

	CONFERENCE
	COREE DU SUD

교수일반분과/자크엘뤼/01/

1/ INTRODUCTION

Biographic elements.

To illustrate the theme of Ellul’s relationship with the Bible, I will begin by saying that he came across the Bible when he was young, and began to read it when he was only 12 years old. He had not received a religious education, so he simply began to read it as a history book. As he read the entire book, he began to believe what he was reading (like a child today reading a story book).

This attitude of free and independent reading allowed him over the years to develop an approach to these texts that was not preconditioned, and to read them in a way that was totally free and alive. In fact, he began to analyze what is written in the Bible using a very flexible, poetic, and literary style of reading which was the total opposite to a set of moral doctrines or a body of texts in the service of religion.

Jean Louis Seurin greatly admired Ellul and said on several occasions, « This man comes into direct communication with God. » Each time they saw each other, Seurin learned something new from him. Seurin was a very humorous man with a gift for drawing and doing caricatures. At the end of this presentation you will see a very humorous sketch that shows the friendship between Ellul and Seurin.

Throughout his whole life, Ellul sought to deconstruct propaganda and identify the dishonesty in messages being disseminated. And the Bible did not escape his laser beam : he tried to communicate what he had learned from the Bible on every level. Obviously, this was in opposition to what Christianity or Catholicism had done to the message of the revelation of Jesus throughout the centuries. The book *Anarchy and Christianity* was undertaken to do an overall deconstruction of Christian myths, ending up with a total revising of the roles of Christians and the Church. The Church had failed in its principal duty which was to become a “vehicle of freedom” for people, and instead had become a rigid bureaucracy conforming with the world.

Thus, Ellul remained on the margins, creating an analysis of the Bible that made it accessible et comprehensible to those around him. We will now look at documents which date from both before and after the Second World War and which illustrate his very early exegetical work.

2 / The law of freedom - Epistle of James

In 2010, Philippe Louiset gave me the recordings of the biblical studies on the Epistle of James that Jacques Ellul organised at his home in 1978. I was deeply moved to hear what I have been reading for many years.

In the introduction to his book “*On freedom, love and power* “ we discover the surprise of Willem H. Vanderburg as he first attended Ellul’s biblical studies.

“To my amazement, what unfolds in these sessions is a message unlike any I have ever heard in churches I have attended in four different countries. I know that I am far from the only one who has had this experience. For example, when I was asked to organize a symposium to mark Jacques Ellul’s death in 1994, I was surprised to learn that all but one of the university professors I have invited to speak had become Christians through the reading of his work ; but for all of them it made for a very uneasy relationship with organized religion.”

And what has not been heard before ? The universal salvation – hell does not exist, nor paradise -, the impossibility to build a christian moral system, since any moral code collides with the freedom given by God, though such a code may be of some interest, since we live under the break between God and humanity, and therefore under necessity.

How does Ellul lead his studies ?

Each session is divided in 20 minutes cycles : Ellul reads the text – first reactions from the participants – Ellul’s interpretation – further exchange. The exchanges are lively, and fun, even laughter, is not rare. Ellul’s answers are full of his interest of the moment - for instance, the Epistle to the Romans and his book *“an unjust God ?”* - and he enjoys shooting down some sacred cows : philosophers, theologians (demons are good theologians), politicians, institutional churches...

How does Ellul ground his interpretation ?

In his book *To Will and to Do: An Ethical Research for Christians*, Ellul describes quite simply his method : *“The criterion of my thought is the biblical revelation ; the content of my thought is the biblical revelation ; the starting point is provided by the biblical revelation ; the method is the dialectic through which the biblical revelation is given to us ; and the subject is the search for the meaning of the biblical revelation (on ethics).”*

Ellul postulates that no single text in the Bible can be understood on his own. It cannot be taken literally or as being exhaustive. It must not be separated from the others. The biblical text delivers many possible interpretations, and it is therefore necessary to check any particular interpretation against the general meaning of the whole scripture. Jacques Ellul is very careful not to put into the Bible any dogma. We have to keep silent, we must be open, or as Karl Barth had put it, *“we have to take off our devotional glasses”*.

Ellul did not analyse the texts from his own knowledge but made use of numerous studies which he compared and criticised. At last he gave his own view.

Jacques Ellul’s knowledge of rabbinic Hebrew gives deep understanding of the texts. He attached a great importance to the signification of the names of people or locations, and thus discriminated easily between the robust interpretations and the woolly ones.

Ellul gives us useful landmarks :

- The people who wrote the Bible were no fools. When we find a contradiction in the text, it is not because the authors were poor thinkers, but because this contradiction is the sign that something crucial is being said.

- **IHWH**, is mainly the God who frees mankind (because he loves mankind) ; no wonder that His word sounds anarchic and anti-religious.
- In the Bible, we are not told of good or evil, (wich are philosophical notions), but of life and death.
- There is a radical distinction between reality, what we see, what science explores, and truth, the Word of God. Moreover, truth is again no philosophical concept but a man : Jesus-Christ.
- The glory is not some sort of luminous halo, but what reveals who is exactly someone. For example, Jesus is the glory of the father, the woman is the glory of the man (God help us !)

Distinction between reality and truth : theological main axis.

3 / [VIVRE ET PENSER LA LIBERTÉ](#)

six hundred pages (600 p) focused on the theme of Freedom

The book covers the intellectual activity of Ellul from nineteen thirty six (1936) to nineteen – ninety two (1992)

It is comprised of thirty seven (37) texts published in their entirety, including:

- Ⓟ seventeen (17) unpublished texts
- Ⓟ “Les structures de la liberté” : 60 pages in French from nineteen seventy two (1972)
- Ⓟ twenty additional notes of conferences and excerpts of texts.

It is organized in four sections, with thirty two chapters in all :

- Prélude, which is an image of the musical Prelude / chapter 1
- Part 1 : Society, Christianity and the Church (chapters 2 – 10)
- Part 2 : God, Jesus Christ and man (chapters 11- 21)
- Part 3 : articles of press (chap 22- 32)

Biblical Index (about 4 weeks of work by JP)

Index of the names

Index analysis of the themes

제36회 기독교학문학회 발표논문 (19.10.26)
Fifteen scans of manuscripts

And Bibliography

TURN

Notebook with entries from 1936 : one of the oldest text of Ellul perfectly dated.

Around 75 pages.

First pages are a meditation , from the point of view of liberty, on the painting of the creation of Adam by Michelangelo for the Sistine Chapel

Historical context : personalism and political engagement.

He had participated in the antifascist revolt of February 1934 with Yvette. He was writing the personalist manifesto with Charbonneau. In 1938, a text was written : « les forces morales » which was not published.

TURN

Richness and usefulness of our familial archives.

Notes of the conferences

We can now tell you that around 98 (ninety eight) conferences have been found in our archives. They cover the period from 1960 to 1990.

These are personal notes, generally from 10 pages to 20 pages.

Several of them have been used to complete the work in « Vivre et penser la liberté »

Here is an example of notes of 1985 (ninety eighty five) ; the conference title was « Christian politics: is it possible ? »

In these notes, we can read :

Christians must be the defenders of human freedom and humans' right to justice in the face of powers which represent nothing other than the transgression of justice and the negation of the liberty.

The Church and Christians have a fundamental role to play in the political world and in relation to it, for true liberation and true justice among men.

TURN

Manuscripts of the published texts

First of all, up until now we have only had the text “The Evolution of the Idea of Freedom Since 1936” in the print version of 1950, in the review « Evidences » number 8, February 1950, (pages 1 to 5).

The manuscript found in our archives has revealed that the text was censored in its original conclusion by the editor.

The book « Vivre et penser la liberté » reestablishes the original text, which permits a comparison between the text and the original manuscript, enabling us to read the article as Ellul would have wanted it to be read.

TURN

Several biblical studies in complete texts have been found in our house

Ellul was invited several times to the south east of France , to the community of POMEYROL. In 1986 he gave a series of 4 biblical studies on freedom. And in fact, Jacques wanted to thank the community of POMEYROL and during a walk, he noticed a donkey, and he decided to buy the donkey and offer it to the community of Pomeyrol.

In this book, all the biblical studies of Pomeyrol 1986 are reproduced.

Reading this kind of document can be difficult. Here it's only one page but you can imagine forty pages like that.

We have also found half of the twelve biblical studies about the Theology of freedom which were given in the years 1971 – 1973.

CAPTION : page 9 : the way of cross and liberation , third study of the series: Christian faith and liberation, at Pomeyrol , dated March 28,1986.

TURN

Unpublished Manuscripts

best example : the Desert that can be dated from 1977. It's the best discovery for me : one of my favorite biblical studies with the « violence of God » that I will talk about after.

It's incredible how Ellul analyzes the role of the Desert in the Bible : there are 5 senses of the Desert for him.

CONCLUSION

- audio recordings of sermons are very interesting
- The book « Mort et espérance de la résurrection » (Death and Hope of the Resurrection) contains the first audio transcripts made by Philippe Louiset and our staff
- Ellul tried to change all the systems of the Reformed Church, participating in the Synod, but there was a lot of jealousy towards him.
- Ellul should have been placed on the Committee of Ethics in France, following André Dumas, but at the end they changed their mind and Ellul was saddened, once again, not to have this option.
- New project with notes “Philosophie du droit”
- Ellul “honoris causa” University of Amsterdam and Aberdeen.

OPTIONS :

- **poetry**
- **Ethics of freedom, new translation 2020**
- **Ethics of holiness**
- **Ecological fight, exemple of France**
- **Sermons**