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The Shattering of Christianity and the Articulation of Belief

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This article is based on a number of texts written by Michel de Certeau between around 1969 and 1974. These texts all explore the ways in which a lucid Christian belief may endure as a resource in contemporary societies.¹ They also indicate a form of transition. In comparison to the probing but orthodoxly circumscribed analyses of *L'Etranger, ou Bunion dans la différence* (1969)², we see the emergence of a more open (more exposed but also freer) mode of reflection. Although Certeau would rarely return in his writings after the mid-1970's to the question of contemporary Christian belief as such, the analytic and figurative frameworks generated by this reflection continue to inform his thought. They help us to make sense of the apparently disparate heterogeneity of his subsequent publications, taking us as they do in a series of significant zigzags between, say, *The Writing of History*, *The Mystic Fable* and *The Practice of Everyday Life*.³

Christianity was, in Certeau's view, in the process of 'shattering'.⁴ While this may have seemed a provocative diagnosis in 1974, it appears today as a basic premiss for a scrupulous sociological analysis.⁵ Moreover, Certeau suggests that there is nothing intrinsically new about this process. He recalls elsewhere the major scissions already at work in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Christendom broke 'into pieces', producing here and there new generations of believers 'without

a church'.⁶ What is unprecedented, he argues, is now the sheer extent and scale of this shattering. This development is not necessarily synonymous with an imminent extinction of Christian belief, but does modify radically the conditions in which such belief must find a voice and a horizon for action.

Certeau's analysis of the shattering of contemporary Christianity can be divided schematically into two related parts. Firstly, the ecclesiastical 'body' of which he was a member (the Catholic Church) seemed to him to be fragmenting and emptying out in a potentially irrevocable manner. Such an institutional body (defined as 'the historical and social being-there of an organized site' (*FC* 268)), once set up and configured the ground upon which Christians acted and believed. This, Certeau contended, was coming less and less to be the case. Ecclesiastical institutions, Catholic or otherwise, now had little or no role in the organisation of the social body—at best, they had been assigned the ambivalent function of plugging the gaps (both mental and social) produced by the forces of economic modernity. Likewise, their capacity to shape the forms of contemporary practices within the overall social body was steadily diminishing. Indeed, such directives as did issue forth from episcopal or ecclesial sources tended to manifest for Certeau a fetishistic desire simply to protect the inert integrity of a prescribed corpus. They appeared as bizarrely or predictably irrelevant to many ordinary believers, who were choosing to take for themselves the 'risk' of inflecting religiously their allotted tasks and responsibilities.⁷

Secondly, Certeau detected a corollary of the break-up of the Christian 'body': an uncontrolled dissemination of Christian language. Christian discourse was now being 're-employed' (*FC* 244) on a massive scale in a range of heterogeneous strategies and projects. These ranged from the traditional recuperation of religion for the purposes of political expediency to a new burgeoning of free-floating, erstwhile Christian terms to connote zones of experiential obscurity and mystery. Christian language was becoming 'metaphorized': it was becoming increasingly transposed so as to stand for something other than itself. This process may present as many poetic possibilities as it does dangers.⁸ Nevertheless, it also altered inescapably the social signification of Christian language. It rendered problematic the task of articulating this language as such, given the weak indetermination coming to afflict each of its terms. Certeau himself, a priest charged with the 'mediation' of this language, came to feel that his place was becoming increasingly 'theatricalized' (*FC* 269). Priests were becoming strangely exotic creatures, France's very own 'Indians'.⁹ They were expected less and

less to work upon the zones where word and deed combine and convert, and were required instead to constitute a 'spectacle'. This spectacle—in the media especially, but also elsewhere—was less and less distinguishable for onlookers from the thousand and one other manifestations of disseminated religiosity.

Certeau feels the Christian 'ground' upon which he once stood to be crumbling and even disappearing beneath him (*FC* 293). The Christian language handed down to him has become at best compromised, at worst socially insignificant and weak: it no longer 'articulates' what it evokes (*FC* 88). Neither of these developments, he stresses, imply automatically the end of Christian belief and practice. They present instead a new set of circumstances—and even new opportunities—for acting upon belief. They present also new problems. To begin with, he suggests that Christian belief needs to articulate itself more effectively. That is to say, to play on the double meaning of the term, it needs both to find a language in which to specify clearly its place in contemporary society, and also thereby to indicate the form of its connections with that society.¹⁰ The prime objective of this dual task is not, for Certeau, the restoration of an institutional site with its former power. It is rather to work out a singular form of practice or 'operation' (*FC* 209).

Singularity

At a fundamental level, as we shall see below, Christian belief for Certeau assumes an irreducibly 'plural' form. It is inconceivable without the cultivation of relations with a transcendent Other and with a multiplicity of human others. In another sense, however, he also conceives the development of Christianity as a historically 'singular' phenomenon. There is no necessary link between the human condition and a Christian structuration of experience. Christianity has no universal status, either *de facto* or—he contends—*de jure*.¹¹ Interestingly, this move allows Certeau to side-step the standard debates around the theme of secularisation. The relative dominance or eclipse of Christianity as a social institution supplies us with no ready-made criterion for discerning the 'meaning' of history—either in the sense of a movement away from belief, or in the equally unconvincing stories now prevalent concerning a putative 'return' to religion. Christian faith constitutes instead a 'singular option' (*FC* 251) which may or may not open the heart of those who chance to meet it. Its resources may gradually become necessary to the people whose paths it redirects.

Christianity for Certeau is 'singular' in the first instance insofar as it is dependent upon a single founding event. It would not be possible without the founding break (*la rupture instauratrice*) operated by the

historical figure of Jesus Christ. By extension it is dependent also on the scriptural corpus (the gospel texts, but also the immense repertoire of other Christian writings) without which the form of this operation would have fallen into oblivion. We will see shortly the importance of the conjunction 'not without' in Certeau's conception of Christian experience. To begin with, however, we need to consider Certeau's conception of the relation between contemporary Christian belief and the particular set of biblical texts—a distant 'convoy of representations' (FC 297)—which trace its founding condition of possibility.

Given the gradual collapse in the institutional—or at least ecclesiastical—mediation of doctrine, the specificity of this relation between belief and writings comes to assume a key role in Certeau's reflection. It is worth clarifying in this respect at least two basic premisses underlying his reflection, insofar as Certeau does not consider that he should simply 'forget' for the purposes of apologetic convenience his pioneering work on the epistemology of modern historiography.¹² Firstly, the gospels as historical texts provide us with no direct access to any absolute truth. Like any other historical texts, they are inescapably set off from the events they stage. Secondly, our understanding of these texts will be organized through and through by our own contemporary models of intelligibility. These are not sterilely historicist positions: just as for Certeau the historian uncovers how the past may resist and hence alter our models of intelligibility, so for him the gospel texts may produce 'disturbances', and even a 'crisis' (FC 299), in our contemporary understanding. Nor are such premisses the principal object of his thought—he has no desire to add his voice to the endless debates which ask whether the gospels are 'really' true or not. Instead, these premisses constitute for him the necessary condition of a lucid but constructive exploration into the potential force of Christian texts in contemporary culture.

We have seen how such force as these texts may hold is not for Certeau epistemological. Their role today is not to supply us with uncontroversial knowledge. Nor any longer is their force primarily institutionally produced. The ways in which the Christian corpus is read are prescribed less and less by Christian institutions. On the one hand, Christian texts are read through reference to (*inter-lectum*) and positioned by contemporary disciplines such as history, psychoanalysis, sociology, etc.. On the other hand, less visibly but equally importantly, they give rise to a proliferation of uncontrolled, errant, 'private' readings. Again, neither of these phenomena are new in themselves. It is the extent of their contemporary development which has gradually withdrawn from ecclesiastical institutions the power to mould a social

body by prescribing a univocal reading of Scripture.

Indeed, even without its institutional mediation, Certeau suggests that the force of Christian Scripture lies less and less in its capacity directly to prescribe for readers precisely what they are to do and think. It cannot function in contemporary society as a self-contained 'programme'. Its stories and figures seem instead to signal to us from afar. Such truth as they possess does not belong to the order of verisimilitude. It appears closer for Certeau to the strange familiarity of dreams (*FC* 294–5), with their unsettling, obscurely revelatory work upon the conscious mind. Christian texts today have the weaknesses—but also the potential force—of 'fables'.¹³ Their prescriptive, quasi-legal power is by and large becoming negligible. They may, however, continue to beckon to their readers or listeners. They may, as 'fables', touch us within and work upon ('convert') the faculty of the will. These singular fables will not work for every human subject. Where they do, however, their effect is liable to be more far-reaching than that of any single prescriptive law.

Fables and form

Certeau does not address directly in the analyses under discussion the detailed contents of Christian Scripture. He wants to explore instead the new *forms* of intersubjective relation and practice opened up by these texts. It is in such forms, he suggests, that we may discern both a transhistorical specificity of Christianity and the seeds of possible future developments. These forms do not correspond exactly in his conception to 'tools' to be abstracted from texts and 'applied' in our own lives. They call to us rather as figures which something in us (desire? an underlying will?) *recognises* in the obscure mirror of a fable as corresponding to its own secret movement. It is then up to our conscious intelligence to unravel the implications of such forms, to articulate their make-up and the nature of their connections with what lies outside them. I would like here to map out simply the key elements in Certeau's analyses.

Firstly, Christianity (and in the very first instance Christ) sets up a particular form of relation between the human subject and others (both a transcendent Other and human others). It posits the other as at once necessary and irreducible.¹⁴ The Christic subject accepts both that it needs others (it feels always that it is 'missing' others), and that these others escape it, withdrawing continually from its attempts to circumscribe their movement. The Christic subject, in Certeau's account, does not simply surrender to others (it remains, so to speak, other to others), but allows itself to be structured by the form of the

relation it cultivates with them. In so doing, it develops a founding paradox: others limit us, they signify our 'death', but at the same time may enable us to participate in a larger 'life'. Christianity opens up a mode of relation to others by instituting a form of 'confidence' (faith) inseparable from a form of 'passion' (the response of the subject to the effacement or displacement he suffers).¹⁵

In order to describe this mode of relation in as 'precise and modest' a way as possible (*FC* 112), Certeau takes up a conjunction which is in fact a double negation: 'not without'. He takes this category in the first place from Heidegger.¹⁶ He sees it at work, however, throughout the many facets of Christian experience. Christ is not without the 'Father' who speaks in him, nor does he conceive his existence without his disciples and the future generations who will go on to 'do greater things' than him (Jn 14, 12). Christianity, as we have already seen, would not be possible 'without' the founding break operated by Christ. Likewise, for Certeau, no-one can call himself a Christian without reference to others, and without reference to the previous generations which have rendered possible this manner of existence. He sees in both prayer and 'charity' (the Christian form of love) the repetition of a basic aspiration: 'Let me not be without you'. In all these instances, Certeau discerns a fundamental form of Christian relation between the subject and others.

He also describes the category of relation designated by this double negation as a 'type of articulation' (*FC* 113). It indicates for Certeau how the different areas of Christian life (prayer, conversation, action, silence...) are combined and connected among themselves, just as it specifies the nature of the relations which Christians aspire to maintain with others and with their God. These relations set up a connection while preserving in the same movement an irreducible separation. It is no doubt the importance of this double process of both relation and separation which explains Certeau's fondness in his analyses for the term 'articulation'. The word in this sense (which has become somewhat fossilised in English) denotes the connection of two or more things which remain nevertheless distinct. It also suggests (if we think, say, of the human body) how this mode of connection allows the elements it joins to move and to work upon or displace each other. Finally, it underlines the limits of each individual element, which can only operate effectively insofar as it is enmeshed in ('articulated with') a configuration of other elements. In other words, to describe a Christian form of relation is for Certeau to describe at the same time a form of limit: my life is nothing without You.

This limit is not in Certeau's view simply a fact to be registered. He invokes rather a specifically Christian 'practice' of limits. This practice

is again inaugurated by Christ who deliberately sets down limits (both his own and those of the Judaic culture in which he has been brought up) in order to generate new spaces for others. We have seen above the most fundamental of these limits defining a form of relation: the 'Father is greater than I' (Jn 14, 28); Christ 'admires' interlocutors, who 'surprise' him; they and other generations will go on to do 'greater things' than him (Jn 14, 12—see *FC* 113). By actively delimiting himself in this way, Christ allows his interlocutors to enter into relations of their own (with the 'Father', with others), and to invent, in the spaces he has opened up for them, new and as yet unimagined landscapes. Practiced in this way, limits have for Certeau a 'permissive function' (*FC* 216).

Moreover, in Certeau's reading, Christ carries out an analagous work of delimitation with regard to the faith which he and his disciples inherit from their ancestors. Christ does not set out to refute this faith. He does not aspire to dismantle the system of social and spiritual 'places' which he and his listeners inhabit in order to replace them with new institutions. Instead, he delimits sites whose right to exist he does not necessarily challenge. In doing this he displaces and alters these sites by bringing them up against what they posit as simply separate or alien. The 'chosen' status of the Jewish race is delimited by bringing it up against the practices of foreigners (Samaritans, Romans...). The wisdom of Scribes and Pharisees is delimited by confronting it with the words and deeds of the socially despised. Time and again, for Certeau, Christ 'converts places' (*FC* 222). That is to say, he delimits the sites occupied by his listeners by 'turning' them (*vertere*—to turn) towards their other. This Christic practice effectively transforms the nature of the limits which it takes up and displaces. They cease to function exclusively as the guarantees of social and spiritual distinction. They begin to work instead as the moving lines of relation/separation without which Christian faith cannot be articulated.

Certeau does not therefore take from the gospel texts a set of propositions which might guarantee his own social place. Christ, in his reading, does not speak from a stable site ('the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head...' (Lk 9, 59)), but inaugurates instead a practice through which places may be displaced, turned towards their others. Certeau recognizes in these fables a form of 'work upon limits' (*FC* 219). They present him with a series of narrative figures which suggest how the limits which signify our finitude and death may be not denied but 'converted' so as to lead us into a richer life. The 'faith' generated by these fables is a belief in the vivifying potential of what lies forever outside us.

The articulation of belief and contemporary social practices

In Certeau's reading, Christ inaugurates less a social institution (a single Church) than a form of practice which moves across existing social institutions. The Church may for centuries have provided the principal support for this practice. It is not, however, the necessary condition of the practice. Certainly, the Church has been for centuries also the principal object of this practice. It has been continually displaced and reconverted in response to the demanding calls of its own message. However, its eventual disappearance or eclipse would not in itself deprive of an object the form of operation inaugurated by Christ.¹⁷ For Certeau, this practice can continue to work in fields set up by other forces and institutions. In so doing, Christian faith would reveal more clearly what in his eyes it has always been: 'a way of proceeding [*une manière de faire*] in spaces which were not its own and which it had not constructed'.¹⁸

Christian belief would thus become, to adopt the terminology which Certeau was later to introduce in another context, a form of 'tactic'.¹⁹ It would no longer have the power, as 'strategies' do, to set up an organised site of its own in which to capitalize its resources and fortify itself against threats from outside. It would become a form of operation which 'has no place but that of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power'.²⁰ The principal strategic forces of contemporary modernity are by and large easy enough to identify: political and economic institutions and corporations, both national and transnational, the machines of education and the media, with their massive turnover of people and signs. Besides the interlocking advances of such interrelated forces, Christianity assumes a curiously marginal or ghostlike position. It does not lay out as it once did the ground upon which we move. Again, this does not necessarily mean for Certeau its extinction as a viable belief. It must confront instead the new historical conditions imposed upon it by other forces. It must introduce the enduring form of its tactics into spaces where it is no longer at home.

It should be stressed that such tactics, as Certeau conceives them, are not the sort of tactics designed to recruit new members for a social institution in decline. This sort of consideration belongs to another level of reflection. They concern rather the kind of contribution which committed Christians may or may not be able to make in contemporary society. For Certeau, they are operations modelled by a reading of Christian writings (such as that outlined above). They are inextricably related to ('articulated with') the particular sites—instituted

500

configurations of positions, contracts and constraints—in which believers find themselves. These sites may be located anywhere in the ‘immense complex’ (FC 260) which constitutes contemporary societies—offices, factories, schools, families, associations, neighbourhoods. Upon these sites, Christian faith may operate a partial work of ‘conversion’. It may ‘delimit’ such individual sites in order to bring them into a new form of relation with particular others. In maintaining its desire not to proceed ‘without’ such others, it may exercise within limits a form of Christian ‘hospitality’ (FC 262, 313). It may open up fleeting or recurrent spaces for unpredictable inventions. It will maintain at the very least the presence of certain irreducible questions which those in secure and strategic positions are all too liable to forget.

Presented in this way, contemporary Christian practice may seem a vital but peculiarly modest, even humiliated thing. These ‘conversions’ which Certeau describes are not conversions to Christianity, and not even in any explicit sense to God. Christian practice from this perspective seems to have become anonymous if not aphasic, working itself out in the languages of others, becoming lost from sight in the ebb and flow of what Certeau calls after Ruysbroeck ‘common life’ (FC 292). Indeed, there seems to be no absolutely compelling reason, at this level, even to call such practices ‘Christian’. They may take from the spectre of Christianity only a residual structuration of thought and practice (FC 285). The historical importance of this should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, such ‘archaeological’ considerations do not in themselves supply a sufficient rationale to see in the endurance of these practices alone a contemporary form of Christianity. Indeed, the people who quietly carry out such tactics may define their identity in part through the very distance they put between themselves and their memories of Christianity, and it would be presumptuous to ignore their insistence on this distance.

For Certeau, these practices only become or remain Christian as such when they are deliberately joined to those Christian ‘fables’ in which they locate their founding conditions of possibility. Without the active cultivation of this link, such tactical practices can be eminently ethical and creative, but it is misleading to call them Christian. In Certeau’s reading, the specific meaning of contemporary Christianity is produced precisely by the necessary *articulation* between a set of fables and a form of effective practice. Certainly, it has become more difficult to carry out this work of articulation. As we have seen, Christian fables in Certeau’s view signal to us, so to speak, from afar. They function now as ‘the poetic other of historical effectivity’ (FC 304). They can

seldom directly prescribe what we are to do and to say. Christians, however, will believe through experience that these fables have the potential continually to work upon what they do and say, to open spaces in their hearts and minds which would not have been possible without them. In this belief, they will withdraw intermittently, in private or together, from today's sites of historical effectivity in order to cultivate their relations with these fables.

Contemporary Christian belief thus works itself out, in Certeau's reading, according to a fundamentally split structure (though the sharpness of this split will be more or less pronounced depending upon one's position in society). It is 'broken' (*FC* 304) between poetic fables devoid of direct historical power and historically effective practices bearing no manifest Christian signature. There is no automatic connection between these two terms. Many today are engaged in analogous social practices while remaining indifferent or hostile to Christian fables. Likewise, many take recourse to the therapeutic or eudemonic virtues of Christian metaphors without for all that letting these interfere unduly with received forms of social practice. For specifically Christian believers, however, this split is in the first instance a dichotomy which they must suffer. It is the virtue of Certeau's analyses to have converted it also into a generative principle. Meaning, he reminds us in a slightly different context, may be conceived as the product of non-objectifiable relations between heterogeneous terms (*FC* 225). The sense of Christian faith, he maintains, derives precisely from the will to articulate its increasingly hidden ('mystic') fables with the changing historical forms of human practice.

A wreck and its castaways

The shattering of Christianity does not in Certeau's account prefigure automatically the end of Christianity, though it functions certainly as a powerful intimation of its mortality. Certeau does not in any case set up for himself an intellectual platform from which to predict the precise nature of developments to come. Indeed, an observer today might be struck as much by the relative resilience of certain ecclesiastical bodies as by the fragmentation which has undoubtedly continued to break apart Christianity as a social institution.²¹ Certeau is concerned above all in the early 1970's with understanding and responding to mutations which are already affecting his own position. He can already feel the 'ground' he once stood on slip and then vanish beneath his feet (*FC* 293), he can sense the language he once spoke being emptied in the world of men of its effective signification. This leads him not to abandon his belief, but to elaborate instead a new articulation of this belief.

It is nevertheless difficult to avoid the impression that Certeau becomes strangely drawn in by the process of shattering which he diagnoses. This is not simply, I would suggest, as a result of the frustrations expressed here and there with regard to the inertia or certain fixations of the Catholic hierarchy, although these must surely play a part. It seems instead, to take up one last time the Heideggerian category introduced earlier, that *without* this process of shattering, the 'modest and radical theology' in which Certeau 'firmly believes' (FC 263) would not be possible. It is as if Christian belief had, for Certeau, to lose in one way or another its social and institutional guarantees before it could find again something of the itinerant spirit which once founded it.

Certeau leaves contemporary believers with a series of figures, fables of his own. These suggest how, like the Jews once before them, Christian believers have been turned out on the road, with nothing but their texts to take with them (FC 303). They have fallen out of the ecclesial ship, just as it was going down, losing themselves in the 'immense and uncertain poem of an anonymous reality' (FC 291). This experience can be, to cite a phrase which Certeau takes from the seventeenth-century mystic Jean-Joseph Surin, that of a 'happy wreckage' (*un heureux naufrage*). It may embark them on a new 'Abrahamic voyage' through the 'austerity of objective tasks' and the humility of 'common life' (FC 291–2). Venturing henceforth on 'unmarked paths', more exposed and less assuredly articulate than they once were,²² they may continue to find opening out before them the spaces for wonderment, prayer and hospitality that they seek (FC 313). These were, as Certeau saw them, the conditions for the continuing possibility of Christian belief.

- 1 The texts may found in M. de Certeau, *La faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), a posthumous collection of essays edited by Luce Giard (hereafter referred to as FC). I have relied principally on chapters 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. All translations are my own.
- 2 M. de Certeau, *L'Étranger, ou l'union dans la différence* (1969; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991).
- 3 See M. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, tr. T. Conley (1975; New York: University of Columbia Press, 1988); *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. S. Rendall (1980; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); *The Mystic Fable*, vol. 1: *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, tr. M. Smith (1982; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 4 See M. de Certeau and J.-M. Domenach, *Le christianisme éclaté* (Paris: Seuil, 1974). The title of the book could be translated as 'Shattered Christianity', although this unfortunately loses the implicit connotations of brilliant light (*éclat*) or enduring radiance carried by the adjective *éclaté*. The book is based upon the transcription of a radio debate between the two authors, supplemented by two separately written postscripts. An unedited and substantially longer version of Certeau's postscript can be found in *La faiblesse de croire*, pp. 267–305.
- 5 See e.g. Jean-Louis Schlegel, *Religions à la carte* (Paris: Hachette, 1995), pp. 127–32.

- 6 Cf. M. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, p. 25 (where 'la chrétienté brisée en morceaux' is translated as 'tattered Christendom'); and Leszek Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Eglise. La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVII^e siècle*, tr. from Polish by A. Posner (1965; Paris: Gallimard, 1969), discussed by Certeau in *L'absent de l'histoire* (n.p.: Mame, 1973), pp. 109-14.
- 7 Cf. *Le christianisme éclaté*, pp. 56-7.
- 8 Cf. e.g. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 165-76 (the chapter entitled 'Reading as Poaching').
- 9 *Le christianisme éclaté*, p. 24.
- 10 The OED gives among others the following definitions of 'articulation': 'The action or process of joining ...; a mode of jointing', and 'The production or formation of speech sounds, words, etc.; articulate utterance or expression...'
- 11 *Le christianisme éclaté*, pp. 68-71.
- 12 See *The Writing of History*, pp. 17-113.
- 13 See FC 293-304. Certeau begins this part of his discussion by evoking the importance of dreams as such (as well as other 'voices' and 'visions') within biblical narratives themselves.
- 14 *Le christianisme éclaté*, p. 51.
- 15 Cf. *Le christianisme éclaté*, pp. 39-40.
- 16 See FC 112, 213.
- 17 Cf. FC 290-1.
- 18 *Le christianisme éclaté*, p. 66.
- 19 For Certeau's founding analyses of 'strategies' and 'tactics', see *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 34-9.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 37 (tr. mod.).
- 21 Cf. Jean-Louis Schlegel, *Religions à la carte*, pp. 128-9.
- 22 Cf. *The Mystic Fable*, p. 289, where Certeau cites Hadewijch of Anvers on 'the dark path, untraced, unmarked, all inner'.

Walking in the Pilgrim City

Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt

"Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come"

(Heb. 13:1 2-14).

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Blessed and cursed by a peculiar "hopelessness," Christians claim fellowship with Christ who suffered outside the city gate, and are called to follow him into that wilderness beyond the camp, that region other than the earthly *civitas*, from which we might discern *another* city. This other city shows the structures of this world, which seem so solid and so real, to be afflicted with an ephemeral quality, a kind of unreality, so as to make