

'When christians dare to give a revolutionary witness then the Latin American revolution will be invincible'.

The Chilean tragedy has illustrated only too clearly that christians are not yet prepared to give that witness; a majority, it might seem, rather than ally themselves with a transition to socialism have chosen to support the existence of capitalism. They are, unfortunately, in very dangerous company, and the lesson is only too clear. In fact it was pointed out by Radomiro Tomic at the time of President Allende's election: 'When you win with the support of the right, it is the right that wins'. One thing is certain: many of the changes brought in by three years of Allende's rule must be irreversible. Not the least important is the increased awareness on the part of many christians of the need for a revolutionary commitment. They need our help.

The 'Essence' of Christianity: Notes after de Certeau

by Fergus Kerr, O.P.

The French theological landscape seems to have been lying comparatively fallow for the ten years since the great days of the Vatican Council, but the periodicals are now laden with the first fruits of a new generation. The notes that follow have been made in the course of reading essays by Michel de Certeau¹, and attempt to transpose his style and preoccupations into terms related to our own out of an idiom that is very different from most theological writing in English (though compare the valuable studies by Bernard Sharratt, hidden in the files of a sadly defunct review: 'Locating theology', *Slant* No 22 (1968), 'Absent centre', *Slant* Nos 24 and 25 (1969).

The Empty Tomb as Ideogram

On literary and text-historical grounds, as virtually all scholars now agree, the narrative of St Mark's Gospel ends at verse 8 of the

¹'Apologie de la différence', *Etudes*, Janvier 1968: 'La révolution fondatrice', *Etudes* Juin-Juillet 1968; 'Autorités chrétiennes', *Etudes*, Février 1970; 'Faire de l'histoire', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Octobre-Décembre 1970; 'La rupture instauratrice', *Esprit*, Juin 1971.

final chapter; the remaining verses printed in our bibles, though they appear in most of the extant MSS and are worth study in their own right, are clearly by some other writer and must therefore be set aside when we try to understand the message of St Mark. From the point at which the three women enter the sepulchre, then, the concluding verses read as follows:

‘And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you”. And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid’. (Mark 16: 5-8).

This narrative, whether or not Mark planned to leave it at that, may be read as a paradigm of the central Christian experience, as an ideogram of the event of faith.

To understand the significance of this story we must first recognise that it depends on the interplay of *four* agents: the *women*, the *young man*, the *absent Jesus*, and finally the *narrator and his audience*. The trajectory of the narrative depends on the tacit understanding between the narrator and his audience which allows him to tell, or retell, how the three women underwent the experience of finding no body in the tomb but only the message-bearing angel.

The status of the women in the narrative is plain. The tomb would have been like a small cave and the body would have been placed on a shelf or slab (‘see the place where they laid him’). It was customary for friends and relatives to visit the tomb for three days after a burial, though most commentators seem to doubt that the women could really have intended to anoint the body, a day and two nights after death. Tombs were visited for three days to make sure that the tightly shrouded corpses had not revived, and the custom of swathing the body in bandages soaked in oils and spices was apparently to honour the deceased (cf. the fascinating book by J. D. M. Derrett, *Jesus’s Audience*, 1973). But all that the women do is perfectly natural, and it is reported in a way that may be taken as ‘factual’. As soon as they enter the tomb the emphasis falls very decisively on what they undergo—on their amazement, panic, flight, silence and fear. The reaction of the women is the fact that the narrator wants to put across—to point, then, to the absolutely shattering character of whatever it was that provoked such emotion.

The emotion of the women, as the Greek text shows, indicates a very specific situation. It was not the fear that women, or men for that matter, might feel in any and every frighteningly unexpected set

of circumstances: being set upon by brigands, getting lost in the dark or whatever. To say that the women were 'amazed', *exethambethesan*, is to say that they were overwhelmed by deep feelings of awe and agitation such as would be expected only in the presence of the supernatural. It is a rare word, used only by St Mark in the New Testament literature, and is clearly almost a technical term for the emotion experienced in face of the numinous. The 'trembling and astonishment', *tromos kai ekstasis*, which 'came upon' the women, though ordinary enough language, surely also, in this context, indicates the strong emotion that stumbling upon something manifestly sacred would provoke. And the silence of the women—obviously eventually broken—is surely recorded, as R. H. Lightfoot pointed out in his classical analysis of this narrative (*The Gospel Message of St Mark*, 1950), 'to emphasise human inadequacy, lack of understanding, and weakness in the presence of supreme divine action and its meaning'.

The second 'actor' in the narrative is the young man, clearly an angel, for his role is to interpret the situation in which the women find themselves—he gives them the message. He is surely a figure imagined according to a familiar biblical convention to represent what happens when the significance of a situation dawns upon those involved in it. Angels looked young but were of no identifiable gender—they are masculine linguistically, but that is honorific' (Derrett, page 120). In fact if the women had taken in the message at the time it is hard to see why they should have fled in such confusion—they should rather have gone purposefully to 'tell his disciples and Peter'. The message of the angel is surely the interpretation of the situation that came to them when they had calmed down enough to consider it. In that case we could read the message thus: 'We didn't have to be so frightened: we came to honour the body of Jesus, it wasn't there, he had gone before us'. As they articulated what they had undergone they discovered it as an encounter with God but an encounter that took the form of finding nothing where they expected to find a body. The vacuum had a meaning. It pointed them towards what they must subsequently have discovered, namely that on the strength of the appearance of the risen Lord Jesus the disciples were being reconstituted as the community which would be the Church. What the absence of the body of Jesus from the tomb meant was the presence of the Lord Jesus in the emergent Church-community. The women could surely not have understood this without some experience of the reconstituted community—without hearing, then, the testimonies to the presence of the risen Lord. But if their first knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus ('he has risen') took the form of their being overcome by the significance of the empty tomb, and if this by itself could never have sufficed to re-establish the disciples as a community, does it not remain a very revealing event for our understanding of the nature of Christianity?

For the third element in the narrative structure is the absent body, the vacant space. The women came expecting to find the body of Jesus and they found no body—they found nobody, they found nothing but an absence: ‘He is not here’. They did not conclude that the body had been stolen or otherwise disposed of. The language used of their emotion indicates, as we have seen, that they at once assumed that the disappearance of Jesus was the intervention of God. Faced with the unexpectedly empty space they immediately attributed the vacuum to the advent of God. In the absence of Jesus the presence of God became palpable. In this particular vacuum the God who hides, *él mistattêr* of Isaiah 45:15, is revealed. This void turns out to be a manifestation of holiness, a hierophany.

The reaction of the women, then, points to the significance of the unexpected vacuum—a significance apprehended initially in consternation and retreat but then articulated into what has been projected, according to a literary device of the times, as the message of the angel. But the emotion of the women and the effect of the vacuum and the interpretation elicited from it gather to full significance, finally, only as we recall and imaginatively appropriate the perspective tacitly assumed by the narrator and his audience. For this narrative, after all, is being recited *in medio ecclesiae*, in the context of some established Church-community, in the mainstream of some ongoing tradition of Christian discipleship, in virtue of a certain *praxis*. What issued from the experience the women had, and from the other experiences of the resurrection of Jesus, was the way of life that formed the familiar ambience in which Mark and his audience lived and loved and worshipped. What Mark is trying to recall here, and to put into words, is the *origin* of it all. He is trying to disclose the kind of event upon which the Church-community is founded. And so, in the perspective of what has been founded, he is trying to locate the founding event, to pinpoint the moment of inception, and he attempts it by evoking the disruptive intrusion of this eloquent vacuum in the experience of the women. It is in the eloquence of that empty space that the language of the Gospel begins.

St Mark’s perspective could be defined more precisely by referring to his preoccupation with the ‘messianic secret’—the fact that Jesus often sought to conceal his identity as Messiah, which becomes the subtext of Mark’s version of the story of Jesus. Without going into the complexities of the matter one may say, adopting Willi Marxsen’s phrase, that the purpose of Mark was ‘to proclaim the One who once appeared as the One who is to come, and who—in secret epiphany—is present now as the proclamation is made’ (*Introduction to the NT*, 1968, page 144). As Mark’s own narrative is recited, that is to say, the One who is to come becomes present—but ‘in secret epiphany’: visible, so to speak, by being invisible, apparent by being concealed, present by being absent.

Marxsen is a convinced and persuasive defender of the thesis that Mark deliberately left off his story at verse 8 of the final chapter; indeed he goes almost as far as to suggest that the total sense of the gospel demands this abrupt conclusion (*Mark the Evangelist*, 1969). His theory is that the 'inconclusiveness' of the 'conclusion' is precisely what discloses the inner trajectory of the whole story. The standpoint from which Mark writes, or narrates, would be his experience in faith of the risen Lord Jesus and his expectation of the imminent Parousia (the definitive 'presence'): the event upon which and in view of which the Church is founded, and which occurs now in these secret epiphanies of which the concluding episode of Mark's Gospel is itself such a splendid instance. It is precisely the incompleteness of the narrative that leaves room for the participation of the narrator and his audience, and the bringing to bear of their eschatological perspective. The narrative of the encounter with God in the empty space is rounded off only in the sequel which is their own following of Christ, their sustained *sequela Christi*.

The Retreating Essence

It has already been argued in these pages that Christianity, being 'pneumatic power to transform cultural traditions, evinced in linguistic transformation', has therefore no 'identifiable centre'—that there is no 'primitive Christian creed', no 'essence' of Christianity (Cornelius Ernst, *New Blackfriars*, October and November 1969). A very similar postulate is commended to the theologian in some uncollected essays by Michel de Certeau who is, by all accounts, a lodestar in contemporary French theology. The reason for approaching his conception of Christian faith as *rupture instauratrice* by way of such an extended analysis of the story of the finding of the empty tomb is simply that this 'rupture', this disruptive vacuum, of which de Certeau makes so much in all his writings, is well exemplified by the narrative of the eloquent absence. And in fact, in (to my knowledge) the only essay so far available in English,² de Certeau explicitly invokes this story at an important place in his argument (I have not seen the French original and doubt if the translation is good):

'A "rupture" is a constant element in the spiritual life. . . . It is immanent in the spiritual attitude, but it increases in proportion to the boldness of the faith that God initiates, sustains and dashes to the ground always through the instrumentality of some human pattern of events. This boldness may assume different forms, but it always consists of being ready to go to the extreme point in the tensions and ambitions belonging to a particular time,

²But see also 'Power against the People', Michel de Certeau S.J. *New Blackfriars*, July 1970. (Ed.).

and of taking seriously a network of relationships in order to await and recognise in them the coming of God. This serious outlook may even be the origin of the Christian's dismay. He is surprised that when he launches out in full faith and with all his heart in human history, he is met with a "vacuum", as much on the part of religious teaching as in the activities and the knowledge which could yet, in a given situation, provide a meeting-point with God. . . . This is a trial that comes to any Christian. . . . And so in days gone by, certain brave and faithful women came in the small hours to visit the place where Jesus *should* have been lying as an object and a sign; but they discovered an "empty" tomb, and they were filled with "amazement". What Christian is there who has not been filled with amazement, at some similar "emptiness"'. (*Concilium*, November 1966, page 9.)

Born in 1925, Michel de Certeau is a Jesuit priest. His training was as a historian and his special competence is the history of Catholic spirituality. His most substantial publications to date are devoted to the Jesuit mystic and spiritual writer Jean-Joseph Surin, the man sent to Loudun in 1636 to exorcise the nuns believed to be possessed by the devil. A cursory perusal of these studies would show that de Certeau is drawn to concentrate on the linguistic innovation which keeps occurring in the history of Christian life to put into words different experiences of the same reality. He likes to quote St Teresa's search for 'new words', *nuevas palabras*, as a critical instance of the re-creation of concepts under the pressure of discovering hitherto unperceived elements in the existing tradition of response to God. In other words, like so many other contemporary French writers, and perhaps like all philosophers since Plato, he is fascinated by the problematical relationship between Difference and Identity, between the Same and the Other.

That this is not, for him, merely a speculative exercise, comes out in essays he wrote at the time of *les événements* in Paris in 1968. He evidently took an active part in the *contestation* of the French system then. He writes admiringly of the Cuban revolution and of the cultural revolution in China. His problem as a Christian is not that revolution means violence but that we must learn how to 'measure and direct the necessary violence by the foundation it has as its goal'. He shows how mistaken it is to oppose revolution to order—every revolution is meant to *inaugurate order*, 'to found a language and a society, to be the genesis of a world'. It is the *creativity* of revolution that he recognises in those weeks in Paris: the possibility of a breakdown, a 'rupture', a disruption, which would be the 'instauration', the 'instatement', of something *different*. Not just something *contrary* but something *else*—to do what is *contrary* is, for de Certeau, to remain under the spell of the *same*. He argues that we are all but

incapable of conceiving any change but one inscribed in the process of homogeneous development. Even to talk of the 'seeds' of the new as contained in the existing order of things is to accept a biological analogy which, for de Certeau, does not do justice to the *difference* that revolution would inaugurate. The model, he suggests, is more like the death that establishes a new life. It is the nature of the 'rupture' that establishes something new that we find it so difficult to imagine. Our whole system of thinking favours a preference for 'tautology'—a preference, that is to say, for a *logos* which rejects everything that is not *tauto* (the same). It is in the impotence to imagine and permit *difference* that de Certeau wants to locate the scandal of the prevailing consciousness. Though he does not mention the name of Emmanuel Levinas, this is a thesis which will be familiar to any one who has read *Totalité et Infini*, surely one of the great books in modern philosophy. Writing as a Jew who survived imprisonment in a concentration camp, and therefore for more than one reason an 'outsider', Levinas brings out the prepotence of Identity in our philosophical tradition and spells out the moral and political implications of this.

The problem reappears in de Certeau's more explicitly theological essays. As he says himself, in 'Apologie de la différence', the problem has been with us since Newman discovered it. And for a Catholic theologian today it has become very acute—how *plural* can a *single* faith be in practice, how *different* can the *same* faith be? Synchronically this is the ecumenical problem: what is different and what is the same in Catholicism and Orthodoxy, or in Christianity and Judaism, or in Anglicanism and Roman eucharistic doctrine, etc. How much difference will identity bear? And diachronically it is the problem of 'development'. Is it so straightforward to change the *form* of Catholic doctrine while retaining the *content* intact, to change the *language* while preserving the *meaning*, as the conciliar programme of *aggiornamento* so hopefully assumed? In the ten years since the Vatican Council we have begun to understand something of the complexity and the hazard of creating new words and new institutions. It is not so easy to put ancient wisdom into modern language; it was never very safe to put new wine into old bottles.

The interplay of Difference and Identity, the hide-and-seek game of Same and Other, have always been at the centre of Christian theology: what else are Christological and Trinitarian controversies about (cf. Bernard Sharratt, *New Blackfriars*, June 1972)? In fact the doctrine of the Trinity is a paradigm of how there can be difference in identity. But it is only now, as Catholic theologians free themselves from the spell of *die Metaphysik*, that the problem of 'development', of continuity and innovation, is coming to be seen as pervading everything, and above all our methodology (cf. Nicholas Lash, *Change in Focus*, 1973).

The 'general ontology' upon which generations of Catholic theologians cut their teeth seems to have been abandoned almost everywhere. Seminaries and Catholic universities no longer privilege courses in metaphysics, if they offer them at all, and the articles appearing now in the specialist journals (*The Thomist*, *Revue Thomiste*, etc.) have a quite different cast from those that appeared ten years ago. But this is not such a liberating scene as it may at first appear to those who remember the free-floating speculations of the old metaphysics course and the emphasis put upon the defining of essences. The flight to biblical studies and patrology, or to sociology and poetry, so typical of opposing wings in the new generation, while it may prove vastly more satisfying intellectually and even of considerable ecumenical and missionary value, must lead to an impasse in the long run unless we face up to the philosophical problems that all these various disciplines perforce ignore. And the fundamental philosophical problem is surely the power of the ontology that has pervaded western-European thinking at least since Plato—and it continues to do so, even and perhaps especially where people regard themselves as untouched by it, in the metaphysics-free seminaries and in the great centres of 'Anglo-American philosophy'. For this 'ontology' is the hold upon us of such basic categories as reason/emotion, form/content, mind/matter, body/soul, and so on.

It is the 'ontology', the language for reality, at the level of these apparently 'natural' and indispensable notions, that the theologian now wants to have explored. Scholastic metaphysics was only a formalisation of this ontology which seems so natural to the western-European mind. It had no time for 'development', for what the Germans call *Geschichtlichkeit*: the way in which our apparently natural conceptuality may be culture-bound. On the contrary, the assumption was that you could work out the correct definition of the essence of anything, and that essence would be unaffected by change. If one suggested that the essence of something might seem somewhat different, say, to people in a culture with a sense of reality quite other than our own, one was immediately suspected of 'relativism'. Rightly enough, of course: for, as Collingwood knew, relativism is precisely the problem with which the discovery of the rest of mankind has afflicted western-European thinking. It is no solution to settle for the dying and rising of language-games—the purest form of relativism to which phrases in the writings of Wittgenstein seem to have led some English philosophers and anthropologists. But it will not do either to go on supposing that how we think is the only way human beings ever have really thought or ever could think—as if Plato and Aristotle were Fellows of the adjacent college and living foreigners were not able to think at all. As Jacques Derrida is saying, it is the *ethnocentrism*—in effect the racialism—of our deep ontology that requires to be investigated.

It seems clear, then, that his historical studies as well as his practical experience of the need for difference have led Michel de Certeau to reflect on some of our unquestioned assumptions. In particular, he wants to refute the notion that Christianity must have an 'essence'. He wants to continue the flight from 'essentialism', but to face up to the problems with which the retreating essence leaves us burdened.

Apologia for Difference

Once we have got beyond the preliminary gestures of mutual recognition, so de Certeau says, we find now, as Catholics, that a whole range of divergences immediately arises: about the place of ecclesiastical institutions, the criteria of faith, the scope of liberty of conscience, and so on. We begin to wonder what is going on as we unite to recite the same creed. We are all saying the same words, but how differently are we meaning them? What is going on if I recite the creed as if it were a special kind of report and you recite it as something more like a symbolist poem? Haven't we all sometimes wondered what meaning the others are putting upon the words as we recite the creed together? Whether they would understand the meaning we are putting on them? Whether every one simply puts his own meaning on the words of the creed? Whether there is any one in the assembly putting any meaning at all on the words of the creed? Whether we are not just all reciting the words blankly in the hope that somebody present is putting meaning into them—the priest perhaps.

Our first instinct, in accordance with our drive to Identity, is either to deny that these differences really exist, or to minimise them, or to classify 'the others' as being simply non-Christian. Our second instinct is to say that, for all our apparently very radical and far-reaching differences, there is never the less some 'essence' of Christian faith upon which we all are at one. We differ over many things—schools policy, what counts as suitable behaviour in church or towards bishops, what meaning the creed has, and so on—but we accept the same essentials. There is an essential core in Christian experience, and that is what matters. The awkward question which de Certeau is raising is where we are to look for this 'essence'. If the many areas in which we manifestly differ from one another are excluded as inessential, then what is left?—even supposing that we could agree that the place of liberty of conscience, etc., may be counted as inessential. And to the problem of the differences that exist among us now de Certeau adds the evidence of his study of our history: 'In order to affirm that there is an *essential core* in experience we should have to maintain that a part of its vocabulary is

unchanging. But both history and sociology rule out any such superficial view, for they show only too clearly that these very words have been subject to great variations in meaning and relationship' (*Concilium*, November 1966, page 5). It is in the light of the data of history, sociology and ethnology that de Cereau has come to see the necessity of revising our notion of *innovation*.

Something *new* is something *different*. When de Certeau speaks of 'difference', and offers an apologia for it, he means every possible eruption of the Other in the Same, *cette percée de l'autre dans le même*: breakdown/breakthrough in the course of a person's life; conflict in a group; discontinuity in a historical development; contestation with regard to an intellectual or social system including of course Christianity. Far from our having to yield to the desire to reduce all difference to identity—and this is no mere philosophical thesis but something that appears in the politics of *Gleichschaltung* and the pressures of conformism just as much as in the refusal to take others seriously (women, foreigners, blacks, the Irish or whoever) or in determinedly linear readings of historical development—we should rather be welcoming the creativeness of difference. And the model for de Certeau of all productive disruption is always the nature of Christian faith: *une rupture sans cesse instauratrice*, an interruption of continuity which proves endlessly constructive. It is perhaps because he has seen that revolution is constructive, that 'disorder' is 'order', that 'disruption' is creative—these all but unthinkable paradoxes for bourgeois metaphysics—that he has been able to re-examine the origination of Christian *praxis*. He is now able to suggest, then, that we may discard all nostalgia for the 'essential core' because the 'origin' of Christianity—of my being a Christian and you being a Christian and of the whole history and phenomenon of the Church—is to be sought in the absence which has given rise to it all, in the disappearance of Jesus which brought about the existence of the Church.

As the illusions of human consciousness are laid bare by sociology, psychoanalysis and the rest, the question arises, perhaps with special acuteness in France, in what seems to be a new era of doubt, *l'ère du soupçon*, of how we are to go on talking the language of faith. How can such a language-game, so full of its own truth and so all-embracing in its scope, seem anything else now but groundless and gratuitous? What de Certeau is asking, in effect, is whether we have not thought of Christianity simply as a unified vision of the world—a perspective within which everything becomes, if not exactly intelligible, then at least endurable; if we have not thought of Christianity as the no doubt ever-changing *form* of some immutable and essential *content*. What he wants to do is to explode that notion and to persuade us that his alternative, far from being an alarming loss of essentials, is actually the rediscovery of Christianity as the first break

in a series, as productive disruption. He seeks to free Christianity from the critiques of those who have taught us to be suspicious of language by showing us that it is what makes possible a multitude of activities, different from one another and yet related, *une multitude de praxis différenciées et apparentées*.

Marx and Freud, for example, have opened up new ways of understanding life and society, ways which have developed institutions and whole disciplines of insight and bodies of experience, ways which have altered the world. Even if you come out of a Tati film, so de Certeau says, you find life funny in a way that you didn't before you began to see things like Tati. The film has made something possible which would not have happened without it. In a similar sort of way, according to de Certeau, Christianity could not have existed without Jesus—but Jesus we cannot now lay hold upon:

'Not that the life, discourses, death and resurrection of Jesus have not left traces in the communities founded and in the scriptures. But the list of these traces—and the precious object it delineates like a pointillist painter as the 'historical fact' postulated by these writings—is not the proof; it is simply one more trace of the relationship that believers have posited from the start when what they heard became for them an event by "opening their hearts" to new possibilities'. (*Esprit*, June 1971, page 1201.)

The 'truth' of Christianity is to be sought, then, in the 'space of possibilities' that the original discontinuity has made possible. The truth of faith seems in fact to become accessible only in *works*. One might even say that, on de Certeau's view, the *truth* of Christian *faith* is to be found only in the *vitality* of Christian *activity*:

'That Christianity is still capable of opening new perspectives, that it makes change possible in the use of language and in the relationship of the speaker to the language, that in fact it permits believers—in the last resort that is the real "verification", whatever the mode and the locus of it'. (Page 1204.)

So the thesis goes as follows. We need not, and should not, seek an 'essential core' for Christianity, either as the shibboleth by which to judge and test each other's orthodoxy or still less as the seed from which to grow doctrine (and if that is right then entirely new possibilities open up in the field of ecumenical reconciliation, and the mushroom theory of doctrinal development that eventually produced Josephology would be finally exploded). What we have, when we speak of 'Christianity', is not 'the formal unity that we imagined but the family of structures more or less related to one another'—I take these famous words from Wittgenstein (*Investigations*, I: 108) be-

cause it seems to me that they sum up Michel de Certeau's thesis precisely. Christianity has no essence, it is rather a network of relationships, a multiplicity of customs, documents, testimonies, persons, institutions, etc., as different from one another as the members of a family and yet all (differently) related—and there must always be a fringe area where it is impossible to decide who or what belongs to the family (it seems to me also that this is different from the branch theory). Christianity is in fact a *complexio oppositorum*.

In the second place, de Certeau shifts the question of the verification of Christianity very firmly from the level of theory to the ground of practice, from reliance on the language alone (and rarefied examples at that) to respect for the undefinable and incircumscribable whole: 'the language and the activities with which it is interwoven', to quote Wittgenstein again (I:7). And these multiply different activities are 'the unsaid', *le non-dit*, 'the immense silence of practice', *le silence immense de la pratique*, the evidence of the action and conduct in which de Certeau for one clearly finds signs of *life* and therefore of *truth*. This is a view that might be compared with that presented in recent studies by D. Z. Phillips, following in the wake of Kierkegaard and Simone Weil.

And the life, finally, derives from a death. What is being done now—the apparently endless series of initiatives and new departures, of conversions and breakthroughs—is made possible only by that unexpectedly original departure: 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you' (John 16:7). The manifestation of the Spirit—multiply visible in the 'works', in the continuing originality of Christian life—depends upon the disappearance of Jesus: 'The empty tomb is the possibility of verification which opens in the era of the word and the Spirit'. The founder—the origin—is accessible nowhere now but in the interconnections of the open network of language and practice which would not exist but for him. It is now in the power—'pneumatic power'—demonstrated (if anywhere) in continuing social, personal and linguistic transformations, that the presence of the 'departed' becomes palpable: 'for where the Spirit of the Lord is, *hou de to Pneuma Kyriou*, there is freedom, *eleutheria*, the liberation of energy and initiative and full play of human creativity" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The tomb, after all, was not so empty that it did not contain a power of meaning that is still not exhausted.