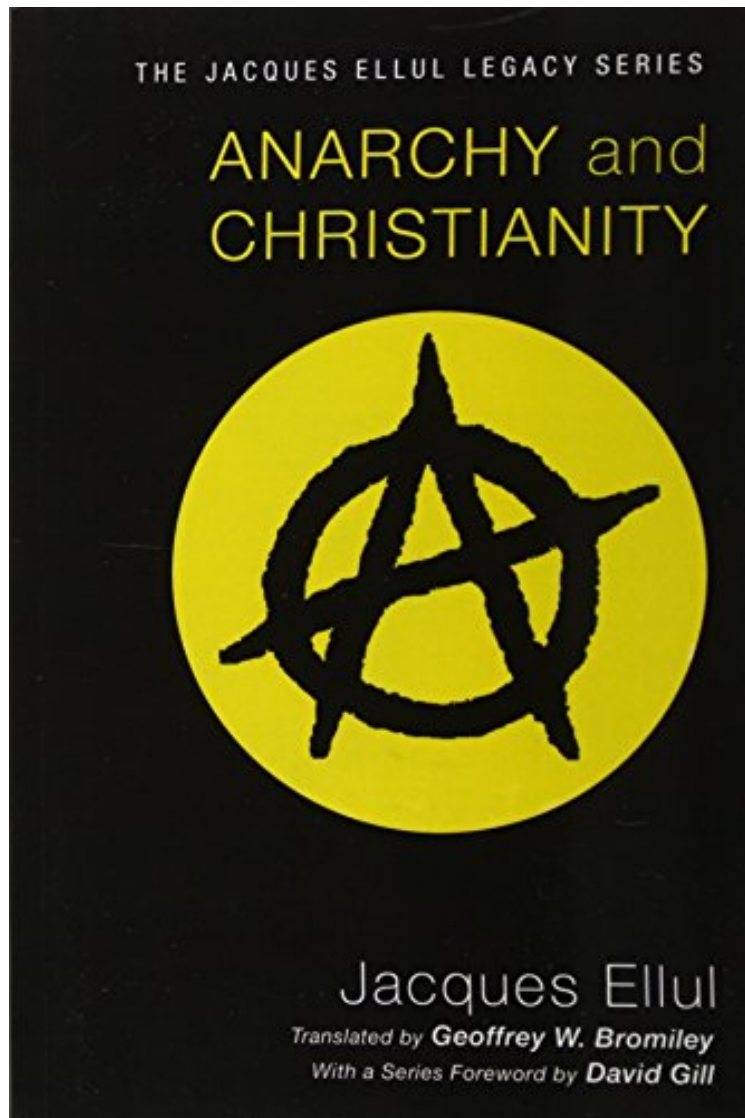


Anarchy and Christianity

Jacques Ellul

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Jacques Ellul : Anarchy and Christianity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Anarchy and Christianity:

37 of 37 people found the following review helpful. Christ CaesarBy Kerry WaltersJacques Ellul was the bad boy of western Christianity during his lifetime, continuously gadflying rigid hierarchies, smug or tepid Christians, and orthodox theologians with book after book that challenged conventional wisdom. (In this regard, he reminds one of Kierkegaard in the 19th century.) Anarchy and Christianity is one of his most penetrating criticisms of institutional Christianity. But like most of his theological works, it's not entirely (or even primarily) critical in tone. It also offers a

vision of what Christian faith might be. Ellul argues that both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are wary of political (worldly) authority. The transition from judges to kings in ancient Israel was viewed as a decline by Hebrew Bible authors, and Jesus' entire public ministry is a challenge to both political and religious authority. The subsequent institutionalization of the Church, and the transformation of the living presence of Christ into "religion," break faith with the teachings and meaning of the Christ. Ellul intends his audience to be not just Christians, but also the anarchist community, which has generally been militantly anti-Christian. In one of the more interesting sections of his book, Ellul tries to demonstrate that in fact genuine Christianity (as opposed to the institutionalization of it that both he and atheistic anarchists dislike) is deeply anarchistic. Through a series of masterful scriptural interpretations (pp. 32-44), Ellul argues that God is not omnipotent, providence doesn't rule out human freedom, and God is a liberator. This re-envisioning of God, which Ellul argues is more loyal to the scriptural model than subsequent theological analyses, is instructive. Is rejection of the monarchical understanding of God anticipates much of what liberation theologians had to say. Also of interest is Ellul's exegesis of five texts from the Christian scriptures which he sees as central to the anarchic message of Christ (pp. 59-85), especially his reading of the Book of Revelation as an anti-governmental authority document (pp. 71-74). Much of what he has to say is reminiscent of the American Christian iconoclast William Stringfellow. An instructive, disturbing, but ultimately inspiring read. Highly recommended.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. No book is perfect. Yet

By Anthony Glenn Miller This book exposes false versions of Christianity simply by highlighting the beauty and truth of the true teachings of Jesus. False versions of following Christ are exposed by examining the depth and beauty of the teachings of Christ. No book is perfect. Yet, this is a unique offering that remains timely for its helpful focus on the topic of anarchist nature of the authentic teachings of Jesus. Excellent.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Need more believers like Jacques Ellul

By Benjamin As I said, we need more believers like Mr. Ellul. Although, I don't agree with everything Ellul says what is more important is that he is an original thinker, even though he does often follow the "party line". That may seem paradoxical but I think he comes up with his conclusions by reasoning and not just accepting what he is told. I think he may be afraid of disagreeing with the Bible and Protestant dogma, though; perhaps fearing he can't serve Christ and disagree with some of the typical interpretations. Because of this, I notice a lot of round-about reasoning and possible contradictions. I don't remember individual contradictions but I remember thinking there were some. And I believe that's common with evangelical dogma. I, personally, share more of a gnostic interpretation. Not a DaVinci code, new-agey gnostic interpretation, and not a mythicist or liberal interpretation, either. I accept Jesus's blood atonement, believe in Him in history as fully God and fully man. But, I think He may not be the Jewish OT God, who I think is probably the demiurge, but, instead, I believe Jesus is the manifestation of the Perfect God. Anyway, Mr. Ellul understood that followers of the Way are the salt of the Earth and it shouldn't be expected for the church to be large. He understood we need to live in small communities, like Acts, and, yes, even in our modern age. He also understood that secular anarchists are largely deceived and prejudiced like so many others, although they are perceptive of much of reality. It is interesting how ahead of his times he was, even though he advocated a primitive simple lifestyle, like in the past. For, recently, many modern secular and anarchistic activists are recognizing the value of Jesus's teachings, and how much of an anarchist He really was. Also, many Christians are realizing how important justice is and how Jesus and the early church was apolitical. Christian community may be entering a revival. For anyone interested, look up New Monasticism and communities like Koinonia Farm, the 12 tribes of Israel, and Rutba House. If more Christians lived as Jesus and the early church did, freely and compassionately and if more activists types realized the reality of soul and Spirit and lived as Jesus did real positive change could happen and the world would be a better place. I don't expect it to be perfect, though, and understand this world is not my home. That said, it's probably true that more anarchists live true to Jesus's teaching than those who profess being Christian. To paraphrase a chapter of Romans (13:12??) The gentiles who don't know God but follow their conscience will not be condemned.

Jacques Ellul blends politics, theology, history, and exposition in this analysis of the relationship between political anarchy and biblical faith. While he clarifies the views of each and how they can be related, his aim is not to proselytize either anarchists into Christianity or Christians into anarchy. On the one hand, suggests Ellul, anarchists need to understand that much of their criticism of Christianity applies only to the form of religion that developed, not to biblical faith. Christians, on the other hand, need to look at the biblical texts and not reject anarchy as a political option, for it seems closest to biblical thinking. After charting the background of his own interest in the subject, Ellul defines what he means by anarchy: the nonviolent repudiation of authority. He goes on to look at the Bible as the source of anarchy (in the sense of nondomination, not disorder), working through Old Testament history, Jesus' ministry, and finally the early church's view of power as reflected in the New Testament writings. --With the verve and the gift of trenchant simplification to which we have been accustomed, Ellul lays bare the fallacy that Christianity should normally be the ally of civil authority.--

-- John Howard Yoder Jacques Ellul (1912-1994), a French sociologist and lay theologian, was Professor Emeritus of Law and of the History and Sociology of Institutions at the University of Bordeaux. He wrote more than forty books, including 'The Technological Society', 'The Humiliation of the Word', and 'Technological Bluff'.

Language NotesText: English (translation) Original Language: French