this phenomenon -- which, of course, is precisely our situation. For the most part, theology is treated as one world of discourse and technology another. In Gabriel Vahanian's view, a theology which does not speak the discourse of its culture cannot speak to that culture. As a theological ethicist or theologian of culture he understands his task to be that of appropriating and transforming the linguistic universe of our technical civilization. The power of his work lies in his ability to locate the linguistic connection between the biblical tradition and our technological civilization.

"No epithet better qualifies this post-Christian age," Vahanian argued in his 1961 book, *The Death of God*, "than, 'technological'" (N.Y.: Braziller, 1961, 176-177). Long before *Time* magazine turned "the Death of God" into a media event, Vahanian had used that phrase to suggest that technological civilization was radically altering the experiential-linguistic texture of human existence, creating a "post-Christian civilization" typified by "a cultural incapacity for God." In a technological age the Medieval language of "supernaturalism" no longer speaks the reality of God. The problem, he argued, is not so much secularization as it is a religiosity disengaged from the world. Christian faith has been reduced to a religiosity living in a separate world, focused on changing worlds rather than changing the world. That technological world which Vahanian first analyzed almost three decades ago was (and still is) a world desperately in need of "the spirit of utopian and radical Christian adventurousness, . . . a radical rupture with the past and a bold new beginning (1961, 188)."

That is not a bad description of the theological enterprise which Vahanian has been engaged in since then -- "a radical rupture with the past and a bold new beginning." A world which has no other language of faith than that of another world (in this case the language of Medieval supernaturalism) is a world which has no capacity to speak of the living God and so ends up endlessly *Waiting for Godot*. A world which has no contemporaneous language to speak of God has no God to speak of. For the living God is not only the God of creation, the God who *speaks us*, but equally the God of incarnation, the God whom *we speak* (*Dieu anonyme*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989). If the God of creation is not first of all the God of incarnation, if the word does not become flesh through the linguistic structures and sensibilities of our contemporary existence, then "God is dead."

The "Death of God" as a cultural event suggested that with the emergence of a technological civilization human existence had undergone a fundamental mutation. The sacred had migrated, as Vahanian put it in *God and Utopia* (N.Y.: Seabury, 1977), from nature to technology. The theological task is to be as faithful to the linguisticity of our world as the Medievals were to theirs. Understanding themselves to part of the sacred order of nature, transcendence was expressed in terms of the supernatural. Today we

understand ourselves in terms of technology and transcendence will have to be expressed in terms of its utopianism. We no longer think of ourselves as living within a fixed order of nature and subject to an unchangeable human nature. We now seek not only to remake our world but also our selves. "Existentialism," Vahanian argued already in *The Death of God*, "is related to Christianity in the same way as technology is. Neither is thinkable without the Christian culture which originated them (1961, 211)." The technological self is no robot, says Vahanian, but the self which makes itself (*God and Utopia*, 1977, 136). And this same existential self-understanding pervades our managerial attitude toward our social structures. A technological civilization has an inherent utopian propensity, an inherent openness to transformation which can only be explained by understanding it as a child of biblical eschatology.

If ours is a Post-Christian age it is so because unlike the Middle Ages which were still shaped by pre-Christian Classical world views, the technological structures of our world are a direct product of the impact of biblical faith upon Western culture. The irony is that, because of this, the Gospel is more directly attuned to a technological civilization than it ever was to the Medieval mythological and metaphysical world view of "Christendom" -- so much so that to speak of God in terms of "nature" and "super-nature" in our world seems foreign and unintelligible.

Every myth of ages past, Vahanian argues, was a "technique of the human" which, while promoting human identity as "human nature," ended up settling humans, not in nature but in culture (1977, 86). Culture is the uniquely human realm, the artificial realm or "second nature" we create through our capacity for speech. As such, culture is inherently technological. Entranced by myth, we once thought of ourselves as part of the order of nature. But when technological consciousness demythologized these myths we became aware that we dwell not in nature but in language -- the realm of culture. We have come to realize that our understandings of nature are themselves cultural products. To be a linguistic creature rather than a creature of "nature" is to be an eschatological-utopian creature. For language provides no permanent place to dwell but rather demands that we become what we are not. Both personal identity and the structure of society is rendered radically open. Modern technological civilization is uniquely and selfconsciously a child of the word.

For Vahanian, "God," our "humanness" and "technology" are related, not extrinsically but intrinsically. They converge in our utopian capacity for culture, that is, our capacity for speech. Theology in a technological civilization cannot be "natural theology" but only a "theology of culture" -- a theology of the word. Natural law and natural theology were always an ill-fitting graft onto a biblical faith which insisted that we are created in the image of a God without image, a God Wholly Other than nature and known only through speech. Human identity, understood "in the image" of

*Continued on page 16.*

# God and Utopia: The Church in a Technological Civilization

by Gabriel Vahanian (N.Y.: Seabury, 1982)

An Essay Review by Lonnie D. Kliever

Southern Methodist University

This essay first appeared in the summer issue of *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 11/3 (1982), pp.321-324, and is reprinted here with the permission of the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion. (Note: In transcribing this paper bold face emphasis has been added to certain passages.)

Perhaps no contemporary theologian is more frequently misunderstood than Gabriel Vahanian. Often wrongly associated with other movements (Left-wing Barthianism, Death-of-God theology), he has gone his own way in fashioning a theological vision at once distinctively biblical and uncompromisingly modern. The constructive lineaments of that theology have been partially obscured by the iconoclastic tone and message of Vahanian's writings in the 1960s -- *The Death of God* (New York: Braziller, 1961), *Wait Without Idols* (New York: Braziller, 1964), and *No Other God* (New York: Braziller, 1966). With the publication of *God and Utopia: The Church in a Technological Civilization* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), the full shape and significance of Vahanian's theology has emerged. In this genuinely original and radical statement, he establishes the essential identity between a 'utopian humanism' and an 'eschatological faith' and sketches out the linguistic and ecclesiological form that faith must take in the 'technological civilization' that is dawning in our time.

Vahanian sees all human existence as essentially utopian. This 'utopianism of the human reality' functions both as a limit and as a horizon. As horizon, "the human" confronts human beings as a dare without prototype. As limit, "the human" contests every expression of life as less than a final achievement. Both dimensions of the utopian are caught etymologically in the Greek word for utopia -- *ouk topos*. Human life happens where strictly speaking "it has no place." This utopian "otherness" or "beyondness" is, of course, what religions speak of symbolically as "God." As we shall see, there are very different ways of conceiving the relation between "God" and humans. But whatever the conceptuality, God is God and humans are human only so long as they remain other to one another.

There can be no doubt that for Vahanian biblical faith is paradigmatic for this joining of the utopian and of the religious. Indeed, the utopian character of authentic humanism and the "eschatic" nature of biblical faith are structurally identical. But this formal identity must not be misunderstood. Vahanian does not generalize utopian humanism and eschatic faith to some universal experience enjoyed equally by all. Both the human and the divine come to appearance only in language and that language is always culturally and religiously particular. The utopian reality of the human and of God is always expressed in a culture's own religiosity and every religiosity is articulated in a specific cultural framework. This means that a given religious and cultural symbol system may either express or repress true humanity and true divinity. Any given symbol system can spell death or life to humans and to God!

Vahanian calls each such symbol system a "technique of the human," and notes that each technique is borne by a distinctive "vector of culture." The heart of this theological program centres in sorting out the ways these techniques differ and why their vectors change with the passage of time. He begins by marking a crucial distinction between "soteriological" and "eschatological" techniques of the human. Soteriological techniques (religions of salvation) envision God as the condition of the human. In soteri-

religiosity, God's transcendence is *exterior* to humans and the world. Human existence is defined by "scarcity" and "heteronomy" and the utopian destiny of the human is projected into *another world* which can only be anticipated through "spiritual" evasion of this world. By contrast, eschatological techniques (religions of the reign of God) see humans as the condition of God. Eschatic religiosity sees God's transcendence as *anterior* to human beings and the world. Human existence is marked by "abundance" and "autonomy" and the utopian destiny of the human is realized in this world becoming *other* through "bodily" engagement with it.

Vahanian further divides soteriological techniques according to whether humanization is seen as a liberation from nature or from history. A soteric religiosity vectored on *nature* centres in a "supernatural" conception of transcendence. Only a return to a supernatural world above can make up for the mysteries and miseries of life in the natural world. By contrast, a soteric religiosity vectored on *history* turns on an "apocalyptic" conception of transcendence. Only the arrival of the apocalyptic world ahead can resolve the vicissitudes and injustices of historical existence. In other words, these soteriological techniques of the human rest on "mythic" conceptions of transcendence. They distinguish humans and God, world and kingdom, by *separating* them spatially and temporally. Consequently, these mythic carriers are never adequate for expressing true humanism or biblical faith. Soteriological religiosity always consigns the utopian reality of humans and God to some paradisaical past or apocalyptic future. Their utopianism has consisted largely "in changing worlds rather than in changing the world."

Given these distinctions, Vahanian argues that Christianity has been a "salvation religion" throughout most of its history. To be sure, there was no way historically that Christianity could have avoided taking the cultural form of a soteric faith because the only cultural vectors available in the Greco-Roman world were mythic. Moreover, these supernatural and historical theisms at least mediated the utopian reality of God and humans in an *ambiguous* way. Belief in another world above or ahead at least stood guard iconoclastically against all temptations to deify nature or society. The existence of the church at least prevented total disengagement from every concern for the world. But even these "misshapen utopianisms" have lost their power to bring the human and God to appearance in the modern world. **An axial shift in modern sensibilities has "dishabilitated" the entire Christian tradition by undermining its mythic framework.** The God of salvation religion who fulfills life from above nature or beyond history is no more! All mythic "cultural vehicles" of transcendence have been dissolved by the triumph of technological civilization. Modern technology has delivered humans from the mythic world of scarcity and heteronomy into the technological world of abundance and autonomy. Modern technology has made humans *producers* of nature and history rather than their *products*.

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# Dieu anonyme, ou la peur des mots [God Anonymous, or Fear of Words], by Gabriel Vahanian (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1989)

An Essay Review by Philippe Aubert  
Pastor, Reformed Church of Alsace

*Translated by Charles L. Creegan*

## God Speaks Our Language

Many theologies have endless prolegomena. One may enquire into the relation between faith and reason, between ontology and theology; lay the foundations of an existentialist, materialist or other reading of the Biblical tradition; reflect on the being of God and the being of humans. It is very true that all God-talk is grist for the Biblical mill. God may be defined as Alpha and Omega, the all-powerful, the judge or the gracious one. These conceptions of God are all present in the Biblical tradition, but the originality of the Biblical message over against other religions is not to be found in any of them.<sup>1</sup>

God is a God who speaks, the inverse of silent idols: "And like all speech, which binds even while liberating, God, bound to humanity, is only so bound by the word."

Even before Gabriel Vahanian, Christianity has certainly not lacked theologians who have placed this Biblical affirmation at the center of their theological thought. Far rarer are those who have accepted all the consequences. Barth himself fell by the wayside — a victim, like many others, of a hermeneutics of history. To say that God is speech, that God is connected to humanity only by language and not by virtue of an analogy of being, or some sort of historical conscience, is to radicalize to the point at which God escapes from the idol which we make as soon as we assign to God a name, a place, a history, be it ever so holy.

Here we can see a filiation with the thought of Bultmann, who, in his enterprise of demythologizing, had no other intention than to bring God back to the zero point, a point of no return at which only the new and the impossible are possible. That is what the Bible does when it forges the idea of redemption over against that of history, of creation over against that of nature.

Radicalized, God is no more tied to nature than to history. Holding to a hermeneutics of speech from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to resurrection, Vahanian elaborates in his book a veritable Systematic Theology. Diving back into the sources of Biblical tradition, his thought does not switch Gods at the whim of the diversity of Biblical texts, of our existential angst, or of passing trends.

Offered as prolegomena are the central affirmations of the Bible: God is speech, and its fulfillment: the Word made flesh. In this verbal condition, God and humanity are linked by language. If the break with ontotheology is not surprising, the anthropology found in Vahanian's thought is worthy of greater attention. In a world where often God has resolved the human question, but also—inevitably—humans have resolved the Divine question, Vahanian reminds us that far from opposing or confusing these questions, the Bible radicalizes them to the point of defining them in terms of alterity: an alterity which only language can establish.

Speech does not separate. It does not separate what God has joined together. It does not separate what is one—as a hand is one with another in clapping, or I with thou, God with humanity in metaphor. It is not metaphor which is a manner of speaking a language. It is language which is a metaphor. It is the power

of metaphor which bodies out the space of a speech as it makes of speech God's space: a space where humanity is the condition of God, where the reality of God is given with the reality of the world, but nevertheless without their becoming confused.<sup>2</sup>

Humans are grounded in God; like Adam, called Son of God, they have no other antecedents than speech. Thus they could not be defined as changelings of nature or as beings gifted with a historical conscience. Without precedents, each one is altogether as human as anyone, in the formula which Vahanian borrows from Jean-Paul Sartre. "Where even God is no more than a word. A word thanks to which humanity is no longer grounded and never will be solely grounded in nature—though we must first be human, and, like Adam, human first rather than the first human."<sup>3</sup>

Now it is clear that language cannot be reduced to a simple code of signs and symbols.

We are far from the conception of Paul Tillich, for whom religious language can only be symbolic: "[The symbol opens] up levels of reality which otherwise are hidden and cannot be grasped in any other way."<sup>4</sup> Tillich translates, he does not radicalize, so that for him the word "God" cannot be replaced since it participates in the Holy which it expresses. Translation only displaces or circumvents the Holy, it makes language an instrument or even a mask. For Vahanian, in speaking, God un masks, un-names, de-sacralizes, putting himself [herself] in question thanks to language which by nature is iconoclastic and utopian.

God can only be spoken!

## Speech and Utopia: God

Refusing to enclose God in a name, the Bible also constrains itself from enclosing God in a place: Biblical iconoclasm moves from the anonymity to the utopianism of God. For the myth of the Eternal Return or of the Earth-mother is substituted the hope in the Promised Land; to natural order which engenders an ethic of necessity is now propounded the Law, gracious order for which the only possible ethic is that of the impossible.

Master of the Universe, God creates. Thus is wiped out any idea of a generative Nature which takes care only of those it favors. So in the Old Testament, the appeal to nature as a norm and criterion of life yields to the Law. The Earth-mother yields to the Promised Land. And the Eternal Return yields to the Sabbath, while humans, whatever they may be in the natural order, are all equidistant from God.

Vahanian restores this utopianism, which succumbs to a sacral conception of God and of the world, by a formula which acts as leitmotif from beginning to end of the book: "Faith consists not in changing worlds, but in changing the world."<sup>5</sup>

## Salvation and Utopia: The Christ

Whether in a sacral or utopian conception of the world, every religion must address the question of salvation. For from Israel to the Church, salvation is the central problem of the Bible.

The answer to this question must lie in the Christic conception of God, but also—as Vahanian is at pains to show—in the Christic conception of humans. Classical Christology generally

develops in three parts. First is an ontological reflection on the person of Christ, which most often aims to emphasize the ontological specificity of Christ as against humans, or again to deny any differences; in this second case, the difference between Christ and us would come out existentially. The second part attempts to discover the historical foundations of the life of Jesus, while the third is given over to the soteriology which follows from the confession of Jesus Christ as savior.

For Vahanian, Jesus is no more the answer to the God question than He is to the human question. He absorbs neither, but rather sets them face to face in their alterity and their communion, thus becoming the covenant between God and humanity. The measure of God and of the person who is the Christ does not begin with the birth of Jesus, but with the faith of the believer. That is to say, faith guarantees its own foundation and the result of historical studies is of minor importance. Does not St. Paul himself settle the question by reminding us that we only know the Christ of the writings? The life of Christ begins with faith and the sense of God shown when, in Christ, God is not stuck in divinity nor the human in humanity, but God is of one body with humans, and in Christ "humanity is the condition of God."

Son of God, Christ does not represent the quintessence of God, but God's providence, in other words God's currency. Son of Man and thus native of the human, he does not symbolize the culmination of nature through the human phenomenon which would also be its conscience, but the novelty of humanity.<sup>6</sup>

More than ever it is a question of salvation. The word is made flesh to be embodied, to become Church as body of Christ--but on condition of becoming a social body in all of its dimensions, ethical, political, economic and cultural. Far from any mysticism, the thought of Vahanian ever returns to ethics: an ethics which permits us to change the world, as opposed to a mysticism which only changes worlds.

#### Utopianism of the Body and Social Order: The Spirit

Far from setting in opposition heaven and earth, God and humanity, or the flesh and the spirit, the Bible invites us to engage nature and its determinism, history and its absolutisms, and the social order.

The pneumatology of Vahanian does not rest on a subtle analysis of the different names which refer to the Spirit. The best way of understanding the third person of the Trinity is still the amazing story of Pentecost.

While Western theology has, for a variety of reasons, dangerously reduced the place of the Spirit, our author gives it a new spin which is not unsurprising. Rather than any mystical manifestation like glossolalia, the outpouring of the Spirit is nothing other than a new social order, an ecclesial vision of the world.

And how is this order to be recognized? From the fact that it falls into place once our behavior--on the social as well as the religious, cultural and ethical levels-- demonstrates the conviction that it is ours when our living is living the Christ.

To live the Christ and not simply in Christ. The nuance in the Pauline expression must not be pushed too far; Vahanian wishes to insist on the fact that the Spirit does not interiorize the Christ, but exteriorizes him, communicates him in every person's language. Every person, be they Parthian, Elamite, Mesopotamian, Jew or Greek, male or female, rich or poor.

Not satisfied to revise the social order which classifies people according to their merits, or privileges of land or blood, the Spirit moves between the individual and the communal -- [shaping] a community in which communion must not eclipse communication. St. Paul was already worried at the attitude of those Christians for

whom the edification of the neighbor was secondary to the mystical communion of speaking in tongues. It falls to Vahanian to take up the cause and to take on the interpretation of the famous passages which Paul devotes to this problem in the first letter to the Corinthians.

And would not God then be reduced to a mere effect of language--like that other Divine abyss, Being, or what fills it, the Holy? Speech postulates language. But when through misdirection it is called to postulate both more and less than language, it leaves the sphere of language. Then it serves to strengthen a vision of the world more mystical than ethical: dualistic, and providing a springboard for the initiates, the candidates for otherness. But if God is a God who speaks to us, God is willingly placed in question, less through nature and its catastrophism or history and its tragedy, than through language. It is in language that one recognizes the traces of God, as those of the wind in the grass, breath in the word, and the Spirit in the newness of the world and of life.<sup>6</sup>

In this book, Gabriel Vahanian shows that it is possible to escape the eternal problem of theism and atheism by returning to the roots of Biblical tradition.

Taking up the theses already expressed in *God and Utopia*, the author proceeds to a true theological reconstruction which, far from refuting tradition, restores it by reorienting it in a direction it should never have left. A theology in gear with modernity which returns to the Christian an awareness of faith, a capacity to grasp the reality of the world, not fleeing it, but rather changing it. On one condition: that the Church must show its mettle, it must not be afraid of words; for more than our past or our future it is speech which remains a challenge to humans and a hope of humanity.

#### Notes

1. Gabriel Vahanian, *Dieu Anonyme ou la peur des mots* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1989), p. 17.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
4. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York, Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 56 [cited in French translation--Tr.].
5. Vahanian, p. 79.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

\* Editor's note: Mr. Aubert makes a puzzling allusion here. I suspect he means to say, as Vahanian does say, that Paul reminds us that even if we once knew Christ in the flesh that is not how we now know him, for we now know him only in the Spirit. (2 Cor. 5:16).

### Ellul Forum Meeting at the AAR Convention

#### *A Critical Appraisal of Ellul's Sexual Ethics*

by Tom Hanks

author of *God So Loved the Third World*

Friday, November 17th, 1990  
at the New Orleans Marriott  
The Lafayette Room

# Theology of Culture: Tillich's Quest for a New Religious Paradigm

by Gabriel Vahanian

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for Jean-Pierre Richter

Whatever reasons are adduced by Paul Tillich when he claims that, under the circumstances of today's human cultural predicament, traditional theological ethics should give way to a theology of culture, one thing clearly stands out: the task at hand can be neither defined nor discharged properly unless it rests, firmly, on a religious analysis of culture. Immediately, however, another thing makes itself felt and grows and looms even larger than the former: it refers to what I shall call Tillich's quest for a new religious paradigm.

In *Theology of Culture* Tillich writes that if "religion is being ultimately concerned about that which is and should be our ultimate concern, [then] faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, and God is the name for the content of this concern."<sup>1</sup> But no sooner has he made this statement than he draws our attention to the fact that with it he points to "an existential, not a theoretical, understanding of religion."<sup>2</sup> But is that all there is to it? Nor would the question arise if, in the same paragraph, he did not invite it by admitting that "such a conception of religion has little in common with the description of religion as the belief in the existence of a highest being called God, and the theoretical and practical consequences of such a belief."<sup>3</sup> Having thus raised at least a question about the assumption that religion must be intrinsically tied up with a substantialist ontology, he adds, similarly, that another and for us equally significant consequence of "the existential conception of religion is the disappearance of the gap between the sacred and secular realm."<sup>4</sup> And yet, just as he retracts himself with respect to God as Being-itself, so also he will not really go so far as to drive a wedge between religion and the sacred much less discard that other, equally rampant, assumption according to which religion must intrinsically be tied up with the sacred.

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Casual as they may be, these statements bring nonetheless into focus what, to my mind, is really at stake in Tillich's shift from theological ethics to theology of culture.

To begin with, take the last words of the last quotation. Considering that normally what goes together with the sacred is the profane while religious is what goes together with secular, one is bound to wonder whether the disappearance of the gap is, for Tillich, the result of a process of desecralization or the result of a process of secularization. For reasons that will become clear as we go on, Tillich does not mean the former. But he really does not mean the latter either, since secularization -- of which he is critical, anyway -- at worst would amount to a displacement of the sacred, not its loss. And if so, there could be no disappearance of any kind of gap, either. Or else, it must result from a process of desecralization -- a process which, precisely, consists, not in obliterating religion, but in providing it with another ground than the sacred. Indeed, unless the gap to which Tillich consistently refers has disappeared, what would be the point of shifting from theological ethics to theology of culture? Given the ambiguities of Tillich's thought or his *existential* ambivalence about the secular (or, for

that matter, the sacred), the shift, once it is properly analyzed, should bring into evidence another yet equally exciting aspect of his thought, with consequences affecting not only ethics and society but also the language of faith and theology properly speaking. Meanwhile, the real nature of the shift and its shortcomings in Tillich's own handling of it are brought to light by raising a simple question. It can be phrased as follows: Obviously honing in on or beckoned by a new religious paradigm, what is it that prevents Tillich from ultimately giving up ontotheology, and the idea of God as Being-itself, for the sake of a theology rooted in the Word -- instead of merely using words? That is, to a theology attuned to the verbal condition of the human. What is it that keeps his thought firmly oriented to the sacred instead of prodding it into a theology of utopia?

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To be sure, what Tillich was concerned with, on his own admission, was a *religious* analysis of culture. But, given the previous remarks, it could well be that this first step was also the wrong one. Considering the vast upheavals generated by the successive scientific and technological revolution and their urgent implications for human self-understanding; considering in other (or, should I say, in his own) words, the cultural shaking of our religious foundations, should he not have instead been concerned with a cultural analysis of religion? Indeed, if language is "the basic cultural creation" and, Tillich goes on, of moreover, "every religious act, not only in organized religion, but also in the most intimate movement of the soul [i.e., not only in theoretical but also in existential religion] is culturally formed," in these times of spiritual crisis and shifting religious styles -- driving, for example, Protestants and Catholics into having nowadays more in common than they do with their respective sixteenth century ancestors -- would a cultural analysis of religion not have provided him with a better and more pertinent theological stance? Much as Tillich protests against ascribing religion to a "special realm" alongside a secular one, does he not himself consolidate such a cleavage even when he defines religion as "the substance of culture" and culture as "the form of religion"?<sup>5</sup> Inevitably, a definition of this type is bound to foster one kind of dualism or another, if it does not simply perpetuate a rather traditional, dichotomous understanding of reality.

Tillich's protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, this impression is not quite alleviated by statements to the effect that "the religious and the secular are not separated realms: they are within each other."<sup>6</sup> Such statements, however, are immediately counterbalanced if not neutralized by the rather telling admission that "this is not the way things actually are."<sup>7</sup> Actually, each realm tries or tends to dominate the other, even as, Tillich claims, on another, existential level, each of us drifts into estrangement or is responsive to both acceptance by God and self-acceptance.

Am I then still suggesting that for all practical purposes Tillich's understanding of the relation between religion and culture is grounded in the sacred? I am, in spite of the fact that he

defines the sacred as a passion for the secular. Am I equally suggesting that his understanding of the religious phenomenon and of Christianity in particular is one that is not so much grounded in "salvation" as one that reduces the Christian faith to a religion of salvation? I am once again, and again in spite of the fact that even for Tillich "salvation," "saving," and "savior" are words that need to "be saved themselves."<sup>8</sup> They are words whose efficacy has consistently lost to the "saving power of the technical control of nature," while at the same time the cure of souls is itself being practiced with a far "greater consciousness of the real meaning of grace" by depth psychology.

In a word, Tillich's reluctance to get rid of *being* in talking about God is in turn explained by his reluctance to get rid of the sacred. Interestingly, this twofold reluctance is accompanied by an even more significant acknowledgement, namely: both religion and culture are funded by language. True enough, what Tillich means by language is nothing more than a symbolic order and its tradition. And, although as an order this order is less and less conspicuous today for its adhering to the so-called vertical dimension rather than to the horizontal one, still it is thoroughly tangled with the sacred of which it remains captive instead of being pegged on utopia. Mistaking optimistic progressivism for "hope against hope," the utopian hope of which at times American civilization was only able to reflect a distorted image, Tillich points out that religion "had nearly forgotten the religious reservation, the vertical line, and had dedicated its force to the religious obligation, the horizontal line alone. It had consecrated progressivistic utopianism instead of judging and transcending it."<sup>9</sup> What he does not realize, however, is that religion has been undergoing a basic shift: in fact, if not yet theoretically, it is no longer tied up with the sacred. And Tillich has no conception of such a radical mutation of the religious experience. Inadvertently or not, he then writes: "The original terminology of scriptures and of the liturgies of the Ancient Church cannot be replaced. Mankind has archetypal words."<sup>10</sup>

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As is well known, Paul Tillich was by and large rather critical of utopia. He sees it as the ultimate sanction of secularism if not its final degeneration. No wonder he did not approve of Gogarten's overall vision of *Säkularisierung*. Yet he should not be rebuked for that. And he would not be altogether wrong if his own alternate concept of apologetics had been free of all suspicion. Indeed, utopia and the sacred do not quite mix. As Gilles Lapouge puts it, utopia is not propitious to the sacred.<sup>11</sup>

And no longer can the question be eluded, either. Something prevents Tillich from identifying the religious dimension with the spirit of utopia. Why? In spite of the entire thrust of his thought, what is it that, for example, drives him to contend that "no church is possible without a sacramental representation of the Sacred"?<sup>12</sup> Or does Tillich manage to overlook the fact that this kind of claim is scarcely possible without the prior confusion of the sacred and the holy, of sacralization and hallowing? Surely, there must be another explanation.

At this point, it seems obvious to me that Tillich was groping for a new religious paradigm. The general trend of his thought is studied with irrefragable indications of such a quest. To wit, the incessant struggle against secularism as well as clericalism or ecclesiasticism he wages in the name of that most apt and most beautiful of all, the Protestant Principle -- of which, apparently, even his own definition of religion and culture, if not his theology of culture, is to be deemed but a distorting echo. Quite correct when, by ecclesiasticism, he means otherworldliness, something seems to go wrong when, by secularism, he means not only socialism but also the latter's utopianism or, more precisely, its immanentist utopianism. Not to mention the fact that it remains to be seen whether, of necessity, utopianism must be immanentist,

Tillich, easily presuming that secularization must lead to secularism and construing the secular in antinomy with the sacred, opts for and finds refuge in the bosom of the sacred even while claiming to be concerned with the unconditioned, the ultimate, albeit forgotten, the religious dimension.

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Still, it is no wonder that in spite of it all he has, in "Critique and Justification of Utopia," written pages hardly surpassable on the subject. From the start, he states, that "utopia is truth," and asking "Why is it truth?" answers: "because it expresses man's essence, the inner aim of his existence." "Utopia," Tillich insists, "shows what man is essentially and what he should have as telos of his existence."<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Tillich points out, "a socially defined utopia loses its truth if it does not at the same time fulfill the person, just as the individually defined utopia loses its truth if it does not at the same time bring fulfillment to society."<sup>14</sup>

However, the significant thing lies elsewhere. It lies in the fact that this truth of utopia seems itself inevitably bound to be checkmated by no less a utopian untruth: "Utopian is a judgment of the extreme sinfulness of the present or of a social group or people or religion and an attempt to lead out of this situation, but it does not say how this is possible if there is radical estrangement."<sup>15</sup>

We need not be surprised at Tillich's negative assessment of utopia being as strong as his positive assessment. He uses the same stratagem with respect to the church or religion in general, or with respect to culture. He remains consistent with the sacral presuppositions of his theological stance, globally considered, if not outright with the Protestant principle. Of the problem thus raised by utopia he sees no resolution except in terms of the *idea of the two orders*,<sup>16</sup> of the vertical and the horizontal or, do I dare add, of the sacred and the profane. Clearly, for Tillich only the Lutheran idea of the two orders -- which I prefer to see as somewhat alien to my own unabashedly Calvinistic understanding of the Protestant principle -- can prevent utopia from "freezing" into some *final solution* (with all this phrase connotes to our post-Auschwitz ears). Tillich does not, I am afraid, seem to allow for the possibility much less for the fact that utopia, if it aims at anything, aims precisely at no final solution of any kind. For him, what would and does ultimately confer finality, even "utopian finality to any place or time in history," is and has always been the sacred. No sooner has he acknowledged the spirit of utopia than he rejects its relevance unless it can be retrieved in the name of the sacred. Unexamined or inadvertent, such a position is all the more unexpected since Tillich himself concludes his own essay with these words which he himself underlined: "It is the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia."<sup>18</sup> And who else but Tillich could say anything like that?

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If the religious task consists in changing the world rather than changing worlds, is there any conquest or, for that matter, any quest that is not fundamentally utopian? Only in this manner can the religious dimension be spared from becoming one dimension among others. Only in this manner can it perform as the leaven does in the dough, changing it into bread. By contrast with the sacred, the spirit of utopia implies in no way that the real world is somehow a place off limits; it is what is at stake in and through cultural revolutions that exhibit a religious vision and religious revolutions that likewise exhibit a cultural relevance. True enough, in Tillich's time, the need for either kind of revolution had, at bottom, been ideologically oriented, exclusive of any other consideration. Progressivistic or apocalyptic, demonic or catastrophic, it did nevertheless reflect something -- though not always the best -- of the deeper revolution that had been and still is affecting us all both religiously and culturally, the technological revolution.

Of this technological revolution, surely, Paul Tillich grasps the hitherto unexpected, unfathomed meaning. The desert can be



"tamed" into a garden, and the wilderness, both inward, psychological, and outward, physical, can be turned into paradise. Which, of course, does not mean that the converse cannot equally happen, and technology unleash demonic forces yet unsuspected by our natural, all too natural, inclination to evil. Not that this would mean the ultimate surrender of nature to technology and its alleged inherent madness, its congenital incapacity for coherence. It could, on the contrary, mean the surrender of technology to nature, albeit through human nature.

To conceive of technology as the ultimate negation of nature amounts to overlooking its real meaning. To begin with, technology has made us more conscious of nature than we have ever been so far. Technology is the spirit of nature conquering nature. And to it, an its implications, Tillich is, no doubt, most sensitive.

So sensitive, indeed, that he feels the need for a new religious paradigm -- a utopian paradigm of religion in lieu of the sacral paradigm bequeathed by the Western tradition. A tradition, however, of whose language, precisely, Tillich does not simultaneously feel the need to be freed. And it is this language which holds Tillich's thought firmly grounded in the sacral discourse of ontotheology and withholds it from the spirit of utopia. But it is a language that defeats itself: pervading everything from birth to death, geared to life after death, it shies away from life in spite of death, the life over which death itself can win no victory -- no final victory.

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Not without some irony, Paul Tillich's ashes were scattered in the sky over and above the memorial garden designed in his honor at New Harmony, a town founded by Robert Owen and his utopian community, a landmark in the conquest of utopia by the spirit of utopia.

### Notes

1. *Theology of Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York 1959, p. 40.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
7. *Ibid.*
8. "Salvation," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* LVII(1963) 1, p. 4 & 7.
9. *The Protestant Era*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1948, p. 190.
10. *Auf der Grenze* Evangelisches Verlagswerk, Stuttgart 1962, p. 47.
11. Gilles Lapouge, *Utopie et civilisations*, Flammarion, Paris 1978.
12. *Auf der Grenze*, p. 52.
13. Frank E. Manuel ed., *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, Beacon Press, Boston 1967, p. 296.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 297
15. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

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### Book Reviewers Needed

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### Kliever, *God and Utopia*, continued.

Seen in this light, technology is not the threat to humanism and faith so widely feared today. Technology liberates humans from an impersonal nature and history and empowers them to humanize both. What then is technology if not the continuation of utopian humanism and eschatological faith? If the proper place of the human is neither "residue of nature" nor "afterglow of history," then technology furthers the realization of "the coming of [the hu]man" by extricating humans from nature's necessities and history's terrors. In other words, technology both negates and fulfills the Christian tradition. In negating Christianity's mythological conception of religion (whether in its supernatural or apocalyptic version), technology at last offers a cultural vector that can embody a genuinely eschatological faith.

Vahanian is under no illusions that technology's promise will be realized automatically. Technology will foster the utopianism proper to the human only if it gets "the religion it deserves." That new religiosity requires a new language and a new ecclesiology. Here Vahanian is still feeling his way and his thought at this point reaches an unparalleled density and difficulty. But the essential shape of this requisite linguistic and ecclesial revolution is clear enough to be grasped.

Linguistically, an eschatological faith can speak of God and the kingdom of God only by speaking of humans and their world. The human is the "event of God," though God is the ever-present other by which humans become what they are not. The world is the "event of God's kingdom," though the kingdom is the never-present *eschaton* that calls forth the world as *novum*. But language about humans and the world in a technological civilization must be *bodily* and *ficible*. The shift from mythology to technology is a shift from a "civilization of the soul" to a "civilization of the body." Technological civilization gives humans an earthly dimension heretofore neglected in favor of the soul and its heavenly aspirations. Body language brings the utopian reality of the human and God into the realizable present and thereby makes the human body and the social structure the instrument of the kingdom and the incarnation of God! But body language that does not sink into factualism or soar into fantasy must be ficible -- it must shape the present by joining the real and the imaginary. Indeed, every human body and social structure is a "bridge" between the imaginary and the real precisely because language is the "artificer" of the human. "Language nudges the body into the word as well as anchoring the word in the body, even as the imaginary is anchored in the real. Indeed there is no utopia except in terms of the realizable, and the imaginary is nothing other than a utopianism of the real. Eschatological artifice does not overwhelm the imaginary with the real, nor does it sublimate the real in the imaginary. It emancipates humans from both, "thereby bringing hope within reach."

Ecclesiologically, an eschatological faith is neither identical with nor separate from the customs and structures of society. The church is rather "the eschatological principle of political and social organization of the human order." The utopian church in a technological civilization must meet the challenge of the "technocratic" systematization and privatization of life. The often-voiced fear that technology inevitably brings dehumanization and faithlessness grows out of technology's breakup of traditional customs, roles, and communities. Bureaucratic rationalization and multinational corporations are making traditional geographic and sociological boundaries obsolescent. Seen in its best light, this technological leveling could signal the latter-day beginnings of a "city of earth" where there is neither East nor West, black nor white, male nor female. But what of the individual who seems lost in this "gigantism" and "interchangeability"? Will the individual

*Continued on page 12.*

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# Forum II

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## Law and Ethics in Ellul's Theology

[Abstract of *Introduction to Jacques Ellul's Judicial Ethics*,  
Master's Thesis, Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Strasbourg]

By Sylvain Dujancourt

Translated by Charles L. Creegan

Jacques Ellul's judicial thought is an aspect of his work which has received little attention. And yet it is perfectly characteristic of Ellul's sociological and theological procedures. In this area as in others, Ellul initiates a dialectic of constant cross-questioning involving study of the problem in its social, political, and cultural aspects, and investigation of what the Bible says—or does not say—about the subject. For Ellul, law is a human phenomenon which is only fully significant in light of Biblical revelation.

A: To affirm that law is a human phenomenon is an implicit response to two questions: What is law? What is its origin?

1) In defining law, Ellul begins by rejecting the traditional alternative between idealist and positivist conceptions—which he accuses in the first case of an abstract vision of the nature of law and humanity, and in the second case of reducing law to a mere rule. Law is "a concrete system destined to be applied." Ellul next distinguishes law from several notions for which it is sometimes or often mistaken: morality, history, the State, custom, laws, language, and science. These distinctions allow Ellul to uncover five characteristics of law. Law is universal, a rule of social life indispensable to the functioning of all civilization. Law is an artificial creation of humanity, helping to ensure control of time, space, and human relations. Law is normative, both in that it expresses a desire to modify the total social fact and in that it is a set of procedures facilitating the realization of the values embodied in law. Law depends on applicability; it is made to be applied. Finally, Ellul claims that law has an aim, justice, which is also its critical benchmark.

Ellul the historian sets out a three-stage typology of the evolution of law. In religious law, law and religion are confused. In secular law there is an equilibrium between the basis, popular conscience, and the form, judicial technique. This is the moment of legal evolution which Ellul prefers. The last stage is that of the technologizing of law, in which judicial technique dominates. Here law is transformed into an organization at the service of the State. The law of our societies is in a crisis due at once to its nationalization, its proliferation, its incoherence, and its devaluation. It has also mutated: technique has transformed law into a mechanism for social control. A teleology of order has substituted itself for one of justice. In counterpoint, Ellul imagines an ideal law which would encompass three qualities: a close mesh with social reality, a subordinated judicial technique, and a capacity for evolution. This conception comes nearest to the second stage of the evolution of law.

2) Having thus analyzed law, Ellul tries to answer the question of its origin—that is, of its creation and foundation. For Ellul, the creation of law is the fruit of a combination of human effort and social facts. Law is firstly a spontaneous and collective work of humans for the organization of social life. Law is created by

decisions made in light of certain values. Without accepting the Marxist analysis of law, Ellul allows that social, economic and political givens play an important role in the creation of law. Ellul considers events to be a particularly important source of transformations of law. The satisfaction of three criteria allows us to affirm that a rule has become one of law: the existence of common and accepted values; regularized procedures; and sanctions. Ellul raises judicial and theological objections to natural-law doctrines which purport to explain the foundation of law. "Natural law" is a human invention, founded on a variable idea of nature; it is a negation of the eschatology of the Kingdom and allows humans to escape radical revelation.

B: Continuing his research, Ellul relates his analysis of law as a human phenomenon to the Bible, and shows that revelation adds to the value and significance of law. He examines the place of law in the project of salvation as it is revealed to us by God, and proceeds to extract a Christian judicial ethics. Ellul's theological analysis of law rests on two choices, theology of grace and Christocentrism, which underline his solidarity with S. Kierkegaard, K. Barth and J. Bosc.

1) In revelation, law is an element of the dialectic between truth and reality. In the Old Testament, Ellul distinguishes between the Torah, expression of Divine grace, and Hebraic legislation. Hebrew law is in many ways similar to those of other oriental civilizations of the same era. Ellul notes that, as an instrument of God, it is nevertheless unique. In the New Testament, law takes on an essentially ethical dimension; it is an instrument directed to reducing conflicts and allowing the weak to compensate for their weakness.

In the Bible, there are three characteristic manifestations of law: institutions, such as marriage, State, or property, which are created by God with a soteriological dimension; human rights, those given by God in the interest of covenant, of which the first is to be able to speak to God in the name of Jesus Christ; justice, which is an act of God, judgement, and grace. The notion of justice establishes a link between law and revelation. This link allows Ellul to affirm that the foundation of law is in God. This is not a theocratic conception of law. Instead it signifies that law finds its true value in God, and that in Jesus Christ it gains its full significance. Law is a part of the lordship of Jesus Christ over the world, between the covenant and the parousia. It is also placed in the eschatological perspective of the final Kingdom, although it cannot contribute anything at all to its coming.

2) On the basis of this judicial and theological analysis, Ellul constructs a Christian judicial ethics, that is to say, a coherence between being and doing relative to law and faith. The ethics proposed by Ellul is founded on the notion of judgement, first of all with respect to existing law, and secondly with respect to the

working out of law. On the one hand, the Christian is invited to take notice of the worth of law before God, while at the same time measuring the exact social value of law. Further, the law of love does not allow the Christian to ignore the law in force; it must come into play with respect to the existing law. The Church must also take care that the law of society does not hinder the free speaking of the Word of God, salvation of humankind.

On the other hand, as to the working out of law, the Christian must work for the re-establishment of order, that is, to recall the existence of a transcendent dimension of law. The point of refer-

ence is the Christological order. The Christian must constantly reorient law, and stress the creative sense and the social function of law. Ellul invites the Church to exercise its role of mediation and conciliation so that all social groups may rally around certain values, and accept the authority of a law which would bring them into being. Ellul also rejects all notions of a Christian law since he opposes the idea of obliging non-Christians to believe in a faith and values which they do not share.

## Notes on the Catholic Church and Technology

by Sergio Silva G., ss.cc.

*Sergio Silva is a priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart and Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Chile. Recently he spent a week in residence as a visiting scholar at the Science, Technology, Society Program of Pennsylvania State University. In the future he will be collaborating with Carl Mütcham and Jim Grote in the development of more bibliographic documentation concerning theological reflection on technology, especially in Latin America.*

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These notes are based on my book (written with the collaboration of Pedro Boccoardo) *La idea de la técnica moderna en el Magisterio de la Iglesia, desde Pio XII hasta Juan Pablo II* (1985) (*The Idea of Modern Technology in the Magisterium of the Church from Pius XII to John Paul II* [1985]), published in *Anales de la Facultad de Teología* 38, 1987, Cuaderno 2, Santiago de Chile, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1989, 166 pages. --- S.S.

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What contemporary Popes and the Second Vatican Council have said about technology reflects the thinking of the Church. Not that in the Catholic Church and in her theology there are no differences of opinion, but on this subject Popes and Council do not go beyond the Church.

To write the book I read and analyzed all that the Popes and the Council have said on technology. It should be immediately noted that Popes and Council seldom reflect explicitly about technology; their statements are usually indirect, apropos other subjects, and in most cases are not in the Encyclicals (letters in which the Pope engages his teaching authority at the utmost, without being infallible), but in occasional speeches to various groups, especially at the Wednesday open audiences. I have collected all such statements (or so I hope) and have tried to organize them systematically.

I have found 409 relevant documents. From Pius XII (1939-1958), 98; from John XXIII (1958-1963), 28; from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), 8; from Paul VI, 98; and from John Paul II (1978 till 1985), 177.

### I.

My main conclusion is that the Popes and the Second Vatican Council have (with some subtle but significant shifts between them) fundamentally the same attitude toward modern technology, an attitude that can be summarized as follows:

1. The documents stress the importance of modern technology as one factor that contributes to the shaping of modern society and its culture.

2. When they come to evaluate modern technology, their statements are of the form "Yes, but." Yes: they affirm technology in itself, that is, they believe that the human ability to know and to dominate nature has been created by God, so that in this abstract and general sense, technology is God's gift. But: this means that contemporary technology is not always and equally acceptable.

Repeatedly, papal documents refer, on three levels, to the ambiguity of modern technology. First, the forces controlled by technology can be used for good or bad, to support life or to sow death. There is, therefore, fundamentally an ambiguity of humanity, wounded by sin.

Second, modern technology involves a serious threat to the human spirit. This threat is twofold. On the one hand, there is the issue of method: the method of modern science is legitimate when it is a question of knowing the natural world, but it becomes illegitimate when applied -- as the only valid method -- to human beings and their works. On the other hand, the problem is cultural: contemporary Western culture is more and more a scientific-technological culture; that is, the ultimate values are the objectivity of modern science and the efficiency of modern technology. But these values tend to destroy the humanness of humanity.

Last, but not least, the indefinitely growing power that modern technology puts in the hands of this wounded humankind -- its limitlessness -- gives to the problem of ambiguity a new dimension and makes it qualitatively different. On the one hand, to say it simply, ambiguity is of a different order when it is concerned with the ability to kill a few people or to destroy all life on our planet. On the other hand (and this is more decisive), there is the difficulty of controlling and dominating this technical development and all its effects in the life of society and of individuals.

The papal documents stress four areas in which this difficulty of controlling technology is most obvious: environmental pollution, the destruction of cultures among underdeveloped peoples, damage to the inner life (self-consciousness, awareness, contemplative life), and the triumph of the scientific-technical positivist ideology.

### II.

After this brief summary, it is helpful to ask: What is specifically theological in these statements about technology? What do they contribute (if anything) to a philosophy of technology? There are at least two specifically theological points in the documents analyzed.

1. The first is that technology is God's gift to humankind. This point can be regarded as a purely formal one, only necessary in the ecclesiastical language game. But it is accompanied by a more global affirmation that the earth (the object of technological manipulation and transformation) belongs to God, and that he has given it in stewardship to human beings.

These statements can make a twofold contribution to the philosophy of technology. On the one hand, a radical denial of technology is excluded, because as an ability of human nature it is God's gift. Yet, on the other hand, every concrete historical technology, including our modern scientifically based technology, must be criticized because it is not obvious that it respects the earth as the creation of God.

2. The second theological affirmation is that the problems with technology are rooted in ambiguities that derive ultimately from sin. Given that sin can be defeated only by Christ, and that his victory shall encompass the whole world only at his second coming, technology, in the light of Christian faith, will always remain, now and in every imaginable historical future, ambiguous.

From here we can conclude that Christians must undertake the effort and the struggle to transform modern technology, so as to deliver it of its bad aspects, because Christians must struggle against sin in all its forms. This must not be done with a utopian attitude, however, as if a perfect technology were possible. A moderate attitude is the only one that can help us to improve modern technology.

### III.

One can, however, go beyond the teaching explicitly contained in the papal documents. If the Popes and the Council were to view technology as a reified anthropology, as made in the image of humanity that prevails in modern culture, then it could be argued that Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of Christian faith, as the criterion of humanness, provides a standard for criticizing technology. If technology is to reify a "good" anthropology, it must be pursued in the light of the human personality of Jesus, of his kind of relations with nature and with human beings.

Finally, there are implications of the fundamental option for the poor made by the Catholic Church in Latin America, since the Conventions of Bishops in Medellín, Colombia (1968), and Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico (1979). This option is not made by the Church autonomously. It is the option of the God of Jesus himself, who is revealed in the Scriptures (and in the lives of his saints throughout the ages) as he who loves with special care and tenderness those of his creatures who have their lives unjustly threatened. This is what happens today with the poor in the Third and Fourth Worlds, and with nature. The teaching of the Church is therefore that technology ought to be used not to promote but to protect against such unjust threats.

Kliever, *God and Utopia*, continued.

and the interpersonal simply disappear in the extraordinary *artificiality* of the technological environment and persona? While admitting the dangers of such a loss, Vahanian contends that artificiality need not oppose the human. After all, linguistic artifice creates the utopian "nowhere" where human life happens. "Far from being a robot, artificial man is the man who makes himself." "Artificial man" can be authentic if he or she makes himself or herself in the image of an imageless God."

The church cannot contribute to this artistic process of humanization by establishing havens of seclusion or ghettos of particularity. The church must go beyond all confessional or geographical boundaries. Neither liturgy nor polity should separate the church from the human community. Yet the church will lose its iconoclastic function and its eschatological anchorage if it is nothing but that community. The utopian church is an *other* world in the present world precisely because it is "pleromatic" – bringing all things everywhere into fullness by naming the One God who is everywhere because nowhere, and who is for every one because for no one. The utopian church is anywhere and everywhere anyone makes a new world.

Here then in bold strokes is the sum of two thousand years of Christian thought and life. Vahanian presents a remarkable sketch of humans and their world in transition from a mythic to a technological civilization. That unanswered questions and critical problems abound in a work this encompassing and radical goes without saying. More traditional thinkers will ask: Is the reality of God so language-dependent? Does an eschatological faith offer real consolations? Is the utopian church anything more than an ideal construct? More radical thinkers will ask: Why does biblical faith deserve normative status? Does utopian humanism require symbols of radical transcendence? Does technological rationality allow anything other than private religiosity? But questions such as these do not blunt the sharpness of Vahanian's challenge to both sides of the contemporary debate over human nature and destiny – to a reductionistic atheism that simply re-assigns the attributes of God to humans or to a reprinted theism that simply remodels human dependence on God. Neither atheism nor theism meets the challenge of making and keeping human life human in a technological civilization.

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# Bibliography

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THEOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

by Carl Mitcham and Jim Grote

*Eighth in a series. Contributions welcome.  
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George Parkin Grant. *Technology and Justice*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. Pp. 133. A selection of essays on the relation between Christianity and modern technology, including critiques of abortion and euthanasia. Grant is especially sensitive to the fascist implications of "quality of life" theologians like Joseph Fletcher who define "personhood" on the basis of neo-cortical function. Regarding Fletcher's indicators of personhood, Grant writes: "The list includes self-awareness, a sense of time, self-control, capability of relating to others, the ability to communicate, a concern for others, control over existence, and a balance of rationality and feeling. A bit unnerving when one looks at oneself. How many of us would qualify?" (pp. 126-127).

Grant, George Parkin. *English-Speaking Justice*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Pp. xi, 104. First published, Sackville, New Brunswick: Mount Allison University, 1974. Pp. 112. Critique of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Within this critique Grant sketches the complex historical relationship between liberal social contract theory, Protestantism, and modern technology. According to Grant, the philosophical weaknesses of social contract theory have been hidden for generations by the material success of technology and the voluntarist faith of Protestant theology. The problematic character of this historical symbiosis of political liberalism, Protestantism, and technology is now coming to light. Social equality is no longer a liberating but a restraining ideal for the progress of technology. While technology depended on the notion of equality in its inception, that dependency has now been outgrown. Liberalism falls by the wayside as humankind turns from the conquest of non-human nature to the conquest of human nature. Favorable review: Jim Grote, "Technology and the End of Liberalism," *Research in Philosophy and Technology*, vol. 9 (1989), pp. 227-231.

Hawkin, David J. "The Johannine Concept of Truth and Its Implications for a Technological Society," *Evangelical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 1987), pp. 3-13. An exegesis of truth as revelation in the fourth gospel, followed by reflections on the implications for social activism, since the Gospel of John has often been used to justify a kind of spiritual withdrawal from the world. "The Fourth Gospel is not 'quietist.' It does not advocate mere passivity and receptivity before God. But neither is it 'activist.' The Fourth Gospel maintains that there should be no sustained and intelligent Christian action unless it is informed by the whole life of faith. . . . Thus the Christian's activity in the world has a fundamentally different starting point from that of secularized, technological man. The Liberal philosophy which undergirds the technological society asserts that man's ends are willed from within the horizon of the

finite. The Fourth Gospel summons men to live beyond the limits of the finite, in communion with the Father" (p. 13).

Jegen, Mary Evelyn, and Bruno U. Manno, eds. *The Earth Is the Lord's: Essays on Stewardship*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978. Pp. ix, 215. Popular essays from a seminar sponsored by Bread for the World Educational Fund. Includes (among many articles) Ronald J. Sider's "A Biblical Perspective on Stewardship" and William J. Byron's "The Ethics of Stewardship."

John Paul II, Pope. "A Dynamic Relationship of Theology and Science," *Origins* 18, no. 23 (November 17, 1988), pp. 375-378. Letter occasioned by the publication of papers from a workshop at the Vatican Academy of Science honoring the 300th anniversary of Newton's *Principia*. "Only a dynamic relationship between theology and science can reveal those limits which support the integrity of either discipline, so that theology does not profess a pseudo-science and science does not become an unconscious theology." Also included in Robert John Russell, William R. Stoeger, SJ, and George V. Coyne, SJ, eds., *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding* (Vatican: Vatican Observatory; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. M1-M14; and under the title "A New Fusionism: Are Science and Religion Compatible?" in *Crisis* 7, no. 3 (March 1989), pp. 39-41.

John Paul II, Pope. "Toward a True Ecology," *Pope Speaks* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 323-327. Talk to representatives of science, art, and journalism at the "Festpielhaus" Theater in Salzburg, June 26, 1988. Quoting his words from a speech five years previously in Vienna, the Pope repeats that "The human person and his world -- our earth, which we saw during the first orbits around it as a star in green and blue -- must be protected and developed. In the horizon of faith the earth is not a limitless, exploitable reservoir, but a part of the mystery of creation, which one may not treat greedily, but rather owes it wonder and reverence." Continuing, he maintains that "In order to arrive at this attitude, we need a culture of asceticism which will enable people and the diverse human communities to achieve freedom also as a readiness to renounce one's own power and greatness, and thus from within themselves make room for others, particularly the weak" (p. 327).

John Paul II, Pope. "Science and the Church in the Nuclear Age," *Origins* 12, no. 8 (July 15, 1982), pp. 126-128. Talk delivered to researchers at the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN), June 15, 1982. Science and religion are in a new period of dialogue in which religion "rejoices at the progress of science" (no. 8). But there is also a need for "harmonizing the values of technology issuing from science with the values of conscience" (no. 9).

Kaiser, Edwin, G., CPPS. *Theology of Work*. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966. Pp. xxi, 521. Part One briefly overviews work in the Bible and Catholic encyclicals in comparison with work in slavery and the pagan concept of work. Parts Two, Three and Four provide more detailed analyses of work in the Old and New Testaments, early Christian attitudes, and in the Middle Ages, respectively. Part Five focuses on "Work in the Modern Age," with

chapters on capitalism, Marxism, and "The World of Work Today." Part Six contains a theological appraisal of "The Value of Dignity and Discipline," "Value of Duty and Right," "Virtue in Work," and "The Value of Association." Part Seven examines "Work in Its Current Problems," including Chapter 22 on "The Problem of Automation," the first section of which is entitled "Automation: The Final Challenge of Technology." Part Eight deals with "Special Areas of Papal Teaching," while Part Nine is on "Work and Worship. From Chapter 22: "The problem of technology has long been recognized as the basic adjustment of man to a mechanized social order" (p. 361). Distinguishes between First and Second Industrial Revolutions. Effects of automation include unemployment and the taking over of some human decision making by machines. A "theological critique" argues against allowing the economy to take on an autonomous character and for subordinating technology to the promotion of "the personal human values of the social virtues" (p. 370). "If men are to be trained to direct and guide an automated economy, they must be trained in the moral-personal values of the social order with a clear perception of the moral-personal goals and the absolute demand for moral means to attain them. . . . Training an engineer merely as an engineer for a technological social order in which he is to make final decisions can never be morally justified" (p. 370). Includes a review of Papal teachings and an extended criticism of featherbedding. Some good references to German discussions, a chronology of the American labor movement, and a brief bibliography.

Kass, Leon. "What's Wrong With Babel?" *American Scholar* 58, no. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 41-60. Classic Straussian biblical commentary. Kass takes Genesis 11:1-9 and compares the story of Babel with Plato's myth of the cave. In both stories the "fire" of technology is central to the rise of civilization and the simultaneous "fall of man." The desire for self-sufficiency embedded in the dream of the universal city (Babel) and in the dream of the autonomous knowledge of good and evil (Adam and Eve) ultimately leads to humankind's complete estrangement from God. God's punishment by the "confusion of speech" fits the crime of prideful self-sufficiency. "The emergence of multiple nations . . . challenges the view of human self-sufficiency. Each nation, by its very existence, testifies against the godlike status of every other . . . The prospect of war . . . prevents forgetfulness of mortality, vulnerability, and insufficiency. Such times of crisis are often times that open men most to think about the eternal and the divine" (pp. 55-56). Kass compares the universal language before Babel (Gen 11:1) with the new universal language of "symbolic mathematics" so necessary to "the dream of Babel today." Contains many arguments similar to those in Ellul's *The Meaning of the City* (1970).

Klotz, John W. *Ecology Crisis: God's Creation and Man's Pollution*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971. Pp. 176. Spends more time cataloguing numerous environmental problems than articulating a Christian ethic of ecology. Reviewed by Wilbur L. Bullock in *Christian Scholar's Review* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1971), pp. 87-88.

Mangum, John M., ed. *The New Faith-Science Debate: Probing Cosmology, Technology, and Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989. Pp. x, 165. Proceedings from a conference of 45 young theologians and scientists-technologists on the theme "The New Scientific/Technological World: What Difference Does It Make for the Churches?" (Larnaca, Cyprus, 1987). Paul Abrecht, from the "Foreword": "The discussion of science and faith is at least several centuries old, but the confrontation that began in the middle of this century — roughly after the discovery of nuclear energy and its use in the making of atomic bombs — has raised quite

new issues. In the earlier confrontation the fundamental issue was the clash between Christian belief and scientific knowledge, especially between the scientific understanding of the world and Christian views on creation. In that debate the churches were generally on the defensive. . . . The contemporary encounter between faith and science is quite different from the earlier one. The rapid advances of modern science, its tremendous successes, and the technological revolution to which it has led in the last half century have given rise to new concern and questions about the future of humanity in a world increasingly dominated by scientific understanding. Today, as a result, science and science-based technology are on the defensive, and religious faith, speaking in the name of troubled and anxious humanity, has begun to ask questions about the consequences of the scientific world view" (p. viii). Contents: Bengt Gustafsson's "The Current Scientific World View," Arthur Peacocke's "The Challenge of Science to Theology and the Church," Victor Westhelle's "The Challenge of Theology to Science and the Church," Gerhard Liedke's "The Challenge of the Church to Science and Theology," Harold P. Nebelsick's "The Task of the Church in the New Scientific Age," Judith K. Larsen's "How High-Tech Is Changing American Society," Ronald Cole-Turner's "Genetic Engineering: Our Role in Creation," Naozumi Eto's "Asian World Religions and Post-modern Science," Vincent P.K. Titanji's "Scientific Research Is My Christian Vocation," Ted Peters' "Reflections on Science as a Vocation," Robert John Russell's "Agenda for the Twenty-first Century," and Paulos Mar Gregorios' "Six Biblical Studies." Appendices contain group reports from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and international roundtables.

"Manufactured Motherhood: The Ethics of the New Reproductive Techniques." *Logos* (Philosophic Issues in Christian Perspective; Santa Clara University), vol. 9 (1988). Pp. xi, 213. Part I, "General Issues in Reproductive Ethics," contains Albert R. Jonsen's "Ethics of Reproductive Technology: The Deconstruction of a Paradigm," Lisa Sowell Cahill's "Women, Marriage, Parenthood: What Are Their 'Natures'?", Joseph Ellin's "Reproductive Technology, Catholicism, Feminism and the Thesis of Bootstrap Pessimism," and Nancy (Ann) Davis's "Reproductive Technologies and Our Attitudes Towards Children." Part II, "Surrogate Motherhood," contains Lori B. Andres' "Feminism Revisited: Fallacies and Policies in the Surrogacy Debate," Herbert T. Kimmel's "Surrogate Mother Arrangements from the Perspective of the Child," Lisa H. Newton's "Surrogate Motherhood and the Limits of Rational Ethics," Leonard M. Fleck's "Surrogate Motherhood: Is It Morally Equivalent to Selling Babies?," June Carbone's "The Limits of Contract in Family Law: An Analysis of Surrogate Motherhood," and Laurence D. Houlgate's "Whose Child? In *Re Baby M* and the Biological Preference Principle." Part III, "Other Issues," contains David N. James' "Why Donor Artificial Insemination Is Immoral" and Kevin M. Stanley's "Moral Issues and Public Policy Concerns Surrounding Sex Preselection." Despite the commitments of *Logos*, only two articles deal at any length with uniquely Christian perspectives on the issue of "manufactured motherhood." Cahill considers the *Instruction* on reproductive technology of the the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1987) and its distinction between homologous methods (involving only the married parents, as in artificial insemination with husband) and heterologous methods (e.g., artificial insemination with donor or AID). Cahill criticizes the Vatican *Instruction* argument for rejection of homologous methods but agrees with arguments against heterologous methods. James, however, later rejects the natural law critique of AID. For James, none of the "possible senses of 'natural' warrant the conclusion that while

ordinary procreation is natural and therefore right, AID is unnatural and therefore wrong" (p. 183).

McDonagh, Sean. *To Care for the Earth: A Call to a New Theology*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., 1986. Pp. 224. Examines the current ecological crisis and proposes a new theology of the earth based on the writings of Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry. By an Irish Columban missionary who has spent many years in the Philippines.

Ovitt, George, Jr. *The Restoration of Perfection: Labor and Technology in Medieval Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 272. Chapter one contrasts the modern view of progress as technology with the traditional Christian theology of progress as growth in self-mastery. Chapter two argues against the Lynn White thesis of Christian responsibility for the doctrine of the virtuousness of technology. Chapter three qualifies Max Weber's observations regarding the positive interpretation of work in medieval monasticism by noting that in monastic theology work was always subordinate to spiritual growth and the development of community. Chapters four and five examine medieval attempts to locate the "mechanical arts" in a hierarchy of values and concludes that while always ranking them low, the 1200s witness an increasing respect for technology because of revolutionary changes in agriculture, energy use, and commerce that gave rise to a gradual "secularization" of labor. Theological acknowledgement of work as an independent domain in society is more an accommodation than a creation. Chapter six offers a somewhat speculative sociology of workers in the middle ages.

Pope, Hugh. "St. Augustine and the World of Nature," in *St. Augustine of Hippo* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1961), pp. 207-231. On the empirical observations of Augustine the naturalist. Mentions Augustine's argument that the book of nature, like the books of Scripture, leads to an understanding of God.

Silva G., Sergio, SSCC. *La Idea de la tecnica moderna en el magisterio de la iglesia desde Pio XII hasta Juan Pablo II* (1985) [The idea of modern technology in church teaching from Pius XII to John Paul II (1985)]. *Anales de la Facultad de Teologia*, vol. 38 (1987), no. 2. Santiago de Chile: Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, 1989. Pp. 166. An excellent and well documented study of statements on technology by recent popes and Vatican Council II. The official Vatican attitude -- with subtle but significant shifts between popes (e.g., John XXIII on nuclear weapons, Paul VI on development, increasing prominence of the problem of ecology, etc.) -- emphasizes both the greatness and the risks of modern technology. As Silva concludes: There is "a positive evaluation of technology in itself, that is, of the capacity that God has placed with humanity to know and to dominate nature. But this does not mean that contemporary technological progress is equally acceptable" (p. 133). Repeatedly, papal documents refer to "the ambiguity of modern technology." "This ambiguity consists, in the first place, in that the forces controlled by technology can be used for good or bad. It is, therefore, fundamentally an ambiguity of humanity, wounded by sin. Nevertheless, the indefinite growth of the power that contemporary technology puts in the hands of this wounded humanity gives the problem a new dimension and makes it qualitatively distinct. Ambiguity is different when it is concerned with the ability to kill a few people or to destroy all life on the planet." "But the ambiguity of contemporary technology is not rooted solely in the use that is able to be made of it to support life or to sow death. There is also a serious danger to the human spirit. The problem has two aspects. On the one side there is the issue of method. . . . On the other side . . . the problem is cultural. . . ." "The popes point

out still a third aspect that contributes to making modern technology an ambiguous phenomenon. This concerns the difficulty of controlling and dominating technical development and all its effects in the life of society" (p. 134). This book is based on "La tecnica y su influencia en la cultura: El pensamiento del magisterio desde Pio XII hasta Pablo VI," *Theologia y Vida* 21, nos. 3-4 (1980), pp. 287-329; and "Alcances y riesgos de la tecnica moderna: El pensamiento del Magisterio universal de la Iglesia desde Pio XII hasta Pablo VI," *Revista Universitaria de la Universidad Catolica de Chile*, whole no. 6 (October 1981), pp. 79-91. See also the author's "La tecnica moderna en la crisis cultural de nuestro tiempo," *Revista Universitaria de la Universidad Catolica de Chile*, whole no. 14 (1985), pp. 18-25.

Stackhouse, Max L. *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. xiv, 177. Chapter 8 is on "Sacrament and Technology." "In religion, sacrament is the primal form of technique -- it is the skill and the art by which we symbolize the most profound connections between the most abstract logics of meaning and the realities of the material world" (p. 153). "Were the rich significance of sacramental actions spelled out and made living realities in modern technological societies, our stewardship of the Word might not only become enfolded in ritual behaviors and liturgical forms. It might become publicly embodied in a more just, participatory, and sustainable technological civilization able to resist the temptation to use the bomb and less inclined to idolize artificial intelligence than to seek, trust, and honor the one Intelligence that stands behind it all" (p. 155).

Tillich, Paul. *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*. J. Mark Thomas, ed. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988. Pp. xxi, 213. Previously unpublished lectures, untranslated papers, and uncollected articles. Contents: "The World Situation" (1945), "The Lost Dimension in Religion" (1958), "The Logos and Mythos of Technology" (1927, trans.), "The Freedom of Science" (1932, trans.), "Participation and Knowledge: Problems of an Ontology of Cognition" (1955), "How Has Science in the Last Century Changed Man's View of Himself?" (1965), "The Decline and the Validity of the Idea of Progress" (1966), "Expressions of Man's Self-Understanding in the Philosophy and the Sciences" (1963, lecture), "Thing and Self" (1959, lecture), "The Person in a Technical Society" (1953), "Environment and the Individual" (1957), "Conformity" (1957), "The Relationship Today between Science and Religion" (1960), "Religion, Science, and Philosophy" (1963, lecture), "Science and the Contemporary World in the View of a Theologian" (1961), "The Technical City as Symbol" (1928, trans.), "Has Man's Conquest of Space Increased or Diminished His Stature?" (1963), "Seven Theses concerning the Nuclear Dilemma" (1961), and "The Hydrogen Cobalt Bomb" (1954).

Williams, George Huntston. "Christian Attitudes Toward Nature," *Christian Scholar's Review* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1971), pp. 3-35 and *Ibid.* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1972), pp. 112-126. Extensive review of scriptural, patristic, and later theological literature on nature with a view toward countering Lynn White's thesis regarding the responsibility of Christianity for the ecological crisis (by a church historian). Williams investigates seven sets of scriptural antinomies and their theological traditions: (1) the involvement (Gen 3:17, Rom 8:22) or non-involvement (Gen 1:31, Ps 19:1) of nature in the fall of man, (2) nature as decaying (IV Ezra 5:55, Ps 102:26) or as constant (Eccl 7:10), (3) nature as intrinsically good (Prov 8:30, Is 55:12) or as only instrumental to human dominion (Gen 1:28 & 9:1, Ps 8:6), (4) the desert wilderness as benign (Is 35:1, Jer 2:2, Rev 12:6) or as malign (Joel 2:3, Matt 4:1), (5) the

books of nature and scripture as complimentary (Rom 1:20) or mutually exclusive (Rom 8), (6) the kingdom of God as pastoral (Gen 2:15) or political (Rev 21:1-2), and (7) salvation as pertaining to humankind alone (all of Scripture) or to the whole of creation (Is 11:16, I Cor 15:28, Col 1:20). Arguments similar to H. Paul Santmire's *The Travail of Nature* (1985). Oddly, on page 113, Williams quotes Rom 1:20 and references the quote as Rom 8:19. This essay appears in much abbreviated form under the same title in *Colloquy* 3, no. 4 (April 1970), pp. 12-15. The fourth antinomy is the subject of an entire book by Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought: The Biblical Experience of the Desert* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

Young, David P. *The Speed of Love: An Exploration of Christian Faithfulness in a Technological World*. New York: Friendship Press, 1986. Pp. viii, 149. An introduction, prologue, and first two chapters argue for a religious judgment of technology as destroying human scale and not being used to help the poor. Quoting Kosuke Koyama: "Love has its speed. It is an inner speed.

It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed" (pp. 2-3). "What is critical is not how to regulate technology by laws or restrictions, but rather how to change our *relationship* to technology through our values and discipleship choices. The important issue should be which technologies we choose to use and which we choose not to use because of what they do in terms of justice to person and planet" (pp. 6-7). Followed by chapters dealing with the destruction of mystery, computers, biotechnology, and nuclear power. Two concluding chapters stress that technology is not neutral and that Christians must invent the future. There is a "leader's Guide" with suggestions on how to use each chapter in a discussion class. A bit breezy, but useful as Sunday school literature, and as reflecting dedicated reformist liberal Christian thinking engaged with technology. A companion volume: David P. Young, ed., *21st Century Pioneering: A Scrapbook of the Future* (New York: Friendship Press, 1986), a collection of essays, cartoons, poetry, etc.

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#### Fasching, *The Utopian Connection*, continued.

such a God, revealed not some ill fated human nature doomed to death but a utopian destiny of new creation. If there is a lesson to be learned from the eschatological utopianism of biblical faith, it is that *a rose by any other name* is not really a rose. The difference between "nature" and "creation," or "history" and "incarnation," is the difference between fate and utopian destiny -- between being trapped in "this body of death" or being "alive in Christ." Everything depends on the word - the Christic event where the otherness of God and our humanity converge as utopian event of the human. For it is "neither God nor man but Christ who is the measure of all things" (1989, 61). This convergence can only occur in the body, (physical and social/ecclesial) where the word is made flesh through the techniques of the human. Wherever the word is so embodied, the world is transformed to disclose the pleromatic fullness of its utopian destiny as the reign of God draws near and all things are made new.

Christ, says Vahanian is not "some leftover Jesus" to be retrieved from the past and faith is no nostalgia for Jesus but rather "hope in Christ" (1977, 73-75). Faith has to do with the coming of the human and Jesus confirms that there is no way to God except through the humanity of every person who comes to us as a stranger, as "God anonymous" (1989, 174-177), even as the church has less to do with the creation of some exclusionary community than with "communion" with the stranger through whom God's otherness invites us to share in the pleromatic fullness of a new creation. "I have no other God," says Vahanian, "than the God of others" (1989, 96).

God, says Vahanian, is not "the condition of" (i.e., does not explain) our humanity any more than our humanity is "the condition of" technology. On the contrary, our humanity "is the condition of God." Apart from the human there is no God to speak of and apart from technology there is no human to speak of. Apart from technology, the human as utopianism of the body cannot come into being. We are not first human and then express our humanity through technology any more than we are first human and then express our humanity through speech. On the contrary, "In the beginning was the Word." First we are given the gift of speech and through speech the possibility of our humanity is given to us (1989, 143). As the embodiment of our capacity for speech

technology makes it possible for us to become what we are not. The human is not a fact to be accounted for but a possibility ever and again to be realized (i.e., "made flesh"). As children of the word created in the image of the God without image *we are not what we are and are what we are not* (1977, 137).

The utopian connection, then, between God, our humanity and technology is the word, our capacity for speech. But we must not think that Vahanian is collapsing the divine into the human and its technological realization. Nor should one think that he is proposing the collapse of the kingdom of God into Utopia. On the contrary, he insists: "Utopia is not the kingdom. Utopia is to the kingdom as nature is to creation, or as history is to redemption, or simply as the flesh is to the spirit. If there is a relationship between them it is one of radical otherness" (1977, 137). It is the task of the church, as an *other world* within (not "another" world beyond) this world, to bring about a cultural revolution through a prior ecclesial revolution.

Without the reign of God embodied in the social structures of our technological civilization, its utopianism will give way to the technical imperative (i.e., "if it's possible it's necessary" or "what can be done must be done") as our fate, putting an end to the utopianism of the human. Apart from the reign of God, the possible becomes reduced to the actual even as creation is reduced to nature and eschatology to history. The reign of God makes the impossible possible. "Created in the image of God, [the hu]man begins where all techniques of the human leave off, where they can only go "too far," . . . where for want of the kingdom utopia ends" (1977, 141). Only a church which has re-formed itself as utopian embodiment of the word for a technological civilization, embracing "the words and concepts proper to *homo technicus*" (1989, 167), can serve as the leaven of a cultural revolution which would enable the world to realize its utopian possibilities -- making all things new and all things possible.