

Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work
By Jacques Ellul

Edited by Willem H. Vanderburg

Revised edition. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2004. xvii, 131 pp.. Original edition , 1981.

Reviewed by David W. Gill www.davidwgill.org

Bill Vanderburg is the founding director of the Centre for Technology and Social Development at the University of Toronto and the author of *The Growth of Minds and Cultures* and *The Labyrinth of Technology*. Vanderburg is one of a long procession of students, researchers, and activists from North America and around the world to travel to Bordeaux for shorter or longer periods of study with Jacques Ellul. Vanderburg carried out “four-and-a-half years of postdoctoral work” with Ellul during the 1970s (p. x) and has continued to ponder and extend the ideas of Ellul during a quarter century as a professor working with engineering students and others.

Perspectives on Our Age is a superb introduction to Jacques Ellul’s core ideas and perspectives and we can be grateful that it has now been republished. Vanderburg first worked with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to create a series of radio programs on Ellul with interviews of Ellul himself and commentary by others. (It would be great if these programs could be reissued on a compact disc). Following the radio broadcasts in 1979 and 1980, Vanderburg developed the material into the present manuscript. Vanderburg mapped out the organization and questions; Ellul provided the answers and narrative.

Perspectives has four main sections: (1) *The Questions of My Life*, (2) *Understanding our Age*, (3) *The Present and the Future*, and (4) *Faith or Religion?* Ellul’s basic perspectives on technique/technology, Marx and Marxism, politics and the state, and Christianity and religion are all sketched out in an understandable way, with a lot of helpful personal and historical context.

The original preface to the first edition was not included in the Seabury Press publication of 1981 for some reason. It is now included along with a new preface and two additional appendices from Bill Vanderburg. Appendix 1 gives Vanderburg’s understanding of Ellul’s concept of technique; appendix 2 gives his understanding of the relation of Ellul’s sociology to his Christian faith and theology. Some readers will, no doubt, find the Vanderburg additions helpful.