

“Anarchy and Christianity”, by Jacques Ellul, (c) 1988

https://dfgdc.org/docs/19880101_Jacques_Ellul_Anarchy_and_Christianity.pdf

Notes, BIO:

Who was he? <https://ellul.org/life/biography/>

A vision from God he kept a secret: Although Jacques Ellul may not yet have been converted to Christianity when he first went to the University of Bordeaux (his faith took some time to develop its final form), on August 10, 1930, God appeared to him in a vision that forever after he modestly refused to describe.

WW2 - resistance, growing potatoes ... He later confessed that he was just as proud of harvesting his first ton of potatoes as he was of receiving his agrégation (the qualifying exam for university teaching) in Roman law (1943).

Life: 1912–1994

1. involved in ecology
2. reformed church of France

Aquitaine Region, Bay of Biscay ...

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Aquitaine,+France/@44.2242006,-2.4150119,7z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0xd54a0293379455d:0xc2990cc209948809!8m2!3d44.7002222!4d-0.2995785>

1. Where are you coming from? (p1)

**simplicistic and uncontested beliefs that I propose to challenge.
But it might be useful to say where I am coming from, as
students used to say in 1968. I am a Christian, not by descent**

2. Communist treatment of Anarchists during Spanish Civil War 1936-1939. (p2)

**greatly liked, so that I was scandalized by the attitude of many
to him in their dispute. Finally, what led to me to detest the
communists was their conduct during the Spanish Civil War
and their horrible assassination of the Barcelona anarchists.
Many things, including contacts at that time with the**

3. Our Christian faith does not set us apart with respect to being saved, but rather requires MORE of us. (p4)

4. Corruption of Christian teaching whereby the faith is used to buttress the STATE ... “God’s will” that some should rule, and others are slaves. (p6)

5. "There has always been a Christian anarchism." (p7)

attitude of Christians in the first three centuries. But what I write is not a sudden resurgence after seventeen centuries of obscurity. There has always been a Christian anarchism. In every century there have been Christians who have discovered the simple biblical truth, whether intellectually mys-

6. Kierkegaard influence, and the "impersonal" command of the state:

To be sure, he ruthlessly condemned the masses and all authorities, even though they be based on democracy. One of his phrases was that "no mistake or crime is more horrible to God than those committed by power. Why? Because what is official is impersonal, and being impersonal is the greatest insult that can be paid to a person." In many passages Kierkegaard shows himself to be an anarchist, though naturally the

7. Ellul's Anarchy

- a) rejection of violence
- b) I am a Christian, love is the way
- c) non-violent action is tactically better ...

p14 – you get a sense that his marxist tendencies are still there, despite his rejection ... a lot of stuff is couched in that French structuralist/marxist class dogma crap

p15 – sometimes you can "use the tools of the state" as an anarchist, against it ... that might be ok. But you have to be careful.

But he objected — and this is the point of the story — to the compulsory vaccination of his cattle against hoof-and-mouth disease, reckoning that if he raised them carefully, and at a distance from any other herd, there was no danger of contracting the disease. This was when matters became interesting. Veterinary officers went after him and imposed a fine. He took the case to court, giving proof of the incompetence and accidents connected with vaccination. He lost at first, but on appeal, with the help of reports from biologists and eminent veterinarians, he was triumphantly acquitted. This is a very good example of the way in which we can find a little free space in the tangle of regulations. But we have to

“We must always remember that when it pays, it also calls the tune.” - the STATE, p16

p17 – Support for tax revolts, as a form of non-violent resistance.

P18 – voluntary, cooperative, schools that parents organize – teach non-violent, non-statist curriculum

“marginal action” - is it too small?

Driving mankind: “covetousness and desire for power” p20

“Coveting” ... to yearn or desire for something ...

→ I have no faith in a pure anarchist society, but I do believe we can create a new social model: Ellul

8. There is this sense in which “anarchism”, for Ellul, is the only hope for the fact of “technocracy” and that no one can control it, the parties are no longer able, they are controlled by it – the “deep state”.

9. p23

and administrative bickering. If we denounce such things, we gain the ear of a large public. In a word, the more the power of the state and bureaucracy grows, the more the affirmation of anarchy is necessary as the sole and last defense of the individual, that is, of humanity. Anarchy must regain its pungency and courage. It has a bright future before it. This is why I adopt it.

10. Christianity vs Christian Faith: p23

11. Religion is a source of war ... p25

12. Christian truth / Christian salvation

truth – found in love

salvation – it cannot be forced, as per crusades/inquisition/europeans in new world

13. churches, in the modern era, have adapted themselves to government: this is an indication of the weakness as a buttress

14. Obedience to God: what does that really mean? P34

Does it mean that we simply obey?

What is God’s relationship to man, with respect to God’s will?

15. Freewill and God: p35

16. “God of the gaps”, but that “God does not serve any outside purpose.”

17. There is not objective knowledge of God p37

God rests, and allows us to take the lead ...

Sometimes God partners with us ... p38

It is for “freedom” that we have been freed ... p40

“God wills the good, but leaves us free to do the opposite.” p42

Miracles are not intended to destroy natural law, and they require no proof ... as Christians our relationship to these events is what is important ... (squishy)

“A miracle is not a marvel. But it is also very rare, and exceptional.” - not meant to astonish ... (Jesus bringing clay birds to life as a boy)

18. Bible as source of anarchism ... p45 ...

Old testament:

- Bible as proof of the folly of ruling
- Prophets as often placed in opposition to the state
- the old testament as a repeating history of state folly

19. Romans and the time of Jesus and Herod

20. “Render unto Caesar” - who is that on the coin? P60

21. Before God, all are equal – let the great man be the servant.

22. During his trial, Jesus does not recognize the Roman court as having authority. P67

Second, his attitude involves accusation of the authorities. Thus he said to the chief priests: "I was with you every day in the temple, you did not lift a hand against me. But now you have come out with swords as against a brigand! Behold, your hour has come, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:52-53). In other words, he expressly accused the chief priests of being an evil power. John records a similar episode (18:20-21) but with a different reply that is half irony and half accusation. When the high priest Annas asked him about his teaching, Jesus replied: "I have spoken openly to the world. Why do you question me? Question those who have heard me; they know what I said." When one of the officers struck him for this insolent answer, Jesus said to him: "If I have spoken wrongly, prove it; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Along the same lines of accusation there is another ambiguous text in John 19:10-11. Pilate said to Jesus: "You refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to free you or to have you crucified?"

Discussion: (from Josh's notes)

Okay, short outline of things.

First part was a defense of Christianity for anarchists.

Second part was a defense of anarchy for Christians.

When anarchists complain about Christianity, it's more about the form of religion that developed (although, yeah, you have metaphysical objections).

When Christians complain about anarchy, they either don't know what they're talking about or they're being far too uncharitable. Like... Christians, look at your own Book. Is there not a skepticism of worldly power throughout?

I Samuel 8, there's a key text. Although God raised up a monarchy (*established* it in the Romans 13 sense!!!), that wasn't precisely his will. Even before the Israelites were exiled in Babylon, they were already in exile from the will of God. Then you have the parable of the trees asking the bramble to rule over them; you have the prophets and their critique of the powerful; you have Jesus' and the apostles' run-ins with the law. There's a lot here, Christians. Pray for the ones in authority, pray for peace and quiet days. Don't necessarily approve of the political forms in which you find yourself. Don't bend over backwards to defend it.

I think we'll have a good discussion.

1. Do you sense or are you able to detect the Marxist/Structuralist influence in Ellul? Not that this is bad ... (I like Foucault)
2. What/Who is God to Ellul?
3. How do we, as anarchists/Christians, confront the state?
4. How do we resolve "state worship" in Christian history?
5. What is Christianity vs Christian? How does Ellul escape the statism of the western churches
6. he preaches non-violent action, marginalism, would you also say his message is counter-economics? Like "hey, that's not God's picture on that money ..."
7. given the stories he tells about the "vaccination of cattle" and other stuff, do you think he would reject the mask?