

From Jacques Ellul . . .

I was not brought up in an especially Christian family, and had only a very remote knowledge of Christianity in my childhood. On the other hand, my family was rather poor and I spent all my youth in the midst of the people of the docks at Bordeaux. I began to earn my own living when I was sixteen and continued to do so while completing my university studies. When I was nineteen, I read, by chance, Marx's Capital. I was enthusiastic about it. It answered almost all the questions that I had been asking myself. I became "Marxist" and devoted a great deal of my time to a study of his writings. But I was disappointed with the Communists, who seemed to me to be very far from Marx, and I never entered the Party. Around twenty-two years of age, I was also reading the Bible, and it happened that I was converted—with a certain "brutality"!

From that time on, the great problem for me was to know if I could be Marxist and Christian. On the philosophical plane, I realized very quickly that I could not, and so chose decisively for faith in Jesus Christ. But what Marx had brought to me was a certain way of "seeing" the political, economic and social problems—a method of interpretation, a sociology. So it did not seem impossible to utilize this, starting with the Christian faith. I could not accept the view that there should be a Christian faith without social and political consequences. On the other hand, however, I saw clearly that one could not deduce directly from the Biblical texts political or social consequences valid for our epoch. It seemed to me that the method of Karl Marx (but not of the Communists!) was superior to all that I had encountered elsewhere.

*In 1933, I participated in the founding of the journal, *Espirit*, with E. Mounier, thinking that in this group we would succeed in doing what I saw somewhat vaguely. After several years, however, I realized that they were*

heading towards ordinary socialism. I also clashed with the very uncompromising Catholicism of Mounier. I then took my road all alone, for in my contacts with Social Christianity, I realized that it was not serious theologically, and was very superficial from the viewpoint of sociological analysis.

Since 1935, I have been convinced that on the sociological plane, technique was by far the most important phenomenon, and that it was necessary to start from there to understand everything else. My first article on technique dates from 1935. Since that time, I have given myself to the task, on the one hand to deepen my theological and biblical knowledge and, on the other hand, to continue with a sociological analysis of the Western world. I have sought to confront theological and biblical knowledge and sociological analysis without trying to come to any artificial or philosophical synthesis; instead, I try to place the two face to face, in order to shed some light on what is real socially and real spiritually. That is why I can say that the reply to each of my sociological analyses is found implicitly in a corresponding theological book, and inversely, my theology is fed on socio-political experience. But I refuse to construct a system of thought, or to offer up some Christian or prefabricated socio-political solutions. I want only to provide Christians with the means of thinking out for themselves the meaning of their involvement in the modern world.

Such is the essential goal of my work. It ends, necessarily, in a Christian ethics—but only therefore an ethics that is indicative.

