The Ellul Forum

For the Critique of Technological Civilization

Ellul in the Public Arena

About this Issue

Jacques Ellul lived in the public arena. He was an academic who mentored doctoral students, lectured, fulfilled university assignments and wrote scholarly treatises. But his defining orientation was public life as a whole. His thinking was geared to citizens, church members and consumers. Intellectuals were especially vulnerable, in his view, because they prized their independence and magnified their critical powers. His prophetic voice engaged the community.

Those influenced by Ellul's work continue to make public space their home. Some are scholars in the traditional sense, but most have a special heart for everyday life and the non-specialist. They write in magazines, work in social services, participate in public organizations, build activity centers, or preach. *The Ellul Forum* this time gives us some illustrations of the way our technological civilization can be discussed and critiqued among general audiences.

Andrew Goddard is a Tutor in Christian Ethics at Wycliffe Hall and a member of the Oxford University Theology Faculty. He presented this address at Wycliffe Hall's Open Day festivities on June 9, 2000. Each year the Hall invites former members (most of them ordained Anglican clergy), council members who govern the college, local clergy, the staff and others who help the college, to an open house. As the newest staff member, Mr. Goddard was asked to address them and he chose to introduce them to Ellul.

Rev. Dr. Randall Otto is the pastor of the Deerfield Presbyterian Church in New Jersey. He is also an adjunct instructor in philosophy and religion at Cumberland College and an instructor at the Eastern School of Christian Ministries. His tongue-in-cheek essay identifies trends in contemporary culture that seem to lead ineluctably to the virtual Christianity of the Internet. His incisive critique and calls for reconsideration make *The Ellul Forum* an obvious home.

Phillip M. Thompson sets Ellul in the context of Thomas Merton, kindred spirits nourishing each other for everyday life outside the academy and monastery. Mr. Thompson has two degrees in law and a Ph.D.in the History of Culture from the University of Chicago. He is currently the Director of the Center for Ethics and Leadership at St. Edwards University in Austin, Texas. In that capacity he works at the interface of the university and public life. A different version of this article appeared earlier as "Full of Firecrackers: Jacques Ellul and the Technological Critique of Thomas Merton," in the *Merton Seasonal* (Spring 2000), pp. 9-16. -

Clifford Christians
Editor

Jacques Ellul:
20ᵗʰ century prophet for the 21ˢᵗ century ?
by Andrew Goddard

I want to begin with a pattern I will return to at the end - to give you a sense of Ellul by letting him speak for himself. We open with two passages from the book *The Presence of the Kingdom* which we will focus on in this lecture. These passages make clear why both Ellul's style and content have led many to classify him as a prophet. They also sketch out the task he set for himself in all his writing.

> The will of the world is always a will to death, a will to suicide. We must not accept this suicide, and we must so act that it cannot take place. So we must know what is the actual form of the world's will to suicide in order that we may oppose it, in order that we may know how, and in what direction, we ought to direct our efforts. The world is neither capable of preserving itself, nor is it capable of finding remedies for its spiritual situation (which controls the rest). It carries the weight of sin, it is the realm of Satan which leads it toward separation from God, and consequently toward death. That is all that it is able to do....Our concern should be to place ourselves at the very point where this suicidal desire is most active...and to see how God's will of preservation can act in this given situation....We are obliged to understand the depth and the spiritual reality of the mortal tendency of this world....

Then, picking up the language of God's will which the Christian must seek, Ellul also writes,

> The will of the Lord, which confronts us both as judgment and as pardon, as law and as grace, as commandment and as promise, is revealed to us in the Scriptures, illuminated by the Spirit of God. It has to be explained in contemporary terms, but in itself it does not vary.

Those two passages demonstrate the two-fold structure of Ellul's work and its prophetic style. On the one hand, there is a challenge to the world and its false religions. On the other, there is a challenge to us as the people of God to be faithful and fulfil our calling in the world. For the majority of our time I want to fill out those twin challenges and explain why Ellul can be viewed as a 20ᵗʰ century prophet who still speaks to us today at the start of the 21ˢᵗ century. First, however, I would guess that for many here, Jacques Ellul himself is rather a mysterious figure, and so before exploring

that theme a brief introduction to his life and work may be helpful.

Perhaps the first sign that Ellul may be classed as a 20ᵗʰ century prophet is found in his own life story. Born in Bordeaux in 1912 and dying in the same city in 1994 he lived through most of the main events and developments of the 20ᵗʰ century. And yet, he was someone who was ill at ease with and constantly critiqued the path that the world (and to a large extent the church) was taking throughout this period. It was the crucial decade of the 1930s which in many ways made Ellul the person he was. Historically, of course, this was the period of the rise of Fascism and Nazism, the firm establishing of communism in Stalinist Russia, the growth of liberal democracy in Europe and North America, and the crisis in international capitalism. These ideologies and the reaction against all of them by small groups of personalist thinkers in France shaped Ellul's life and thought decisively. Personally, this was also when Ellul came to living Christian faith and made his spiritual home in the minority Protestant French Reformed Church. There he was to be shaped theologically not just by the broader Reformation heritage but by Kierkegaard's thought and the work of Karl Barth. While his analysis of the world was developing through his involvement in personalist groups and his discovery of Karl Marx, Ellul was also completing his legal studies at Bordeaux University. His first teaching post – at Strasbourg – was interrupted by the Nazi invasion of France and after returning briefly to Bordeaux he and his young family then fled to the countryside where he was involved in the Resistance.

During the war years Ellul drew on his reflections in the previous decade to plan out what would become his life-work. By his death this amounted to 50 published books and hundreds of articles. While obviously his writing responded to events, his work was undoubtedly conceived as a whole from the start. He himself said in 1981, "It is true to say that I haven't written books but rather 'one' book of which each is a chapter."

In particular the structure of this work was carefully thought through from the beginning. There were to be two strands of writing in a dialectical relationship with each other. These two strands are reflected in the quotations with which we began and the structure we will follow shortly – the will of the world and the will of the Lord. On the one hand there are books which study the structure and development of the social, political and cultural world – the will of the world. These often show no sign of any explicit Christian commitment on his part. On the other hand there are books which seek to discern and explain the will of the Lord. They do so through biblical studies, theological reflections on important themes (the city, money, faith, hope), and the developing of a Christian ethic. These tracks in broad terms can be classed as sociology and theology. Though they often seem to run in parallel, these two tracks are actually in dialogue with each other throughout.

During the five decades which followed the planning of his work Ellul was not just thinking and writing. He was also living out his thinking. Employed as Professor of the History and Sociology of Institutions in the Law Faculty at Bordeaux University and Professor in the Institute of Political Studies he was also active in many other spheres. As a lay Christian he was active in the World Council of Churches and French Reformed Church, leading a local congregation, editing a major theological journal, and contributing in the highest levels of church government, including reform of theological education. After a brief period as Bordeaux's Deputy Mayor at the end of the war, he continued political involvement but more from the margins than within the established structures. Locally he supported groups defending his Aquitaine region from development plans and initiated major work with young delinquents.

In *The Presence of the Kingdom* Ellul defines a prophet as "not one who confines himself to foretelling with more or less precision and even more or less distance; he is one who already lives it, and already makes it actual and present in his own environment" (p. 38). Although time prevents further details of his life, they would I think provide further confirmation that he was indeed, on his own definition, a 20th century prophet.

It would be impossible in the time we have to do justice to Ellul's massive corpus of writing and the intricacies of his thought. I will therefore introduce him and what he may still have to say to us today through the book which he later confessed he realised "could be the introduction to the complete work" (x). Indeed on re-reading it at the end of working on my thesis I was astonished at how often I found a sentence or paragraph which gave the heart of one of his later books.

Known in English as *The Presence of the Kingdom* it was first translated in 1951, and its reissue in 1967 and again in 1989 demonstrates its continuing significance and relevance. As Daniel Clendenin writes in the new introduction to the 1989 edition,

> The book deserves a wide readership not only because it is the necessary primer for all Ellul study (it is the first book one should read by him), but because it examines issues that remain perennial problems in church and society...Ellul demonstrates in this book a timeless quality in his ability to examine issues far ahead of his time in a creative way. Despite its having been written a generation ago, *The Presence of the Kingdom* will provoke new dialogue today (xxxviii).

In getting a sense of this importance and the purpose of the book, the French title is perhaps more informative – *Presence au monde moderne*. While we may today think our task is to be present in le monde post-moderne, Ellul's subtitle was not only radical at the time of its publication in 1948 but highlights the deeper truth about our world than whether it is modern or post-modern. The work was subtitled, "Problemes de la civilisation post-chretienne". It was this sense as early as the 1940s that our civilization must now be understood as post-Christian which was truly decisive for Ellul. It shaped both his analysis of the world and his vision for the church.

The book originated in 4 talks he gave in 1946 to the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute in Bossey on the theme of the "Christian in modern society". Ellul took as his guide a biblical passage which remained a favourite throughout his life – "Do not be conformed to this present age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern the will of God, what is good, what is pleasing to him, and what is well done". What, he asked himself, if we are to take this seriously, might the stand and attitude of the Christian be in the world ?

Rather than trying to offer a detailed chapter-by-chapter account or critique of this short work, I want simply to highlight some themes to give you a flavour of its contents and what I believe is its prophetic character and continued relevance today. I will take the two subjects outlined in the opening quotations, likewise the two strands of his later writing – the will of the world and the will of the Lord. I want to pinpoint in each of these four challenges we still need to hear today over 50 years later.

As our opening quotation said, "The will of the world is always a will to death, a will to suicide". What, then, can we say about the world in its contemporary post-Christian situation?

First, Ellul stresses that we need to face the reality of the world. Here is, of course, a standard prophetic challenge that we are dangerously deluded about the state we are really in. That we think things are not as bad as they are. That we think and even proclaim that there is peace when there is no peace. Ellul sees this as a real problem in our world: "In the sphere of the intellectual life, the major fact of our day is a sort of refusal, unconscious but widespread, to become aware of reality" (82). This is – and here we find a common theme in Ellul's sociological analysis – a totally new situation. We face it because of a combination of the world's complexity and the forms of communication within it. We are left, he says, oscillating between the surface phenomenon – the presentations of the world given by the media – and the explanatory myth which seeks to give people coherence in the face of confusion. Personally I find it amazing that in the 1940s – half a century before CNN and 24 hour news – Ellul could write of how "every day modern man learns a thousand things from his newspaper and radio". He speaks of how the average person is "submerged by this flood of images which he cannot verify" and "news succeeds news without ceasing". As a result we are unable to master all we are given by the media. So we must either drown in confusion or grasp for some explanatory myth or failsafe ideology – the Islamic threat, the conspiracy of multinationals, the attack on traditional values – which gives us some handle to make sense of the world. The first challenge Ellul then gives us is the challenge to reflect on our own experience of reality, to face up to it in all its complexity and its negativity, and to seek to understand it. This is a challenge we particularly need to hear today in our churches – do we really encourage and equip God's people to think critically and deeply about God's world ?

Secondly, Ellul highlights one particular cause of our blindness in relation to our world. We refuse, he says, to question the way our world is because of our respect for facts. We will not judge a fact. We just accept it. And this, he argues, is nothing short of a new form of religion in our day and age. We feel bound to adapt ourselves to the fact which becomes in effect divinised. So Ellul writes that "Anyone who questions the value of the fact draws down on himself the most severe reproaches of our day: he is a reactionary, he wants to go back to 'the good old days'...".

In his time, the great example of this was the atom bomb. We did not, would not stop and refuse to develop or use it, or question this fact and the demands it made on us. We became

instead dominated by it. It became, in biblical terms, an idol, one of the principalities and powers which rule our lives.

Today, in the 21st century, the atom bomb is perhaps less of an obvious and pressing issue. But does our world not show the same subservient attitude to facts? What about the fact of globalisation or the supposed power of the market? It is claimed to be simply impossible to question certain economic policies no matter how destructive they are. What about the fact of reproductive technologies? Can anyone seriously question this established project to produce human life? What, more recently still, about the fact of cloning? Again and again we can see the accuracy of Ellul's analysis today. We seem to have developed a refusal to consistently and persistently challenge what is presented to us as a fact. We have shown a constant unwillingness to ask of such alleged facts whether they are themselves good or bad. We refrain as a society from rejecting or even questioning what claims to be unchallengable fact.

The third area to which Ellul draws attention is illustrated by some of these examples of facts. It is the area for which he became most famous but is also one where he is often misunderstood. Perhaps Ellul's most famous book is *The Technological Society* which appeared in English in 1964. It originally appeared in French in 1954 as *"La Technique"* but received little attention. This French title is significantly different, for technique of course goes much wider than what we usually think of when we speak of technology.

In *Presence of the Kingdom* Ellul discusses what he later analysed as Technique in terms of "means". Chapter 3 is called "The End and the Means" and argues that our world has been overtaken by "means" and we have lost any sense of concrete "ends". Tied to this, he argues, is our fixation with efficiency and usefulness in all spheres of life.

On re-reading the book for this lecture I found the following passage which I must confess I had totally forgotten, but again perhaps illustrates the prophetic insight Ellul has here. He wrote,

> Anything that does not serve some purpose must be eliminated or rejected, and in matters that concern men and women the same view prevails. This is what explains the practice of euthanasia (for old people and incurables) in the National Socialist State. Anyone who is not useful to the community must be put to death. To us this seems a barbarous practice, but it is simply the application of the universal predominance of means, and to the extent in which this fact is developed we may expect to see the introduction of this practice into the whole of civilization (53).

One can imagine the outrage such an extreme claim must have caused in 1946! Yet we have already seen changes in the law in the Netherlands and parts of the USA and Australia and doubtless these will soon be picked up and support for legalised euthanasia grow in this country. When they do, Christians will rightly challenge them but perhaps what we also need to do is learn from Ellul to look deeper. We should see and question the more fundamental driving spiritual forces such as the exaltation of usefulness and efficiency which make such views so acceptable to our culture.

Perhaps closer to home we need to ask whether the church has not also bought into this great concern of the world with means, efficiency and usefulness. One may think of the effort put into marketing the gospel effectively or restructuring church institutions. More controversially there is the highly technical mindset driving various contemporary evangelistic programmes such as Alpha and parts of the church growth movement. That is a challenge to which we will return later when we look at Ellul's counter-proposal.

Finally, in relation to the world, Ellul argues that what the world needs is nothing short of a revolution. This theme runs through his work from the 1930s onwards and, although influenced by Marx, is not simply Marxist analysis. There is rather a sense that the world being formed, the world we today have inherited, is destructive of human beings and genuine civilization. In typically purple prose he writes,

> If this revolution does not take place, we are done for, and human civilization as a whole is impossible. At the present moment we are confronted by a choice: either a mass civilization, technological, "conformist" – the "Brave New World" of Huxley, hell organised upon earth for the bodily comfort of everybody – or a different civilization, which we cannot yet describe because we do not know what it will be; it still has to be created, consciously, by men. If we do not know what to choose, or, in other words, how to "make a revolution", if we let ourselves drift along the stream of history, without knowing it, we shall have chosen the power of suicide, which is at the heart of the world (31).

As we look around Britain and Western Europe as a whole today with the quest for economic growth, greater material goods, more and more technological gizmos, do we not, in that striking phrase, "hell organised upon earth for the bodily comfort of everybody" hear something which still speaks to us? Are we not challenged as Christians to face up to the need for a real deep-seated revolution in our world ?

Here then, I suggest, are four prophetic words which Ellul spoke back in 1946 concerning the world, words we still need to hear and heed today:
- Face up to reality and seek to understand it
- Don't be afraid to challenge what are asserted to be simple facts of life
- Don't get obsessed with means and technical efficiency
- Recognise a major revolution is needed in our world

Alongside this fourfold challenge in relation to the world and its false religions there is also a prophetic fourfold challenge to us as God's people to be faithful and to fulfil our calling. This begins where we ended a moment ago with Ellul's emphasis on revolution. In the title of his second chapter Ellul calls for "Revolutionary Christianity". The revolution that we have seen Ellul believes the world needs is one which Christian faith offers. This is not, of course, a political revolution but something much deeper. And it depends not ultimately on us but on Christ at work in us and through us. We are called to be His ambassadors and representatives in this alien world and as such we will be revolutionaries in the world.

Ellul vividly draws out the implications of various biblical images here.

> In the world, the Christian belongs to another,
> like a man of one nation who resides in another
> nation....A Chinese residing in France thinks in
> his own terms, in his own tradition. He has his
> own criterion of judgment and of action....He is
> also a citizen of another State, and his loyalty is
> given to this State, and not to the country in
> which he is living....The Christian stands up for
> the interests of his Master, as an ambassador
> champions the interests of his country....From
> another point of view he may also be sent out as
> a spy...to work in secret, at the heart of the
> world, for his Lord; to prepare for his Lord's
> victory from within (33-4).

If that is how we as the church understand ourselves, if that is how we live, then the faithful Christian must be revolutionary. I wonder how many faithful, committed Anglicans have really come to terms with the fact that, in Ellul's words, "in consequence of the claims which God is always making on the world the Christian finds himself, by that very fact, involved in a state of permanent revolution" (36-7).

The second insight is intimately connected with this revolutionary Christianity. It is the need to focus on and understand rightly the place of the Christian in the world. This is the title of Ellul's first chapter and in one sense the theme of his whole book. We are called to be in the world but not of the world. It's a phrase we all know well but one we perhaps too often fail to take seriously.

Ellul fills out its meaning by reference to three New Testament images. We are to be the salt of the world which, interestingly, he reads as an allusion to Leviticus 2:13 pointing to our calling to be a sign of God's covenant with the world in Jesus Christ. We are to be the light of the world, removing its darkness and giving meaning and direction to its history. We are – in an image we perhaps less often think about – to be sheep in the midst of wolves. Not a nice situation to be in. An image which speaks of sacrifice and refusal to dominate. An image which reminds us that, to use Ellul's terms, we are called as Christians to an "agonistic" way of life, a life of tension and suffering.

One of the aspects of that tension and agony is that in the world the Christian is torn between two truths – "on the one hand it is impossible for us to make this world less sinful; on the other hand it is impossible for us to accept it as it is" (9). That insight itself speaks volumes about Ellul's own prophetic position, reflecting as it does the anguish and pain of the situation in which the biblical prophets found themselves. And yet surely he is right when he warns us, "If we refuse either the one or the other, we are actually not accepting the situation in which God has placed us....We are involved in the tension between these two contradictory demands. It is a very painful, and a very uncomfortable situation, but it is the only position which can be fruitful for the action of the Christian in the world, and for his life in the world" (10).

We may and do try all sorts of escape from this calling. Sometimes we separate the spiritual from the material and focus simply on the interior life. Sometimes we work away to moralise and supposedly Christianise our world. Both Ellul warns us are

serious errors. We need instead to engage fully in the world of death as witnesses to the God of life.

And this focus on the Christian in the world means, thirdly, that Ellul emphasizes the centrality of the lay Christian in the Church's mission. This is a biblical truth which we probably feel the church has rediscovered in the decades since Ellul wrote. "Every member ministry" is now in theory and often in practice something the church acknowledges and encourages. And yet even the phrase itself points to the danger. Have we simply been clericalising the laity, getting them to do things on Sunday and in and for the church which traditionally the clergy did? Ellul – himself not ordained – bitingly comments, "there are no 'laymen' in our churches; because on the one hand, there is the minister, who does not know the situation in the world, and on the other hand, there are "laymen", who are very careful to keep their faith and their life in different compartments..." (11).

A cruel caricature perhaps. Aren't many prophets guilty of that too? But how often in our churches do those at the cutting edge of life in the world get the opportunity to share and reflect in depth on what it means to be a Christian in business, in a union, in education, or wherever they are called to live the agonistic life of being in but not of the world? Where do lay Christians find guidance and practical support in their calling to be salt, light and sheep among wolves? If we undertake it seriously this task will not be an easy one. Ellul himself discovered that. Following these talks he set up various Protestant Professional Associations to try and meet these needs. After initial success all the groups gradually died because the task was too hard and people lost interest or lacked the time to make the groups work. Yet, in our 21st century post-Christian world surely Ellul is still right, that we need to be equipping and encouraging lay people to be the presence of God's Kingdom in the world.

Fourth, Ellul warns us against thinking that all this simply requires us to develop techniques which enable us to do certain things effectively and in Christian ways. He insists that all this is more a matter of being than of doing – not something easy in our activist culture, including our activist evangelical culture.

Ellul roots this call to be in a theological challenge to our society's fixation with means and efficiency. Christ he says is our end and He is also our means by making that end present to us now. Means and end are therefore united in Him. We do not therefore as Christians have to find means which will secure our end for us because both means and end are God's gift to us in Christ. Ellul therefore urges the Christian to have a different attitude from the world.

> It is not his primary task to think out plans,
> programs, methods of action and of achievement.
> When Christians do this...it is simply an imitation
> of the world, which is doomed to defeat....It is
> not our instruments and our institutions which
> count, but ourselves, for it is ourselves who are
> God's instruments....We, within ourselves, have
> to carry the objective for which the world has
> been created by God....Christians have received
> this end in themselves by the grace of God (65).

So then four more specific challenges to us as God's people at the start of the 21st century:

- We are to be revolutionaries in a world requiring revolution
- We are to be truly in the world and yet quite different from it
- Lay Christians are therefore central in the mission of the church
- It is who we are rather than what we do which is crucial.

In conclusion, I want to draw these various challenges together and again let Ellul speak for himself through three somewhat longer quotations taken from the book's final chapter. They can be summed up in three words – calling, lifestyle and community.

FIRST, Ellul challenges us to realise our Christian calling – our difficult calling, our prophetic calling as God's people in His world.

> We cannot give everything into the hands of God (believing that God will open the eyes, ears, and hearts of men), until we have wrestled with God till the break of the day, like Jacob; that is, until we have struggled to the utmost limits of our strength, and have known the despair of defeat. If we do not do this, our so-called confidence in God and our "orthodoxy"are nothing less than hypocrisy, cowardice and laziness. All that I have already written will be useless unless it is understood as a call to arms, showing what enemy we have to confront, what warfare we have to wage, what weapons we have to use. Then, in the heart of this conflict, the Word can be proclaimed, but nowhere else. When we have really understood the plight of our contemporaries, when we have heard their cry of anguish, and when we have understood why they won't have anything to do with our disembodied gospel, when we have shared their sufferings, both physical and spiritual, in their despair and desolation, when we have become one with the people of our own nation and of the universal church, as Moses and Jeremiah were one with their own people, as Jesus identified himself with the wandering crowds, "sheep without as shepherd", *then* we will be able to proclaim the Word of God – but not till then! (116).

SECOND, to fulfil this calling Ellul insists we need to develop a certain way of being in the world, a Christian lifestyle.

> In order that Christianity today may have a point of contact with the world [it is necessary] to create a new style of life. It is evident that the first thing to do is to be faithful to revelation, but this fidelity can only become a reality in daily life through the creation of this new way of life: this is the "missing link"....There is no longer a Christian style of life. To speak quite frankly, without beating about the bush, a doctrine only has power (apart from that which God gives it) to the extent in which it is adopted, believed, and accepted by men who have a style of life which is in harmony with it...The whole of life is concerned in this search. It includes the way we

think about present political questions, as well as our way of practicing hospitality. It also affects the way we dress and the food we eat...as well as the way in which we manage our financial affairs. It includes being faithful to one's wife as well as being accessible to one's neighbour....Absolutely everything, the smallest details we regard as indifferent, ought to be questioned, placed in the light of faith, examined from the point of view of the glory of God. It is on this condition that, in the church, we might possibly discover a new style of Christian life, voluntary and true (119-20,122-3).

THIRD, we can do all this only in Christian community. And here is perhaps a particular challenge for us who lead parish churches or who will be leading them in the near future.

> It is impossible for an isolated Christian to follow this path....It will be necessary to engage in a work that aims at rebuilding parish life, at discovering Christian community, so that people may learn afresh what the fruit of the Spirit is....We shall need to rediscover the concrete application of self-control, liberty, unity, and so on. All this is essential for the life of the church, and the function of Christianity in the world. And all this ought to be directed toward the preaching and the proclamation of the gospel (124).

We stand, today, over fifty years later, facing the real challenges of living as God's people in a post-Christian, post-modern world. Surely we can discern in Ellul's challenge to make God's Word known, the words of a 20th century prophet to us in the 21st century, being faithful to our calling, creating a Christian lifestyle, and building Christian communities.

Like all prophets, Ellul's words confront and challenge us. They may disturb, perhaps even run the risk of disheartening us. He knows that. He was often enough accused of being a hopeless pessimist in his writing! And so it is only proper to end as he ends his book – with words of hope and encouragement:

> The enemies of the church seek to turn it aside from its own way, in order to make it follow their way; the moment it yields it becomes the plaything of the forces of the world. It is given up to its adversaries. It can only have recourse to God in prayer, that he may teach it his way, which no one else can teach it. This means not only the way of eternal salvation, but the way which one follows in the land of the living, the way which is truly impossible to find unless God reveals it, truly impossible to follow with our human power alone. The problem is the same in the social and the individual sphere. From the human point of view this way of the church in the world is foolish, utopian, and ineffective, and we are seized with discouragement when we see what we really have to do in this real world. We

might throw the whole thing up, were we not sure of seeing the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: but we have seen this goodness, it has been manifested, and on this foundation we can go forward and confront the powers of this world, in spite of our impotence, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8.37-39) (126-7).

The Trend Toward Virtual Christianity
by Randall E. Otto

In his article "Welcome to The Next Church" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1996), Charles Trueheart summed up the megachurch phenomenon: "Seamless multimedia worship, round-the-clock niches of work and service, spiritual guidance, and a place to belong; in communities around the country the old order gives way to the new." Regardless of whether they are megachurches, many congregations today are incorporating mass marketing methodology such as an entertainment orientation, slick packaging, multi-media imaging, a variety of options, along with a minimization of history and an accent on anonymity. The question remains, however, whether this methodology will ultimately be self-defeating. Is it possible that contemporary American pragmatism will find all of these elements more fully realized in the electronic Christianity of the Internet? Perhaps the virtual Christianity of electronic churches such as The First Church of Cyberspace and the Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua is "The Next Church."

The Entertainment Orientation

Walt Kallestad, pastor of the Community of Joy church in Arizona, says, "If Jesus Christ were alive today, I'm certain he'd be using every form of entertainment that's out there to make God relevant and practical in people's lives." Most young people today want an entertainment orientation. Because many churches are targeting Baby Boomers and Generation Xers who have grown up on the visual stimulation and slick packaging of television and special effects movies, their worship has a fast pace and lots of entertainment allure. While often architecturally non-descript, contemporary "worship centers" are loaded inside with the technology for maximum visual stimulation, with screens for the projection of chorus lines as well as the faces of those on the stage, whom one can otherwise hardly see. Recently, as I worshiped from the balcony of a large church in Arkansas, I found myself looking steadily at the screen for the images of those little people down on stage who were giving testimonies, singing, or preaching. It was almost like watching them on TV! In fact, I wonder if my worship experience would have been much different had I stayed home and watched a service on my television screen. True, watching anything on a screen can make the experience seem distant and objectified, as preaching and prayer on television sometimes appear theatrical and almost silly, but that's the price of good entertainment!

The transmission of images via the screen is fundamental to modern religion. When Billy Graham's evangelistic sermons are broadcast throughout the world, he is visible to all but a relative few only on a screen, even if they are in the same venue—yet thousands respond to his preaching. God speaks to people through the screen! When the thousands of men at a Promise Keepers convention in Washington are linked via an audio-video hookup to another convention meeting simultaneously in a stadium in Atlanta to sing a chorus together, it is a virtual taste of heaven. A couple decides to get married and arranges a legally valid wedding in which the participants are at remote locations and the vows are typed in via computer keyboards. Having observed in some non-traditional religious groups' computerized rites of passage "something close to an actual neopagan congregation, a community of people who gathered regularly to worship even though they had never seen each other face to face," Stephen D. O'Leary says that there is little difference between the Christianized form of computerized screen relationships and the neopagan form, save for institutional approval. In "Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks" (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Winter, 1996), he says that Christianized forms "are not fanciful predictions of what is to come; they have already taken place. They are no more or less 'unreal' than than [*sic*] the neopagan gatherings on CompuServe, insofar as the criterion is considered to be physical presence."

The entertainment orientation of many contemporary churches advances to a new level in the cyberchurch. What can happen on its screen is virtually limitless. The First Church of Cyberspace (http://www.godweb.org/index1.html) offers a number of options, all instantly available at the click of a mouse. One can listen to inspirational music and hymns, pick from a variety of sermons by different religious leaders, look at art from the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel in Gallery One and Rembrandt and Byzantine art in Gallery Two, with options to link to other religious sites, discussion forums, and reviews of religious books, movies and more; there is even Java Theology! Now this is *really* a church with options and high quality entertainment! One can choose from the music of J. S. Bach to a Congolese mass and read "sermons for every season" while enjoying famous art from around the world, all at any time in the convenience and comfort of one's own home.

The cyberchurch not only has greater entertainment appeal than any contemporary church; it also has a greater consumer value to the church shopper. Shoppers can stay as long as they wish and leave whenever they want. Virtual Christianity might possibly satisfy the interest level – as well as efficiency of time and resources – of the technology icon himself, Bill Gates, who has said (*Time*, January 13, 1997), "just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. . . . There's a lot more I could be doing

on a Sunday morning." Were he a virtual parishioner in the First Church of Cyberspace, Gates could do whatever he wanted on Sunday morning and surf in for a virtual religious "hit" whenever it seemed convenient. He could come *whenever* and *however* he'd like. The "come as you are" approach of the contemporary church still requires casual apparel generally suitable for public display. In the virtual church, Gates, well-known for "dressing down," could come in literally anything (or nothing) at all!

More of today's young people want to be like Bill. In actuality, they are increasingly being created in Bill's image. As Wendy Murray Zoba notes in "The Class of '00" (*Christianity Today*, February 3, 1997), studies show that teens today are:
- bombarded by frequent images, so that they need continual "hits"
- sufficiently aloof that the remote control symbolizes their reality
- so engrained in consumerism that they take it for granted
- a cyber-suckled community

If so, the consumer-driven and entertainment-oriented contemporary church must eventually make a transition toward the virtual Christianity of the cyberchurch or risk losing its market share of today's youth.

In 1996 the Roman Catholic Church in Germany failed to take advantage of these new technologies and so improve market share. A new software program entitled "Confession by Computer" marketed by the Cologne-based Lazarus Society, offered sinners the chance to confess to their computers from a list of 200 failings, a list which, as the Reuters report noted, could be "customized for especially original sinners." "As soon as the sin is selected on the basis of the Ten Commandments, the computer searches out an appropriate penance," the program's promotional literature stated. The program would then display or read out audibly the words to the prayers "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," with suggestions on to how to get in touch with a priest or minister on the Internet.

To these technological innovations, which could have electrified repentance and streamlined priestly duties, the Church issued a stalwart and predictably passé rejection. A spokeswoman for the German Conference of Bishops said, "You cannot have sins forgiven by the push of a button." Surely the Church has not recognized that Jesus himself urged *ease* in the pronouncing of absolution! When chastened by the scribes for telling a paralytic he had just healed that his sins were forgiven, Jesus responded, "Which is *easier*, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'?" (Matt. 9:5).

The non-sacramental character of many contemporary churches may further impel them toward virtual Christendom. Their general perception of the sacraments as mere memorials means no Real Presence is involved in Holy Communion; and, since baptism is typically administered in private gatherings at someone's pool, little real presence is involved there either. In fact, computerized simulations can create images so real as to make the technological community "come to life." As Erik Davis (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Winter, 1996) observes of neopagan communities meeting on the Internet:

> The technopagan community comes to life with the creation of performative rituals that create their virtual reality through text, their participants interacting with keyboards, screens, and modems. This is certainly odd for those who conceive of ritual strictly in terms of situated *actions*, as a drama involving chant, gesture, and props such as chalices, bread, wine, incense, etc.; yet in the entire experience as revealed in archive files at least, such elements are replaced by textual simulations.

Moreover, with advances in CD ROM, video morphing, and virtual reality technology, simulations may appear almost indistinguishable from real-time events. Besides, in the postmodern world, signs no longer imitate or duplicate the real, but simply substitute for it. The sacraments are merely signs pointing to something unseen anyway.

Ease of *approach*, well-packaged *entertainment*, and multiple *options*--these *keywords* of many contemporary churches are taken to an enhanced level in the virtual church.

Transcending Denominations

Another emphasis of many contemporary churches is the transcending of denominations. Although many contemporary churches are in theology and polity simply independent Baptist churches, they avoid sectarian bias by dropping any denominational affiliation from their name. For some, the hope of gaining greater market share means not just dropping a denominational identification, but also dropping any reference to Jesus Christ himself. A church in California decided it might have broader appeal by changing its name from Church *of the Master* to Church *in the Foothills*. Location, location, location! The important thing is that the consumer can find the church's *physical* location, not that the church have any *theological* location.

People don't care much about theology anyway. They just want to attend someplace where they can feel good and where everybody gets along. For this reason some contemporary church pastors demur from preaching on divisive social issues. As Trueheart observes, "Like the mainline denominations, though perhaps with more success, new, large, independent churches attempt to live with intense divisions among their flock over abortion and homosexuality."

The cyberchurch, however, is equally savvy in being non-descript and broad in appeal. The Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua (http://www.dogchurch.org/narthex.shtml) combines in its name the appeal of the non-descript with comic relief. How many would dare name their church *after a dog*?! Yet its outrageousness almost guarantees youth appeal! As "a sacred place in cyberspace named in honor of a little old dog with cataracts who barked sideways at strangers because he couldn't see where they were," the Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua has maintained that humans relate to God in the same way, "by making a more or less joyful noise in God's general direction with the expectation of a reward for doing so." The church's creed is extremely simple and ostensibly Christian: "We can't be right about everything we believe -- thank God, we don't have to be." This creed certainly transcends all denominations and includes virtually everyone. It has great market appeal! It is simple, much easier to remember than the Apostles' Creed and truly a basis on which people can get along.

The Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua grapples with divisive social issues, though inconclusively. The pastor of the

church posts an *irenic* position on a bulletin board in which he encourages all sides to come together in moral discourse taken from the realm of politics. The value of the cyberchurch approach is that everyone has access to the pastor and can post his or her thoughts without fear of acrimony, since the writer need not leave an actual name. The anonymity in much of contemporary church life is in the cyberchurch turned into a positive good.

The cyberchurch not only transcends the parochial, the doctrinal, and the denominational; it transcends both time and history. While some lament the a-historical nature of computer technology, the cyberchurch is utilizing an approach already at work in postmodern society. While undoubtedly driven by an interest in having the broadest appeal possible, the present concern among some churches to transcend denominational affiliations is also a tacit acknowledgment of their a-historical nature. Denominational affiliations typically describe the doctrine and history of a particular church body. Lutherans, for example, have their origin in the historical context and doctrinal formulations of Martin Luther and his successors. Presbyterian and Reformed churches have theirs in the context and formulations of John Calvin and his theological heirs. Such churches tell the prospective worshiper what their historical and doctrinal moorings are.

Many contemporary churches intentionally avoid any reference to church history, the theologians, and doctrinal formulations of any branch of Christendom. Their intention is to be broad in scope, but the effect is clearly a-historical. The average contemporary church consumer probably has no more notion of who Martin Luther and John Calvin are than the most avowed atheist, despite the fact that Luther and Calvin have provided the theological groundwork for what many of these churches believe, such as justification by faith. These churches thus build on borrowed capital, and state as their theology (and of course, the theology of the Bible) what is actually derived from someone in time and history who shall likely forever remain nameless. After all, namelessness is part of the appeal in many churches.

The cyberchurch again takes this impetus to a new level. A-historicality is an admitted part of the on-line environment, an extension of what contemporary society desires, the here and now, not the then and there. Howard Besser has observed, "the on-line environment of the future is the logical extension of postmodernism. Everything is ahistorical and has no context" (*Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information* [San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995]). The cyberchurch recognizes the a-historicality of postmodern humanity and gives opportunity for every voice to be heard and every idea to be shared, provided, of course, that the voice is electrified in the form of an on-line message.

Who We Are
Numerous assumptions of the contemporary church are enhanced in the cyberchurch, suggesting its transitional nature to electronic Christianity. The *residual* element hindering this transition remains the insistence on bodily meeting as the form which its community will take, be it in the relative anonymity of the megachurch auditorium or in the genuine personal interaction of the small group. This insistence on physical togetherness is a holdover from those primitive days when human beings were considered a combination of body and spirit, a psychosomatic union. Along with this lingering belief remains the occasional interest in personal touch, hearing voices, and feeling the warmth of another close by.

However, these are fading memories of a bygone era, the silly sentiment of "the good ol' days" when people met together on the front porch just to chat. If, as Douglas Groothuis says in *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), "much of the technological imperative finds its restless energy in the desire to lessen or eliminate the agonies of embodied existence," then decrying the decentered self and the fluidity of personal identity concomitant with this technological imperative as "Gnostic" will mean little, particularly to an a-historical mindset. The future, virtually deified by the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann as "the mode of God's being," is calling us. The communications and information age of the future bid us live in a different, disembodied world.

Computer scientists inform us that the future will be virtual. Professor Nicholas Negroponte at MIT says in *Being Digital* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), "computing is not about computers any more. It is about living." In the future, he writes, "you will be able to purchase personality modules that include the behavior and style of living of fictitious characters." In other words, we will be able to be someone else, live a virtual life. David Gelernter, computer science professor at Yale, says in his book *Mirror Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) that reality will be replaced, piece by piece, by a software imitation, and that human beings will live inside that imitation. This is the virtual world that lies ahead. In order to adapt to this new world and maximize its role in it, the contemporary church will have to make the transition to the virtual Christianity of the cyberchurch.

Making this transition, therefore, requires that humans recognize they are really thinking machines. MIT sociologist and psychologist Sherry Turkle says in *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), "We cede to the computer the power of reason, but at the same time, in defense, our own sense of identity becomes increasingly focused on the soul and the spirit in the human machine." In other words, the more we enter into the virtual world the more we will realize our true selves. As an MCI advertising campaign not long ago said, there are no bodies and there are no ages, genders, or infirmities--only minds. Each one of us is a mind and the closer we coalesce our minds to that of the computer, the more we will realize who we really are: minds that can be united with one another through the on-line community of virtual Christianity in an artificial world. The Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua says it "is all in your mind. If your mind is real, that's good enough for us." If artificial reality is the authentic postmodern condition, the market-driven church must meet its seekers on those terms, in the authenticity of artificiality.

Once the mind-body problem is overcome in the Greek recognition and Idealist sublation that we are mere minds, the transition may continue to the *virtual community* of which Howard Rheingold has spoken (*The Virtual Community* [New York: Harper & Row, 1993]). Some may resist the virtues of the virtual, such as James Brook and Iain A. Boal, who say in the Introduction to *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information*, "virtual technologies are pernicious when their simulacra of relationships are deployed society-wide as substitutes for face-to-face interactions, which are inherently richer than mediated interactions." To these curmudgeons we may reply: If these personal encounters are so much richer, then why are they so much less pursued? The postmodernist impulse has been set by developments in science and technology: the world is understood to

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be relative, indeterminate, and participatory; it is not composed of stuff, but rather of dynamic relations. The twentieth-century process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead described the world not in terms of substances, i.e., things, but in terms of events, i.e., temporal units of relatedness. This is the vision of the world in which dynamic temporality rather than static substantiality is the central factor for life and relationships. Our critics are much more to the point when they admit that the cyberspatial way of life "seems to represent a crypto-religious ideal of our society." And if it is the religious ideal of our society, then the entertainment-oriented and consumer-driven church of tomorrow must adapt or lose market share. The transition must be made to the virtual church.

Of course, for those churches that refuse the entertainment-oriented, market-driven approach there can be little hope. Their failure to adapt has already cost them a significant segment of the religious market. Those that remain resolute against the impetus to change and adapt to cultural pressures will become increasingly insignificant. As Neil Postman says in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1992), technopoly is totalitarian technocracy which eliminates alternatives to itself by making them invisible and therefore irrelevant: "It does so by redefining what we mean by religion, by art, by family, by politics, by history, by truth, by privacy, by intelligence, so that our definitions fit its new requirements." Irrelevant and laughable will be the one who refuses to see the new metaphysical status of information and the virtual deification of the virtual. Postman notes that the phrase "The computer shows . . ." is technopoly's equivalent to "It is God's will." Silly and simple will be those who continue to believe in a historical creed of an historic church and meet with other such obscurantists to interact personally on a

Sunday morning in resistance to culture, to sing old hymns and hear lengthy sermons declaring objective truth. The world will be busy surfing the Net.

Why bother with Sunday? A culture that demands convenience and ease of accessibility requires that it be viewed as a day like any other. Those few who remain from the historic and traditional church, who continue to meet together personally for Sunday worship, must then serve to remind us that *Sunday morning is who we as human beings really are*. It is the day of Christ's resurrection, the central tenet of the Christian faith, the firstfruits of the resurrection of all to eternal life or condemnation, body and soul. To gather together on Sunday morning means we humans *are indeed a psychosomatic union;* our souls will live in eternal joy or torment after death *and* the bodies integral to who we are will rise. To fail to meet together to worship on Sunday morning means that we do not consider our bodies essential to our experience, that we have already imbibed the disembodied disdain of physical relationships involving personal touch, love and care. As George Lakoff says in *Resisting the Virtual Life*, "The more you interact not with something natural and alive, but with something electronic, it takes the sense of the earth away from you, takes your embodiment away from you, robs you of more and more of embodied experiences. That's a deep impoverishment of the human soul." To lose the "sense of the earth" is to lose sense of who we are, for *humans* came from the earth (*humus*) and to the earth will return, though only till the resurrection.

Who are we? If mere minds or machines, we may continue toward the virtual illusion of actual Christianity. If we are made in God's image, however, we are soul and body rooted in time and history to know, worship, and serve God and one another together.

Jacques Ellul's Influence on the Cultural Critique of Thomas Merton by Phillip M. Thompson

The Context of the Ellul and Merton Connection

Simone Weil described the West as a "motorcar" that is "launched at full speed and driverless across broken country."[1] The reckless and dangerous trajectory of Western culture also troubled the Trappist monk and writer, Thomas Merton (1916-1968). Merton's cultural critique of technology, and most importantly the mentality developed and affirmed in technology, lacked a certain depth and coherence until it was annealed by his close reading of contemporary social critics, particularly Jacques Ellul.

Ellul might seem a curious choice for inspiration. Generally, the ellipses of the man Martin Marty labeled the "quintessential Protestant" and other Catholic intellectuals crossed infrequently.[2] Those Catholics expressing an opinion have offered mixed reviews. There is a general consensus that Ellul adroitly adumbrated the reach and impact of technology on contemporary culture.[3] Some Catholics have viewed Ellul not only as an accurate

prophet of doom, but as offering a Christian "hope" that offers a breach, a "heteronomy in a closed age."[4]

For other Catholics, Ellul's Augustinian dualism in the political realm is suspect. It appears to reflect a profound pessimism about human influence in the realm of social and political action. This perspective can initiate a self-fulfilling prophecy.[5] In addition, while Ellul correctly discovers a comprehensive techno-scientific system in the West, he fails to concede that it has positive and negative values. Catholics have not discounted elements of truth, verification, and rationality in technology and science.[6]

From Ellul's side of the table, he is -- not surprisingly -- leery of certain elements of Catholic teaching. In *Le Fondement Theologique du Droit* (1946), he denounced the lack of Biblical grounding in the revival of the natural law tradition. The natural law tradition was then at the height of its revived influence in Catholic theological and legal circles.[7] There were also institutional problems

in the structure of the Catholic Church. They had mistakenly adopted the pagan forms of the Romans.[8]

Despite his firm beliefs and polemical style, Ellul is too subtle to be trapped indiscriminately into any mold, including that of a Protestant crusader. For example, he expressed appreciation for the creativity and spontaneity of John Paul II. He also graciously recognized the value and insight of some Catholics whose position was relatively sympathetic to his own. An entire issue of his journal *Foi et Vie* was devoted to Charles Peguy.[9]

The mild interest in the French sociologist among Catholics primarily occurred after the fall of 1964 when a copy of *The Technological Society* was sent to a hermitage in the woods of Northern Kentucky. Merton was thrilled to discover in its first pages someone who shared his deep distrust of a technical mentality exemplified by the machine. A personal journal records the impact of the new find.

> Reading Jacques Ellul's book, *The Technological Society*. Great, full of firecrackers. A fine provocative book and one that really makes sense. Good to read while the council is busy with Schema 13 (as it is). One cannot see what is involved in the question of "The Church in the Modern World" without reading a book like this. I wonder if the Fathers are aware of all the implications of the technological society? Those who resist it may be wrong, but those who go along with all its intemperances are hardly right.[10]

The timing of Merton's reading was fortuitous. In the midst of the Catholic Church's aggiornamento (opening) to the world, the book was a prudent warning. Why the monk was so smitten by this book, however, goes beyond the immediate timing of the reading and requires at least a cursory understanding of his perspective in relationship to his more general cultural criticism.

Merton devoted a couple of articles, a lecture to his novices, and a fair portion of *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* to the issue of technology. The main body of his thinking regarding technology is derived, however, from fragmentary and episodic explorations in journals, letters and other writings. All of his writings reflect his search for a spiritual orientation that seeks reality and meaning amidst a disorienting century. This yearning for meaning could be exceedingly naive or excessively enthusiastic about a momentary concern. Nonetheless, Merton's insights provide valuable "clues as to how we might live and how we might view the world even when we find ourselves in circumstances quite different from his own."[11]

On the perimeter of his society and imbued with the values of a monastic regime, there is a peculiar freedom to assess the impact of scientific and technological advances. As a Christian, he "takes up a critical attitude to the world and its structures" and declares that the claims of the world are often fraudulent. In this prophetic resistance, each "witness" must shoulder "the 'burden' of vision that God lays upon him."[12]

Contrarily, the prophet in the contemporary context can not impose a spiritual 'pattern of thought' To participate in the dominant secular discourse, he or she must address religious concerns within the language and understandings of a post-Christian culture. This approach is acceptable, since a Christian assumes that this world, for better or worse, is the scene of our redemption and our creative response to God's love.[13]

The Journey from the Monastery to the World

An extended engagement with the scientific and technological culture of the external world would be advanced in Merton's social critique of his later years. The seeds of this engagement were first sown in an internal dissent against the intrusion of technology into monastic life in the 1940's and 1950's.

The assumptions that were brought to the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1941 are not easily ascertained since the evidence is slight. A few random comments suggest some awareness of the corruptive possibilities in technology. There was admiration for Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means*, in which the Englishman asserted that evil means such as violence and war, even in a just cause, corrupts the user by asserting the primacy of material and animal urges. Each individual must reassert their mind and will through prayer and asceticism.[14]

Following his entry into the strict asceticism of a Trappist monastery, it is not surprising that his early pronouncements advocated a *fuga mundi*, a "total rejection of the business, ambitions, honors, activities of the world." Years later, he described himself in this period as having "Thoreau in one pocket, John of the Cross in another, and holding the Bible open at the apocalypse."[15]

This apocalyptic and isolationist perspective was reinforced when the monastery was besieged by a "small mechanized army of builders" in the 1940's and 1950's in order to meet the physical needs of a flood of new postulants. The intrusions of the machines often shattered the solitude of the contemplative life.[16]

While Merton vented personal frustrations about such intrusions, he was more concerned about the technological mentality abetted by the machines. In order to make the abbey secure and prosperous, the brothers departed for their work assignments "like a college football team taking the field." Many monks were "restless and avid for change and new projects" and after operating machinery had difficulty adjusting to silence.[17]

> Where many machines are used in monastic work ... there can be a deadening of spirit and sensibility, a blunting of perception, a loss of awareness, a lowering of tone, a general fatigue and lassitude, a proneness to unrest and guilt which we might be less likely to suffer if we simply went out and worked with our hands in the fields.[18]

The mentality fostered by continuously adopting novel and faster methods at the monastery was hostile to a consciousness of spiritual conversion where rapidity and efficiency are not possible. The contemplative life cannot be mass produced, sold or quantified. Moreover, the technical mentality advanced the false belief that proper techniques in the form of rules, regulations, etc. could achieve salvation. The success of this mentality of progress reflects a failure in the monastic ideal and a failure to build a proper understanding of the ascetic life. In its place there was a false individualism, an accommodation to the American myth of progress.

By the early 1960's Merton's heightened interest in social concerns could not ignore issues of science and technology. Increasingly, there was a distressing capitulation to the primacy of

"man's desire to better himself and his world by science." He feared that the "...lack of balance between technology and the spiritual life is so enormous that there is every chance of failure and accident."[20]

The Mertonian cultural critique thus assumes that technology is an inevitable -- but potentially dangerous -- aspect of human life that can wound or even destroys its maker. The objective, therefore, must be "to save modern man from his Faustian tendencies, and not become a sorcerer's apprentice while doing so."[21]

In searching for sources of insight on technology, he was frustrated within his own tradition. With a few exceptions, Merton believed the Catholic Church was inattentive to the dangers of the technological revolution in the West. The relatively few Catholics who addressed the issue of technology either completely embraced or rejected it. Finding the cupboard of tradition relatively barren, he turned to scripture. In Genesis, there appeared to be an anthropological explanation of the source of the problem. Adam's Fall, in part, is an attempt to improve the "wisdom and science" of the Garden of Eden. Humanity, through Adam, exchanged a "perfectly ordered nature elevated by the highest gifts of mystical grace for the compulsions, anxieties and weaknesses of a will left to itself..."[22]

It is worth considering Ellul's similar view of Genesis. He objected to any exegesis that justified a regime of constant technological fine tuning of the divine creation. Nature, in its pre-Fallen state was "perfect and finished." God had finished his work and it "was good." Human beings were and should be the passive receptors of this beneficence. Human beings work within, but should not complete or expand creation. As was true in Merton's analysis, Adam participated in the fullness of the wisdom of God. This wisdom did not need to subordinate, exploit or utilize nature.[23]

For Merton, the consequence of the Edenic Fall and a search for a more complete "wisdom" was a devotion to a false humanism, i.e. for some ideal other than the love of God. This disobedience to God results in an "orgy of idolatry" which has polluted much of contemporary life. An idolatrous devotion to the works of humanity produced a fractured and consuming devotion to activity which never integrates the spiritual and the physical. Technology abets a relentless quest for money and status as an anodyne for the human predicament. This Pascalian "divertissement" attempts to hide the reality that such actions are idolatrous diversions and not true ends.[24]

Merton's Biblical and other occasional speculations on technology were complimented and extended by the insights of contemporary social critics in the early 1960's. The works of Lewis Mumford, Rachel Carson and Jacques Ellul provided some depth and breadth to an instinctive distrust of a technological mentality.[25]

The Impact of Jacques Ellul

Merton was introduced to Jacques Ellul in 1964 at the recommendation of his friend, Wilbur Ferry, at The Center for Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California. Ferry had arranged a translation of *The Technological Society*. Merton may also have heard of Ellul from another contact, Will Campbell, the editor in chief of *Kattalagete*. who was a fervent supporter of the French writer.[26]

Whatever the source, Merton delighted in finding a kindred spirit on technology who clarified many of his positions. Ellul's analysis of technology was "entirely convincing" with a "stamp of

prophecy which so much writing on that subject seemed to lack." He immediately recommended *The Technological Society* to friends and even theologians at the Second Vatican Council.[27]

From his reading of *The Technological Society*, Merton posited the source of the contemporary cultural errors to a mentality of progress and change, a "technique" that has trumped all other ideological or institutional principles. Technique had become both an instrument and an ethic. With efficiency as the regnant ethical principle, technique imprisons humanity "in a gigantic inhumane machine."[28]

The "Calvinism" of Ellul may be "too pessimistic" for Merton, but it correctly illuminated the fundamental reality that the West was being dominated by a technological mentality that has corrupted any alternative humane vision.[29] For example, the primacy of technique abets the contemporary delusion that each person is an autonomous creature capable of constant personal improvement. Paradoxically, the result of this quest for personal freedom through "technique" is often bondage, not liberation. Indeed, the truth is

> ...technology alienates those who depend on it
> and live by it. It deadens their human qualities
> and their moral perceptiveness. Gradually,
> everything becomes centered on the most
> efficient use of machines and techniques of
> production, and the style of life, the culture, the
> tempo and the manner of existence responds
> more and more to the needs of the technological
> process itself.[30]

The totalizing discourse of "technique" must "serve the universal effort' (of continual technological development and expansion)." Ellul warned that "Technique has no place for the individual; the personal means nothing to it." Assuming this mandate, the hermit will soon be an anachronism since no person can be disengaged from the manifold obligations of efficiency and progress.[31]

If religion and ultimate principles are circumscribed, however, then what are the ethical foundations for this brave new world? Morality becomes allegiance to progress. If more effective means of production are possible, they are deemed necessary. There is minimal reflection on the consequences or humanity of the system and "there seems to be at work a vast uncontrolled power which is leading man where he does not want to go in spite of himself...."[32]

Technique coarsens human relations by a movement from religious to market values. The market orientation of contemporary society presumes that human beings are "biological machines endowed with certain urges that require fulfillment." Love becomes a deal and emotional needs are fulfilled through a negotiated exchange, a *contract*. The primary desire of each consumer is to constantly upgrade the product and no transaction is final. There are always more deals and new customers. The terms of the deal are determined by shifting market values.[33]

> We unconsciously think of ourselves as objects
> for sale on the market. We want to be wanted.
> We want to attract customers. We want to look
> like the kind of product that makes money.
> Hence, we waste a great deal of time modeling
> ourselves on the images presented to us by an

affluent marketing society.[34]

This consumer version of love is problematic in other ways. The deal is often based on momentary considerations of the potential packages without any consideration of the lasting effects. It is emotional strip mining. The object is not love, but the effectiveness of the deal.[35]

The problem with this consumer approach is that "love is not a matter of getting what you want." Loving is about giving; it is about sacrifice, not exchange. It is thus a form of worship which responds to "the full richness, the variety, the fecundity of living experience itself: it 'knows' the inner mystery of life." The individuals participating in this mystery are transformed into a new entity through the conversion of love. This conversion confirms our deepest spiritual identity.[36]

The corrupting mandates of technique, exhibited in the contemporary example of marriage, have the potential for massively altering the psyche of the human species. There is the very real possibility of a serious "depersonalization of man in a mass-technological society". Technique has increased and improved the range of options, but it has also ceded individual creativity, authentic experience, and choice to technocrats and processes. There are profound symptoms of alienation such as "boredom, emptiness, neurosis, psychoanalytic illnesses, etc." To avoid these symptoms, humanity occupies itself with endless forms of diversion.[37]

The rudderless system of "technique" absorbs the individual into a mass society. The individuals drawn to this system can not accept the challenge of discovering within themselves the "spiritual power and integrity which can be called forth only by love." They are instead molded and shaped for the ends of a greater social, economic or political entity. In these mass movements, they are easy targets for those with wealth and power who wish to "crush and humiliate and destroy humanity."[38]

The computer is a perfect instrument for this manipulation. Merton's cybernetic ideas were influenced by a paper entitled, "The Triple Revolution", from The Center for Democratic Study. This pamphlet received in the same year as *The Technological Society* explored the social consequences of cybernation. "The Triple Revolution" contended that the cybernetic revolution would unleash immense capacities by combining thinking and action in a single machine, the computer. The result would be an almost unlimited potential for productivity.[39]

The computer is dangerous, because it has no independent capacity for thought or judgment and yet it can engage in very sophisticated and rapid calculation. If it is not balanced by any humanistic or religious principles, it can be employed on behalf of "technique." Human complexity is reduced by IBM cards to labels such as "priest", "Negro" or "Jew." To demonstrate the danger of cybernation, Merton sketched in one of his journals a story line about the mindless efficiencies of a computer. The story is centered on the diary of a machine still operational after a nuclear apocalypse. The computer comments on the nothingness around it, but does so "brightly, busily, efficiently, in joyous and mechanical despair.

There are many other examples of broader social problems in the mass society developed by a technological hegemony. The more technique attempts to control all processes, the more nature rejects its control. The result is an unprecedented ecological disaster. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* illustrates the capacity of nature to resist human exterminators through the survival of insecticide resistant insects. This situation is rendered even more destructive because preexisting ecological controls have been eliminated by insecticides.[41]

The destruction of nature is more than matched by the rising violence of the technological war. The productivity of military machinery is measured by precision and effectiveness and not by a cost/benefit analysis. Ellul asserts in *The Technological Society* that

> Nothing equals the perfection of our war machines. Warships and warplanes are vastly more perfect than their counterparts in civilian life. The organization of the army- its transport, supplies, administration- is much more precise than any civilian organization. The smallest error in the realm of war would cost countless lives and would be measured in terms of victory or defeat.[42]

The consequences of applying technique to the military is not lost on the monk listening to the distant volleys of tanks at Fort Knox. On the very first day that he was reading *The Technological Society*, Merton records that a SAC (Strategic Air Command) bomber swooped near his hermitage. In frustration he heralds the plane as another dangerous example of "the technological society!"[43]

The Vietnam War, however, was the greatest example of the technological society engaged in a process of asserting power without clear or coherent ends.

> His book [*The Technological Society*] was not liked in America (naturally) but for that very reason I think there is a definite importance in his rather dark views. They are not to be neglected, for he sees an aspect of technology that others cannot or will not recognize: it does, in spite of its good elements, become the focus of grave spiritual sicknesses.... To begin with, the folly of the United States in Vietnam-certainly criminal-comes from the blind obsession with mechanical efficiency to the exclusion of all else: the determination to make the war machine work, whether the results are useful or not.[44]

Cliches about liberty, faith and an adherence to material prosperity are advanced to disguise the "essential emptiness" of war aims. The embracing of this emptiness allows for the creation and spread of a "motiveless violence." The weapons and strategies in Vietnam, such as napalm, burning villages, etc., are not the responsibility of evil scientists, but the result of a "moral ignorance and callousness" in the very "fabric" of the technological society which places a priority on efficiency.[45]

This "motiveless violence" and "moral ignorance" was personified in Lyndon Johnson's Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, who was trained at Ford and was brought to Washington to efficiently direct the machineries of death. He is typical of the modern bureaucrat who has "incredible technical skill and no sense of human realities." Such men are lost in "abstractions, sentimentalities, myths, delusions." The war is thus the product of "good ordinary people" whose "surface idealism" and "celebration of warm human values" mask an unreflective technological paradigm of

capacities and progress.[46]

Why would a society accept the violence and dehumanization of "technique" which can end in a military or environmental catastrophe? It is a Faustian bargain which cedes moral authority and principle for the lure of unprecedented powers. This bargain is reminiscent of Prometheus' pride. Prometheus is to be pitied, because, like Adam, he did not have to steal the knowledge. It was always there as a gift.[47]

The Faustian bargain is also the consequence of the modern penchant for a "systematic" application of what had formerly been an occasional capacity to create objects. This capacity becomes a new religion, the "sect" of the product. As a result of the preaching of advertisers, there results a fevered "acceleration" of this process which results in a "technological revolution." The problem with these breakthroughs is that they result "in a climate of practicality for its own sake and a contempt for value and principle." Pragmatism vitiates any moral standard, preferring intellect instead of reason. The intellect distinguishes between the possible and the impossible, while reason distinguishes between the sensible and the senseless. The only remaining questions for the triumphing intellect are "will this work" and "will it pay off?"[48]

If a society is guided by intellect, then it will not have the mental resources to constrain technology. Merton affirms with Ellul that "technique" will then subordinate the individual to its ends. The machinery of this system becomes autonomous while man, the "bio-mechanical link", is gradually eliminated. There is no compromise with this agenda and the citizenry must "take it or leave it." Most Americans do not opt out of the system because the prosperity resulting from the productivity are "signs of election," a divine blessing.[49]

Conclusion

It was only in 1964 and 1965 that Merton specifically references Jacques Ellul in his letters and journals. As with many of his enthusiasms, Ellul faded before new readings and issues. Still, the impact of the contact continued as many of the insights in *The Technological Society* were fully assimilated into the Mertonian perspective on technology and culture. The Frenchman provided invaluable ballast for an honest and constructive assessment of technology.

Indeed, this leavening impact can be observed in Merton's subsequent analyses of war, ecology, personal relations, computers and many other areas. The potential fecundity of the Frenchman's ideas was recognized during the initial reading of *The Technological Society*.

> I am going on with Ellul's prophetic and I think very sound diagnosis of the Technological Society. How few people really face the problem! It is the most portentous and apocalyptical thing of all, that we are caught in an automatic self-determining system in which man's choices have largely ceased to count.[50]

This enthusiasm was only slightly diluted by a recurring note of hesitation about Ellul's excessive pessimism. This hesitation was only tentatively held. In one journal entry, Merton notes that Ellul is "excessively pessimistic", but then countered in the following sentence that he was "not unreasonably" pessimistic. Merton, unlike some other readers, intuitively hesitated to label the Frenchman as only an inveterate pessimist.[51]

This intuition was merited. The corpus of Ellul's writings clarifies that he never wished "to maintain that technology was to be deplored." Technique provides an opportunity for either progress or destruction. Humanity can "steer", "alter" or "frustrate" this mentality. In the best scenario, technique is demythologized and new avenues of communication reopened. Each person must reassert his or her essential freedom. This objective is assisted by separating technique from ideology and decentralizing state power.[52]

While there are some reservations about *The Technological Society*. Merton clearly sides with Ellul against those espousing a "new holiness" of a technological cosmos. A dash of Calvinist pessimism is preferable to the excesses of an evolutionary optimism as exhibited in his fellow Catholic, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. There is "impiety" in Teilhard's "hypostatizing of mechanical power as something to do with the Incarnation, as its fulfillment, its epiphany."[53]

Ultimately, Merton holds that the positive achievements and capacities of technology must be balanced by spiritual values. In this balanced judgment, each person should gratefully accept the positive impact of the techno-scientific world and they must also demand an accounting of the ethos of progress. This was the ultimate lesson of *The Technological Society*. The reflective individual must carefully, but firmly, reject the "universal myth that technology infallibly makes everything in every way better for everybody. It does not."[54]

Notes

[1]Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, trans. Arthur Wills and John Petrie (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, *1955*), 111.

[2]Martin E. Marty, "Creative Misuses of Jacques Ellul" in Clifford G. Christians and Jay M. Van Hook, eds., *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 4.

[3]John Eudes Bamburger, O.C.S.O., "Defining the Center: A Monastic Point of View" 20 *Criterion* (Spring, 1981), 4-8. Bamburger was a Trappist monk at Gethsemani with Merton; David W. Gill, "Jacques Ellul: Prophet in the Technological Wilderness" *Catholic Agitator* (October, 1976), 3,4.

[4]Vincent A. Punzo, "Jacques Ellul on the Technical System and the Challenge of Christian Hope" 70 *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (Supp., 1996), 17-31.

[5]Douglass D. McFerran, "The Cult of Jacques Ellul" 124 *America* (Feb. 6, 1971), 122-124; The comments of McFerran are relatively mild compared to some Protestant writers. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The World of Narke Christ, Christianity and Politics" *Katallagete* (Spring, 1989), 16-21.

[6]Jean-Michel Maldame, O.P., "Science et technique: Les Impacts de la science et de la technique sur la culture" 78 *Revue Thomiste* (October-December, 1978), 634-656; See also Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 168,169.

[7]Jacques Ellul, *The Theological Foundations of Law* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

[8] Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity*. trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdemans Publishing Co., 1986), 37-40.

[9] Jacques Ellul, "Celui qui est toujours ailleurs..." *Sud-Ouest Dimanche* (August 14, 1983), 2; Jacques Ellul, "Rehabiliter Peguy" *Foi et Vie* (1982), 9-27.

[10] Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (October 30, 1964) in Robert E. Daggy, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), vol. 5, 159,160; Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964).

[11]Thomas Merton, *Learning to Love Exploring Solitude and Freedom*.

Christine M. Bochen, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton 1966-1967* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), vol. 6, 125; Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska* (New York: New Directions, 1988), 150; Lawrence Cunningham, "The Monk as Critic of Culture" 3 *The Merton Annual* (1990), 189.

[12] Merton, *The Asian Journals of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 329; Thomas Merton, *Disputed Questions* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 222, 223.

[13] Merton, "The Christian and the World Preliminaries" (May, 1966) in *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: The Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College), vol.6, 48-50.

[14] Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937); Judith Anderholm, "Thomas Merton & Aldous Huxley" 16 *The Merton Seasonal* (Spring, 1991), 8,9.

[15] Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence* (March 11, 1947), Jonathan Montaldo, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), vol. 2, 44. Thomas Merton, "Is the World a Problem?" (April, 1966) *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College), vol. 6, 91.

[16] Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1953), 5; Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (March 3,1953), Lawrence S. Cunningham, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), vol. 3, 37.

[17] Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (December 6, 1959), 352,353; Thomas Merton, "Letter to Dom Gregorio Lemercier" (October 23, 1953), Brother Patrick Hart, ed., *The School of Charity* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 69; Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, 41.

[18] Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image Books, 1966), 25.

[19] Thomas Merton, "Technology" in *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College), vol. 6, 53-55. These are notes for an oral lecture to the novices on technology. Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (August 22, 1956), 72; This idea is also partly drawn from Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Thomas Merton, *Turning Toward The World* (June 12, 1960), Victor A. Kramer, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), vol. 4, 11; (August 13, 1961), 150,151.

[20] Merton, "The Christian and the World" (May, 1966) *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Collection, Bellarmine College), vol. 6, 49; Thomas Merton, "Letter to Elbert R. Sisson" (February-March, 1962) in Thomas Merton, *Witness to Freedom*, William H. Shannon, ed. (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1994), 38.

[21] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (April 15, 1965), 228.

[22] Merton, *The New Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1961), 110,111.

[23] Jacques Ellul, "Technology and the Opening Chapters of Genesis" in Carl Mitcham and Jim Grote, eds., *Theology and Technology* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984), 120-126.

[24] Thomas Merton, "Letter to Henry Miller" (August 7, 1962) in Thomas Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, Christine M. Bochen, ed., (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993), 277; Morton, *The New Man*. 118; Merton, *Disputed Questions*, 178,179.

[25] Thomas Merton, "The Christian in a Technological World" (Louisville: Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College). This is a tape recording of a lecture given to the novices at Gethsemani in the early 1960's.

[26] Thomas Shannon, "Can One be a Contemplative in a Technological Society" 22 *The Merton Seasonal* (Spring, 1997), 13; Victor Kramer and Dewey W. Kramer, "A Conversation With Walker Percy About Thomas Merton" in Lewis Lawson and Victor Kramer, eds. *Conversations With Walker Percy* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), 313.

[27] Thomas Merton, "Letter to Pere Herve Chaigne" (December 28, 1964); (April 21, 1965), in Merton, *Wituess to Freedom*, 109; Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (October 30, 1964), 159,160; (November 21,1964), 161.

[28] Thomas Merton, "Letter of Thomas Merton to Bernard Haring"

(December 26, 1964) in Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*. William Shannon, ed. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 383,384. In this letter, Merton recommends to the Council Fathers of Vatican II Jacques Ellul's "monumental work" *La Technique*; Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 2, 1964), 161.

[29] Merton, "Letter to Herman Lavin Cerda" (October 5, 1965) in Merton, *The Courage for Truth* 205,206; Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 6, 1964), 163.

[30] Merton "Letter to Hernan Lavin Cerda" in Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, 205-207.

[31] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 6,1964), 163; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 286.

[32] Thomas Merton, "Una Sociedad que Esta Peligrosamente Enferma" 11 *Punto Fina* (September 15, 1967), 14-16; Merton, "Letter to Bernard Haring" (December 26, 1964) in Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*. 383, 384.

[33] Merton, "Love and Need" (September, 1966), *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College), vol. 6, 264-266. It is worth noting that this essay was completed as Merton's own ill fated love affair with a nurse was ending.

[34] Thomas Merton, "Love and Need", 264, 265.

[35] Merton, "Love and Need", 266-268.

[36] Merton, "Love and Need", 267-272.

[37] Merton, "The Other Side of Despair" (July, 1965) *The Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Collection, Bellarmine College), vol. 5, 205; Merton, "Technology", 55; Merton, *Learning to Love* (January 27, 1967), 188; Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (November 25, 1958), 232; Ellul sees diversion in media, particularly film and sports; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 375-384.

[38] Merton, *Disputed Questions*, 127-134; Merton, "Letter to Rosemary Radford Ruether" (March 19, 1967) in Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love* 505-508; Cf. Merton with Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 278, 284-291.

[39] Shannon, "Can One Be a Contemplative in a Technological Society", 14. Ellul's interest in cybernation was largely focused on its immense capacity for calculation. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 16, 89, 163, 356.

[40] Merton, *The Courage for Truth* (January, 1964), 282; Merton, *Turning Toward the World* (March 2, 1962), 207; Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (January 31, 1965), 200,201.

[41] Merton, "Technology", 54; Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Crest Books, 1962), 217-231.

[42] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 16.

[43] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (October 30, 1964), 160.

[44] Merton, "Letter to Pere Herve Chaigne" (April 21, 1965) in Merton, *Witness to Freedom* 109.

[45] Merton, "Letter to James Douglass" (May 26, 1965) in Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love* 161,162; Merton, "Letter to Bernard Haring" (December 26, 1964) in Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*, 383; Merton, "The Church and the 'Godless World'" (December, 1965, January, 1966); *Merton Collected Essays* (Louisville: Thomas Merton Collection, Bellarmine College), vol. 5, 294-298.

[46] Merton, "Answers for Hernan Lavin Cerda", 5-9 in Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, 205,206; Merton, *Learning to Love* (April 16, 1966), 41.

[47] Merton, *The New Man*, 23-29.

[48] Merton, "Technology", 53,54; Merton, *Turning Toward the World* (July 9,1962), 230; Merton, "Answers for Hernan Lavin Cerda" in Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, 205,206; Ellul, *The Technological Society*. 133-149 (the system of technique); 406-408 (advertising).

[49] Merton, "Technology", 54; Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (December 7, 1958), 234; Merton even before reading Ellul had recognized the pernicious effect of the regnant ideal of process in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*. Merton, *Turning Toward the World* (June 12, 1960), 11; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 79-94.

[50] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (October 31, 1964), 161.

[51] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 6, 1964), 163.

[52] Jacques Ellul "Technique et Civil.ization" 7 *Free University Quarterly* (August, 1960), 166-177; Jacques Ellul, "The Technological Revolution and Its Moral and Political Consequences" in Johannes Metz, ed., *The Evolving World and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 100,107; Jacques Ellul, "Between Chaos and Paralysis", trans. Cecelia Kings 85 *Christian Century* (June 5, 1968), 747-750; Jacques Ellul, "Technique et developpement" in C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, ed., *La perpsective occidentale du developement* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 258-295; Jacques Ellul, "Search for an Image" 33 *Humanist* (November-December, 1973), 22-25.

[53] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 16, 1964), 166.

[54] Thomas Merton, "Circular Letter, Lent, 1967" in Thomas Merton, *The Road To Joy*. Robert F. Daggy, ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 98.

[46] Merton, "Answers for Hernan Lavin Cerda", 5-9 in Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, 205,206; Merton, *Learning to Love* (April 16, 1966), 41.

[47] Merton, *The New Man*, 23-29.

[48] Merton, "Technology", 53,54; Merton, *Turning Toward the World* (July 9,1962), 230; Merton, "Answers for Hernan Lavin Cerda" in Merton, *The Courage for Truth*, 205,206; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 133-149 (the system of technique); 406-408 (advertising).

[49] Merton, "Technology", 54; Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (December 7, 1958), 234; Merton even before reading Ellul had recognized the pernicious effect of the regnant ideal of process in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*. Merton, *Turning Toward the World* (June 12, 1960), 11; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 79-94.

[50] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (October 31, 1964), 161.

[51] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 6, 1964), 163.

[52] Jacques Ellul "Technique et Civil.ization" 7 *Free University Quarterly* (August, 1960), 166-177; Jacques Ellul, "The Technological Revolution and Its Moral and Political Consequences" in Johannes Metz, ed., *The Evolving World and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 100,107; Jacques Ellul, "Between Chaos and Paralysis", trans. Cecelia Kings 85 *Christian Century* (June 5, 1968), 747-750; Jacques Ellul, "Technique et developpement" in C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, ed., *La perpsective occidentale du developement* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 258-295; Jacques Ellul, "Search for an Image" 33 *Humanist* (November-December, 1973), 22-25.

[53] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life* (November 16, 1964), 166.

[54] Thomas Merton, "Circular Letter, Lent, 1967" in Thomas Merton, *The Road To Joy*, Robert F. Daggy, ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 98.

About the Ellul Forum

History

The *Ellul Forum* was first published in August of 1988. Two issues are produced each year (in January and July). The goal of the *Forum* is to honor the work of Jacques Ellul by analyzing and applying his thought to aspects of our technological civilization and by carrying forward the analysis and critique of technological civilization in new directions.

The *Forum* is not intended to be a vehicle for true disciples. The whole thrust of Ellul's work has been to encourage others to think for themselves and invent their own responses to the challenges of a technological civilization. Although we do review and discuss Ellul's work, it is not our intention to turn his writings into a body of sacred literature to be endlessly dissected. The appropriate tribute to his work will be to carry forward its spirit and its agenda for the critical analysis of our technical civilization. Ellul invites us to think new thoughts and enact new ideas. To that end we invite you to submit essays on appropriate topics.

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