Introduction

A Hermeneutic of Freedom?

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Among the everyday activities performed by the modern individual, few are both as elementary and complex as reading. On one level, reading is completely self-evident. Children read in elementary school; adults read instructions, recipes, road signs, music. The quality of these readings is discernable by what they produce: the child says "cat," the food is tasty, or the music is harmonious (of course, assuming the letters "c-a-t," a well-conceived recipe, and a harmonious composition!). But what makes for a "good" reading once the scope is broadened to include more complex literary, historical, mythological, poetic, or philosophical writings? Is there a guaranteed method to produce good interpretations?

These questions are more complex when these various genres intertwine within a single work; even further complexity emerges when a tradition and community hear all genres in this one work as moments in divine-human dialogue. Precisely this kind of interpretive questioning describes the reflections of the Judeo-Christian tradition on the Biblical text. In the Christian community, reading has always been tied up with living; interpretation inevitably shapes life. And when interpretation is so inextricably ethical, an ethics of interpretation can prove useful. Here, the modern disciplines of biblical studies, hermeneutics, and theological interpretation of scripture step in, offering voluminous resources to accompany ethical reflection on scripture.

Yet for all the helpful tools that hermeneutic studies might give us, hermeneutics has its limits. It can never assume responsibility for our

readings. However its tools might refine ethical thinking, they can never give an account for our lives and actions. Hermeneutics can interrogate our "how," but cannot dispense with our "why." When one raises the profound and contested subject of human freedom, recourse to hermeneutic method to justify one's actions serves as an excuse, an evasion; the challenge of freedom can only be taken up by a person, not a method. What, then, could a phrase like "hermeneutics of freedom" mean?

In the life and work of the twentieth-century French thinker Jacques Ellul (1912–1994), we have a lived example of one who wrestled at length with the meaning of free biblical interpretation. The essays in this volume present evidence of the stimulating, provocative, and fresh encouragement which readers of the Bible find in Jacques Ellul. While diversely grappling with Ellul's interpretations, the voices collected here resound in unison: Ellul forces us to reconsider our readings of (indeed, our *listening to*) scripture. Furthermore, despite his disappearance more than a quarter of a century ago, this volume marks an important moment in a very contemporary conversation, proving that we have by no means exhausted Ellul's potential to fruitfully upset and reconfigure the way we relate to Christianity's most influential text. Ellul's increasingly evident current relevance only further underscores his belief that the Word of God as attested by this text is living and present here and now.

Before describing the content of the contributions contained herein, I would like to draw on Ellul's volumes of theological ethics to comment on the concrete ways in which his approach might be considered a *hermeneutics of freedom*.

I. A Free and Prophetic Scriptural Hermeneutic

a. Situating Ellul's Ethical Works and Interpretation of Scripture

Allowing Ellul to rework our scriptural approach might involve revisiting our approach to Ellul himself. This volume is produced not only by veteran Ellul readers, but also by a new generation of scholarly interest in Ellul. The new eyes of the reader approaching Ellul for the first time should be welcomed by seasoned readers as an invitation to revisit what have become accepted approaches to his corpus.

While Ellul's multifaceted work has often been described as a dialectic between *theology* and *sociology*, it is more precise to describe this duality as a project of *theological ethics* in dialogue with an *historical-institutional*

approach to social reality.[1] Ellul's project is ultimately a project of prophetic communication, involving both an address to his reader designed to interrogate contemporary life with biblical revelation, and a call to lived response in free dialogue with God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Seeing his work this way explains the substantial and central place in his corpus occupied by his five published volumes of theological ethics.[2]

To facilitate this communication, alongside his vast theological-ethical corpus Ellul wrote numerous volumes presenting theological interpretation of scripture. These volumes include both what might be dubbed "existential commentaries'—combining careful study of a given biblical book or theme with Ellul's intense, personal meditations on what this book or that theme means for readers *today*—and several volumes made from recordings of bible studies led by Ellul in his home in the 1970s.[3] The present volume thus focuses on this theological-interpretive component of Ellul's work.

Arguably the most crucial ethical theme in Ellul's works (as in those of his lifelong friend and dialogue partner Bernard Charbonneau) is *freedom*. Ellul planned a four-part ethics including an introduction (*To Will & To Do*) followed by one part corresponding to each element of the apostle Paul's trio of faith, hope, and love: an *Ethics of Holiness* (faith), an *Ethics of Freedom* (hope), and an *Ethics of Relationship* (love). Based on his diagnosis of western society in the late twentieth century as fundamentally lacking hope, Ellul began with the *Ethics of Freedom*, guided by the feeling that this was the most urgent element for our time. Throughout his work, Ellul refuses to consider freedom metaphysically, viewing such an approach as foreign to Judeo-Christian thought. Instead, Ellul aimed to consider human freedom as lived in contemporary society—taking seriously all the concrete pressures and determinations of human action which such action involves—and to confront this freedom with his readings of the Bible. The result is a profoundly countercultural freedom whose biblical contours jarringly frustrate the political discourse situating much modern discussion of freedom. I will not try to describe the unabashedly Christological approach characterizing Ellul's fundamentally biblical theology here (as David Gill and others do a fine job

1. For more on this, see my introduction to Ellul, *To Will & To Do*, vol. 1, or at length, my *A New Reading of Jacques Ellul.*

2. Ellul, *To Will & To Do*, 2 vols.; *Éthique de la liberté*, 3 vols. Additionally, Ellul's 1000+ page manuscript of *Éthique de la sainteté* has yet to appear in French or English.

3. The first category includes works such as Ellul, *Judgement of Jonah*; *Politics of God and the Politics of Man*; *Meaning of the City*; and *Reason for Being.* The second category includes the two volumes compiled, edited, and translated by Willem H. Vanderburg, *On Freedom, Love, and Power*, and *On Being Rich and Poor*, as well as *Mort et espérance de la résurrection*.

in Part I of this volume). Instead, I would like to focus on how Ellul situates freedom in relation to his ethical interpretation of scripture.

b. Prophetically Proclaiming the Law of Freedom

One of Ellul's major ethical contentions is that the Protestant tradition has an underdeveloped approach to scriptural ethics.[4] Ellul tries to counter this deficiency in his ethical studies, and especially in his two-volume introduction to Christian Ethics, *To Will & To Do*. This means that Ellul's theological ethics offers not just biblically oriented thought about living but includes a built-in ethics of reading the Bible as well.

In volume one of *To Will & To Do*, he very clearly indicates the *biblical* foundations and distinctly Protestant contours of his ethical approach. In his thinking, biblical injunctions are not to be made into a law equally imposable upon Christians and non-Christians but are only valid by faith *in Christ*. We cannot arrive at the "good' via any casuistry, nor establish absolute criteria for good action. The good is the will of God, not the will of humanity; any good we might set up ourselves is thus in competition with God's good. Christian ethics is thus impossible, as such a declaration would necessarily be out of line with God's own declared good. However, as the church is a sociological group like any other, Christians spontaneously produce morality as a social bond. It would therefore be better that such morality be consciously created precisely to protect against temptations to absolutize it. Christian ethics are thus profoundly relative but not unimportant; they are thus *impossible*, but *necessary*.

He continues this discussion in the recently discovered second volume of *To Will & To Do*. Therein, Ellul develops the *analogy of faith* (or *rule of faith*) as a Spirit-guided and specifically ethical hermeneutic approach to the Bible. (This is treated at length by Frédéric Rognon in chapter four of the present work.) He notes that Paul discusses this volume specifically in relation to the prophet; developing theological ethics, then, is the specifically communicative function of the *prophet*.

Ellul often remarks how in the Old Testament, the prophets essentially lived out the freedom of the Word, calling Israel back to the spirit and letter of the covenant established with God throughout their history as a people. But he notes that the prophets did not simply repeat the Mosaic law, but selected elements of it and translated them into their own time and context. He thus writes:

4. See Ellul, *To Will & To Do*, 1:223.

> We must do concerning these texts exactly what the prophets accomplished in relation to the law of Moses; but this is only possible in the objectivity of an analogy of faith, in relation to the objectivity of the text; that is why there is no veritable contradiction between what is said by the prophets and the Pentateuch. Of course, on specific points, there are contradictions of form, of expression, of institution, but never of inspiration, because of the unity of the Spirit.[5]

In volume two of *To Will & To Do*, Ellul discusses what it means that Christ "fulfills" the law. Because Christians must take the Bible seriously in its entirety, the legal texts of the Old Testament cannot be ignored. But what is the relation between these Old Testament laws and contemporary Christian ethics?

Freedom enters precisely at this juncture. In *The Ethics of Freedom*, Ellul insists that freedom is the central, primary element in Paul's theology, calling it a "superstructure of revelation.' He insists that Paul is not simply expressing a personal preference but is carrying forward the heart of Jewish thinking. For Paul, we know God as our Liberator, and our freedom is unthinkable apart from God's own presence.[6] (G.P. Wagenfuhr discusses this at length regarding the book and theme of "exodus" in chapter eight.) Moreover, in volume two of *Éthique de la liberté*, Ellul discusses the theme of "the law of liberty' as developed in the Epistle of James. Ellul sees this law of freedom not simply as an element in New Testament ethics; rather:

> There is thus no longer any question of putting multiple commandments into practice, of a morality; but the only requirement which God imposes on us is henceforth to behave as free men. And this becomes a *duty*. Our only duty is lived freedom. And James strengthens this affirmation by speaking of the law. This is truly a transposition of the entire law.[7]

The New Testament "law of freedom," therefore, *is* the entirety of the Old Testament law when refracted through the fulfilling work of Christ. Certainly, there is more to say. For example, Ellul insists that this law of freedom is none other than the command to love, an additional step which we cannot develop at length here. Likewise, Ellul spends multiple volumes clarifying this freedom precisely to avoid Christians' making it into a "value,' which leaves it a malleable and abstract notion which we attach to almost whatever we please.

5. Ellul, *To Will & To Do*, 2: forthcoming from Cascade.
6. Ellul, *Ethics of Freedom*, 94–100, esp. 96.
7. Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, 2:14 (my translation).

But this is enough to highlight that for Ellul, there is no Christian ethic which is not rooted in and oriented by the law of freedom.

Therefore, Ellul's prophetic-communicative project functions just like an Old Testament prophet: he cries out to the entirety of a society who has forgotten (or never truly known) God's promises and God's ways, admonishing them to return to the injunctions of God's law. However, in the post-Christ context, this fulfilled law is none other than the law of freedom. Thus, Ellul's careful theological-scriptural interpretation of freedom as the central ethical element in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible translates into a theological-ethical injunction to live in freedom. This, then, is the primary content we can assign to Ellul's *hermeneutic of freedom*: it is a hermeneutic in which freedom is the central ethical element, permitting us to see the unity of the scriptural whole and the work of God in the world around us.

A recurring critique of Protestant Christians in Ellul's time is that they have deeply misunderstood biblical ethics and thus failed to live out this freedom. As Ellul nuances it, this critique seems to apply quite well also to our own time. On the one hand, unnuanced readings of scriptural ethics often ignore the law's mediation via freedom in Paul's writings, tending to solidify his ethical proposals into an absolute morality, effectively creating a new law. Ellul even complains that in our day Christianity is largely seen *only* as a morality. This critique might arguably be applied today, for example, to much of anglophone evangelicalism worldwide, and markedly in North America. On the other hand, Ellul faults less "conservative' readings for a different version of the same fault: guided by a concern to appear in step with the times, some Christians reject this absolute morality in the name of embodying "principles" such as love; or being "present' to the modern world, accompanying it in its projects; or assigning ethics primarily political, rather than scriptural contours.[8] Ellul's critiques of these readings are even more acerbic: he sees them as a failure to take the whole of scripture seriously, and as ignoring the specific backdrop of New Testament's focus on grace, instead eliminating the ethically productive tension caused by Paul's injunction to non-conformity (in one of Ellul's most oft-cited ethical verses, Rom 12:2). It is thus that Ellul can say that we

> . . . make a pretext of grace and freedom to neglect the law and live on a lower level than the commandments . . . Freedom from the law opens the door to cupidity and hardness of heart,

8. Ellul critiques Niebuhr as representing the first of these options in *To Will & To Do*; he critiques French Barthians as wholly misconstruing "presence" in *False Presence of the Kingdom*; and he critiques liberation theologians for subordinating theological considerations to politics in general or to Marxist theory in particular, in *Jesus and Marx* and *Violence*.

> so that I can ignore the poor and cheat my employees and have no scruples about murder or divorce. What is unleashed here is animal freedom, the autonomy of sin . . . I would rather see Christians use phylacteries and keep the Sabbath in Jewish style than see them as they are, abusing grace and freedom, not even going beyond minimal demands, living as they like . . . Puritans and literalists were far more serious than we who make a comedy of freedom, a pretext of grace, a mere emotion of faith, and the crassest social conformity of the Christian life.[9]

These critiques, too, seem currently relevant.[10] In short, we might suggest (adapting William Stringfellow's provocative phrase) that Ellul's hermeneutic of freedom is "too biblical for most Christians."[11]

c. Reading Freely

As the essays in this volume amply demonstrate, Ellul is a stimulating scriptural guide precisely because he reflects this freedom back into his reading of the text from which it springs. Just as Scripture nourishes Ellul's understanding of freedom, his freedom to variously adopt, adapt, or reject a range of hermeneutic methods and approaches is one of the most remarkable and palpable characteristics of his biblical approach.

Ellul explicitly formulates this hermeneutics of freedom. In *The Ethics of Freedom*, a section on "Freedom in Relation to Revelation" specifies three dimensions of specifically Christian freedom with regards to divine revelation: first, freedom of interpretation; second, freedom of deviation; and third, freedom of research.[12]

My interest here is in freedom of interpretation. Regarding this freedom, Ellul writes:

> . . . one of the things that disturbs me about modern hermeneutics is its complete subjection to the modern cultural background with its fashions and fads and scientific façade and

9. Ellul, *Ethics of Freedom*, 151.

10. For example, a 2011 sociological study of French Protestants noted a marked "desire to appear as modern, in phase with French society at the beginning of the twenty-first century" as a defining characteristic of French Protestant celebrations, specifically adapting its Calvinist heritage to give off an "image of a happy and optimistic modern Protestantism . . . " (Encrevé, "Les protestants français," 98, 102).

11. This remark appears in Stringfellow's endorsement on the front cover of the Eerdmans edition of *Meaning of the City*.

12. Ellul, *Ethics of Freedom*, 161–84, esp. 162.

> ideology. I find not the slightest sign of freedom here nor even the most modest approach to truth . . . The very basis of hermeneutics is thus to be sought elsewhere, and in my view it lies in the act which God performs to liberate us . . . The very freedom that God himself gives us means that we have to act as free men in relation to the text that objectifies God's word.[13]

In our western anglophone culture influenced by an analytical philosophical tradition and geared towards objective approaches to truth (themselves often problematic derivations from legitimate natural science), "truth' is often heard as equivalent to "absolute.' When Christianity is forced into this mold, the person of Truth is translated into propositions; knowing truth shifts from a complicated relation to a divine person, to a correspondence to correct intellectual-objective methodology. Ellul rejects the scientism backing such interpretive schematics. But that does not mean, as some may be wont to think, that he succumbs to a "postmodern' relativity in which all truth is equal. Instead, for Ellul, truth was never reducible to its intellectual content, but was always a question of *life*. His rejection of fixed and closed hermeneutical method reopens the space for a lived relation to the text, opening the way for the biblical reader to rigorously seek the relation between the Word of God and their own life.

Ellul not only theorizes this hermeneutic freedom, but observably exercises it as well. We might see its manifestations, for example, in his dialogue with historical-critical methods,[14] his moderated use of structuralist method,[15] the liberty he takes with experimental, partial, and biased interpretative schematics,[16] or his adaptation of certain elements of Marxist thought (without ever fully accepting the possibility of a Marxist-style "materialist reading of the gospels').[17] We might also note that he feels no pressure to

13. Ellul, *Ethics of Freedom*, 162–63.

14. In numerous commentaries, Ellul begins by summarizing elements of historical-critical commentary which he employs in his interpretations—just before he notes how such methods generally flout the possibility of seeing a unified intention and meaning both within a given biblical book and across the biblical canon as a whole. Cf. Ellul, *Judgement of Jonah*; *Reason for Being*.

15. Ellul polemicizes against structuralist method in *Meaning of the* City, yet partially employs this method in his commentary on the book of revelation. Ellul, *Apocalypse*, 15.

16. For example, Ellul's *Humiliation of the Word* productively applies what Ellul admits is an oversimplified and biased distinction between seeing/images/reality and hearing/spoken language/truth. Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word*, 1–4.

17. The dialectical method employed in Ellul, *Apocalypse* is clearly partially modeled on Marxist historical dialectics; yet Ellul's *Jesus and Marx* is a sustained polemic against two concrete attempts at (and the very possibility of) a "materialist" reading

assert *complete* understanding. Even his "concluding' biblical commentary on Ecclesiastes explicitly sets entire verses aside without claiming to explain or understand them.[18] As part of Ellul's admittedly "naïve' interpretive approach, this is particularly encouraging for the non-specialist who feels the full weight of their ignorance when confronted with the expansive scholarly literature on any given biblical book or topic.[19] Finally, we might note that Ellul feels free to change his interpretations over time.[20]

In short, Ellul shakes up the assumptions which restrict our scriptural approaches, *whatever they might be*. He does not teach a method; he models a freedom which he hopes to pass on. His goal is neither to modernize an ancient text, nor to be "relevant' to society, nor to justify any human actions. To adherents of a fixed reading—whether the faithful tenants of literalist approaches, or to the technicians of the historical-critical apparatus, both of whom claim a certain kind of mastery of biblical meaning—Ellul's interrogative probing reopens the question of what the text might communicate about the living God, here and now. He strips biblical readers of methodical weaponry, puts their backs against the wall, and positions them to hear the still, small voice of love, which frees slaves, shatters illusions, and demolishes domination, bringing the prophetic question startingly into the present: "Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jer 23:29)

Understandably, the prophetic challenges Ellul poses to entrenched reading habits are often unsettling and uncomfortable. However, may neither the thoughtful Christian wary of the risks to their theological understanding implied by Ellul's interpretive freedom, nor the rigorous scholar suspicious of the accessibility of Ellul's "naïve' approach, write Ellul off as belonging to another camp. The "negative," questioning power of the prophetic word he proclaims is intended to edify, to encourage faithful and liberated reading, and to result in a loving ethical practice.[21] And if he so challenges our biblical-hermeneutic approach that we are left confused, uncertain as to how we are to understand the Bible at all, I can do no better than to repeat his own response when this question was posed by an

of the Gospels.

18. Ellul, *Reason for Being*, 143n8.

19. On "naïve," see Ellul, *Apocalypse*, 12.

20. This is particularly notable in Ellul's approach to law, which changed continually, and in Ellul's approach to the theological concept of "recapitulation." Cf. Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, ch. 6; Marques Rollison, *New Reading of Jacques Ellul*, ch. 5.

21. On "negative," see Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word*, 268; on edification, encouragement, and love, see *To Will & To Do*, vol. 2, ch. 3; *Ethics of Freedom*, 167.

attendee of the Bible studies which Ellul hosted in his home: "We can read our Bibles because of grace, and that is all."[22]

II. The Contours of This Conversation

This volume marks both a helpful survey of Ellul's biblical engagement and an important moment in the reception thereof. The chapters in this volume constitute four types of contributions. The first group presents expanded versions of papers initially presented at the biannual conference of the International Jacques Ellul Society (IJES) at Regent College in Vancouver in July 2018, whose guiding theme was "Ellul and the Bible."[23] In the intervening two years since this conference, versions of some of these papers have also reappeared in *The Ellul Forum*. A second group of chapters present new translations of Ellul's own writings, two of which make their first published appearance in these translations.[24] A third category includes papers written on other occasions which were expanded, reedited, revisited, or simply reprinted here.[25] Some of these were printed elsewhere (mostly, though not exclusively, in *The Ellul Forum*), while others make their published debut in these pages. A final category includes totally new contributions written in response to a call for submissions to this volume.[26] As it gathers the best contributions both from the many years of discussion in *The Ellul Forum* and elsewhere, pairs them with the best of recent multi-generational scholarship, and even includes previously untranslated and unpublished articles from Ellul himself, this volume thus aims to cover most of the width, breadth, and depth of its chosen subject.[27]

Indeed, the range of contributing voices is worth noting. Contributing authors and translators can be grouped in several ways. First, the volume places established authorities in Ellul studies (such as Patrick Chastenet, David Gill, Andrew Goddard, Ted Lewis, Frédéric Rognon, and Christian Roy) and seasoned Ellul translators (such as Anne-Marie Andreasson Hogg, Lisa Richmond and once again, Christian Roy) alongside

22. Ellul, *On Being Rich and Poor*, 168.

23. See chs. 1, 4, 8, 17, and 19.

24. See chs. 2, 3, 5, 13, 14, and 15. Chs. 2 and 3 appear here for the first time in any language, while the others appear here for the first time in English.

25. See chs. 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 20, and 21.

26. See chs. 6, 7, 9, 16, and 22.

27. There is a notable exception to this goal of full coverage: the present volume lacks a specific treatment of Ellul's reading of Revelation. This is not an oversight; treatments of Ellul's *Apocalypse* are being held in reserve for publication in a future volume.

a new generation of emerging scholars and translators who specialize in Ellul's thought (such as Michael Morelli, Elisabetta Ribet, Matthew T. Prior, G.P. Wagenfuhr, and myself). Three other notable categories include established biblical scholars and theologians (such as Brian Brock and John Goldingay) and emerging theologians (such as Amy J. Erickson and Declan Kelly) whose research is not especially Ellul-driven, and pastoral practitioners manifesting no small Ellulian engagement themselves (such as Chris Friesen, Jean-Sébastien Ingrand, and Anthony Petrotta).

Furthermore, these contributions stem from recent "hotspots" in Ellul's *theological* reception. Historically, several cities have stood out as prominent reception hubs of Ellul's thought, including Bordeaux in France, and in North America, Berkeley, CA and Wheaton, IL in the United States, and Vancouver, BC in Canada. These hubs are still mostly represented in the present volume. However, this volume also reflects that Aberdeen, Scotland, and Strasbourg, France have been particularly strong hubs in recent years.

Summary of Contents

This volume is divided into three parts. David Gill's chapter opens part one, "Approaching the Biblical Text," by sketching the broad lines of Ellul's relation to the biblical text. The two following chapters present new translations of previously unpublished articles by Ellul which offer general commentary on his ethically driven biblical readings (and prefigure later developments in volume two of *To Will & To Do*). The first article, translated by Anne-Marie Andreasson Hogg, is a prepared lesson clearly delineating Ellul's understanding of how scriptural authority differs for Christians and non-Christians. For the former, he shows how Christian ethics can neither ignore, nor divide, nor directly apply the Old Testament law. For the non-Christian, Ellul notes how the universal Noahic covenant gives Christians a biblical basis for thinking through Christ's lordship over all things (a theme developed in Ellul's studies of Amos).[28] The second article, translated by Lisa Richmond, continues the ethical-institutional focus and gives a rare and early mention of Ellul's approach to the "analogy of faith." In chapter four, Frédéric Rognon develops this last element at length, situating it in its historical context and demonstrating it with detailed examples. Section one closes with a third article from Ellul (also translated by Anne-Marie Andreasson Hogg) concerning "Meaning and its Interplay with Freedom in the Bible," deriving from Ellul's contribution to a conference of Jewish intellectuals. Ellul finds that God values and respects human freedom, which

28. See Ellul, *On Being Rich and Poor*, 16–17.

interacts with an absence of an objective meaning to the Bible and to human history as a whole; instead, the meaning which God grants to human history involves human interpretation and decision, and humans can only perceive this meaning retrospectively.

Part two, "Revisiting Ellul's Readings of the Bible," aims to survey the major textual components of Ellul's biblical engagement. John Goldingay opens the section with a favorable and critical evaluation of Ellul as an exegete of the Old Testament, focusing on Ellul's studies of 2 Kings, Jonah, and Ecclesiastes. The next seven chapters focus on Ellul's specific engagement with a given theme in a biblical book. Michael Morelli highlights the gravity which Ellul's readings of Genesis place on the act of naming. G.P. Wagenfuhr focuses on Ellul's approach to the biblical book (and *theme*) of Exodus, highlighting the centrality of God as liberator in Ellul's readings. Amy J. Erickson highlights Ellul's figural reading of Elihu in his approach to the book of Job, emphasizing Job's wrestling with fear and the present value of waiting along with God. Anthony Petrotta explores, probes, and reconsiders Ellul as an insightful reader of Ecclesiastes. Jean-Sébastien Ingrand peruses the prophetic and personal elements of Ellul's sustained engagement with Jonah. And Chris Friesen fruitfully revisits his careful personal wrestling with Ellul's interpretations of 2 Kings. Part two closes with two more Ellul articles. The first of these articles, translated by Jacob Marques Rollison, demonstrates how Ellul continually reconsiders his interpretations, re-evaluating them in light of new contextual knowledge, here with reference to Romans 13:1. The second article, translated by Lisa Richmond, presents Ellul's review of a translation of the Bible by André Chouraqui, a renowned Hebrew scholar and translator who powerfully influenced Ellul's biblical interpretations.[29]

Part three presents additional topics and recent interventions involving Ellul as a biblical reader. The section opens with Matthew T. Prior's translation

29. Indeed, the inside front cover of several books in Chouraqui's biblical translations contain the following endorsement from Ellul, who (after comparing this translation's influence to that of Luther's translations) writes: "We are swept away in a current, a text which moves, evokes, awakens—a text which either leaves the reader discouraged, or provokes them to a new dimension, to a conversion of the intelligence (and the heart!): and I think that [this element] itself is the biblical text, its mark as a bearer of a revelation, which no translation until the present day had rendered palpable with so much strength, and perhaps, so much truth" (my translation). Chouraqui notes that Ellul was an early reader of his translation of the book of Revelation. Ellul further wrote a preface to Chouraqui's biblical study of the Psalms. The two thinkers corresponded at length, and Chouraqui read through Ellul's 1977 article "Impressions d'Israël," making suggestions which proved valuable to Ellul. See Ellul, *Israel, Chance de civilization*, 14n1. Willem Vanderburg in particular has picked up on the powerful influence of Chouraqui's translations; cf. Vanderburg, *Secular Nations Under New Gods*, 89.

of Ellul's short but poignant article on "Darwin and the Bible," which clarifies the types of questions involved in relating the Genesis accounts with questions concerning the material origins of the universe. Patrick Chastenet follows this with an Ellulian meditation on giving and gifts, mixing extensive biblical analysis with sociological considerations. Christian Roy considers the relation between nature and scripture in *The Green Light*, a profound work by Ellul's lifelong dialogue partner and friend Bernard Charbonneau which examines nature, freedom, and the ecological movement. Reprints of essays by Brian Brock and Andrew Goddard expand the conversation, with Brock examining Ellul's readings of Amos and James and Goddard explicating how the Bible desacralizes idols in Ellul's thought. Elisabetta Ribet parses the biblical terminology for hope and abandonment, drawing on material from her recent doctoral work on Ellul's *Hope in Time of Abandonment.* Ted Lewis expands on Ellul's pairing of the Genesis Tower of Babel narrative with the kenosis hymn in the second chapter of Philippians. Finally, Declan Kelly closes the volume, drawing out distinctly apocalyptic contours of Ellul's desacralizing hermeneutic in *Money and Power*.

In the diversity of readers and readings presented in this volume, the clear note sounded in Ellul's call to hermeneutic freedom reverberates in echo some twenty-five years after his death. We can only hope that the same note of freedom is discernable through the scholarly rigor and personal wrestling which these chapters manifest. If so, these polyphonic texts can be heard as renewing the call and inviting further voices to join the conversation, taking up the challenge to read—and live—in freedom.

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