



MARS HILL AUDIO

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Many of the books we reference are available from our friends at Eighth Day Books: [www.eighthdaybooks.com](http://www.eighthdaybooks.com) or 1.800.841.2541.

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**Richard Stivers, Jacques Ellul, etc.**

Richard Stivers's *The Media Creates Us in Its Image and Other Essays on Technology and Culture* (2020) is published by Cascade Books. Stivers's other books include *The Culture of Cynicism: American Morality in Decline* (Blackwell, 1994); *Technology as Magic: The Triumph of the Irrational* (Continuum Books, 1999); *Shades of Loneliness: Pathologies of a Technological Society* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); and *The Illusion of Freedom and Equality* (SUNY Press, 2008). It is essential to remember that Jacques Ellul's "technology" (in French the term was *la technique*) is not concerned with gadgets as such but with a strategy and a mentality which he defined as "the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity." This summary appears in *The Technological Society* (published in French in 1954 and in English by Knopf in 1964), Ellul's best-known work. Less often referenced but also worthy of note and still remarkably relevant are four subsequent works: *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (Knopf, 1965); *The Betrayal of the West* (The Seabury Press, 1978); *The Humiliation of the Word* (Eerdmans, 1985); and *The Technological Bluff* (published in French in 1988 and in English by Eerdmans in 1990). In this last book, written as contemporary information technologies were beginning to achieve omnipresence, "Ellul finds his early analyses substantiated and even superseded by the degree to which the 'technical system' has become unchallengeable by its increasing control of our language and our culture" (Matthew T. Prior, *Confronting Technology: The Theology of Jacques Ellul* [Pickwick, 2020]).

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**J. R. R. Tolkien & George MacDonald**

Holly Ordway's *Tolkien's Modern Reading: Middle Earth beyond the Middle Ages* (2020) is published by Word on Fire Academic. While Ordway's *Journal* interview did not reference Tolkien's interest in George MacDonald's books, her book has an entire chapter devoted to the

influence of MacDonald on Tolkien's writing. She quotes Tolkien as having said that MacDonald's books (along with those of Andrew Lang) composed "the books which most affected the background of my imagination since childhood." Tolkien acknowledged that his own portrayal of goblins was influenced by MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*. Later in his life, however, Tolkien's affection for MacDonald seems to have waned a great deal, a decline that Ordway describes and examines in detail.

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**Hymns in history**

Peter Mercer-Taylor's *Gems of Exquisite Beauty: How Hymnody Carried Classical Music to America* (2020) is published by Oxford University Press. In *The Hymnal: A Reading History* (Johns Hopkins, 2018), Christopher Phillips (heard on Volume 149) discusses hymnals as "lived-with books" which have formed devotion at church, school, and home. Erik Routley's *Hymns and Human Life* (U.S. publisher, Eerdmans, 1959) is a rich and thoughtful survey that focuses more on the texts of hymns than their tunes, and with an emphasis on English-language texts. As one reviewer wrote at the time of the book's publication, "According to his analysis, there are three functions of hymnody, all of which must be present in any satisfactory and successful hymn: the codification of doctrine, the unifying of the congregation, and the praise of God."

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**Other books mentioned**

Scott Newstok's *How to Think Like Shakespeare: Lessons from a Renaissance Education* (2020) is published by Princeton University Press. Junius Johnson's *The Father of Lights: A Theology of Beauty* (2020) is published by Baker Academic.

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