

Notes on Recent Books by and about Jacques Ellul

The Ellul Forum welcomes critical reviews of these and other books addressing issues of the interplay of technology, culture, politics, theology, communication and other topics. Feel free to submit your proposals, essays, and reviews to IJES@ellul.org

Jacques Ellul, *The Empire of Non-Sense: Art in the Technological Society*

(Papadakis Publisher, 2014) 168 pp. www.papadakis.net

Translated by Michael Johnson & David Lovekin from *L'Empir du non-sens* (Presses universitaires de France, 1980)

At long last (34 years after its original publication in French!) we have an English translation of Ellul's study of art in the technological society. Introductory essays by Samir Younés (Professor of Architecture, Notre Dame) and David Lovekin (Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Hastings College in Nebraska and author of *Technique, Discourse, and Consciousness: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jacques Ellul*, 1991) add greatly to the value of this major work. The work begs for serious reading and discussion.

Jacques Ellul, *If You Are the Son of God: The Suffering and Temptations of Jesus*

(Eugene OR: Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014) 95 pp. www.wipfandstock.com

Translated by Anne-Marie Andreasson-Hogg from *Si tu es le fils de Dieu: souffrances et tentations de Jésus* (Editions Centurion, 1991)

This is a remarkable little book. Ellul begins by reflecting on the meaning of temptation and on the biblical ideas of Jesus' simultaneous divinity and humanity. In the first half of the book he explores many different aspects of the "suffering servant." In the second half he focuses on many aspects of the temptations of Jesus, exploring especially the famous threefold temptation at the beginning of his public career. This (like all of Ellul's work) will not be your usual seminary or religious professional study! Great, provocative, illuminating insights.

Jacques Ellul, *On Being Rich & Poor: Christianity in a Time of Economic Globalization*

(University of Toronto Press, 2014) xxii, 273 pp. www.utppublishing.com

Compiled, edited, and translated by Willem Vanderburg.

As he did in *Jacques Ellul: On Freedom, Love, and Power* (2010) with tape recordings of Ellul's studies of parts of Genesis, Job, Matthew, and John, Bill Vanderburg (Emeritus Professor and Director of the Centre for Technology and Social Development at the University of Toronto) does now in *On Being Rich and Poor* with tape recordings of Ellul's studies of the biblical books of Amos and James. Both of these volumes are major contributions to lovers of Ellul's brilliant if idiosyncratic (that is a compliment!) engagements with the biblical text. We are continually amazed and challenged by his unusual but well-grounded interpretations. Yes, it is too bad there was not first created a French text from these recordings but for those interested it is possible to listen to the original French recordings which are catalogued in the special Jacques Ellul Collection at Wheaton College (IL). Any who have ever worked from a recording of a live interview or event to a publishable manuscript know that a wise and sometimes strong editorial hand is essential and certainly Bill Vanderburg provides that. Bill was present at many of these studies 1973 - 1978 in Bordeaux. (I was privileged to sit in on Ellul's studies of Ecclesiastes in 1984-85 in Bordeaux which Ellul himself turned into his book *Reason for Being* (1987; ET 1990) so I can well imagine the profound experience to which he refers). Both of these volumes are major contributions for which we are indebted to Bill Vanderburg --- and which deserve a wide reading and a deep review.

Jeffrey M. Shaw, *Illusions of Freedom: Thomas Merton & Jacques Ellul on Technology and the Human Condition*

(Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014). 193 pp. www.wipfandstock.com

Jeff Shaw recently completed his doctorate with a thesis that is now edited and presented in this book. Sometimes one of the best ways to understand better a thinker or author is to do a side-by-side comparison with another thinker, distinctive but with several touch points that invite comparison. Shaw puts the American Catholic monk alongside the French Protestant sociologist to helpful effect in terms of their views of technology, theology, sociology, and politics. Brothers for sure, reinforcing many of the same perspectives, but with interesting distinctives. To receive a fuller critical review in a future *Ellul Forum*.