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THE FOUNDING RUPTURE FROM STRONG TO WEAK IDENTITY



In this essay I would like to show how writing history by Jesuits historians changed in the last decades. For many years the Jesuit Historical Institute based in Rome published sources concerning history of this Catholic religious order. The typical and most representative publication of Jesuits historians is *Diccionario Historio de la Compania de Jesus. Bibliografico-tematico* (2001). What is characteristic for this kind of historiography is the concentration on facts and limitation of interpretation. More hermeneutical approach toward the history of the Order could be seen in publications by John O'Malley, particularly in his *First Jesuits* and *Four Cultures of the West*. In both books O'Malley presented the Jesuits more as a cultural phenomenon than as a missionary organization. From the same perspective I wrote the history of the Jesuits in Poland in 1564-1668.

In the first part of this essay I will present the history of the Polish Jesuits, using traditional methods, showing the strong identity of this religious order, which had very significant impact on Polish culture. In the second part I will try to present the change of the paradigm of Christianity which took place during the II Vatican Council in the second half of twentieth century, and its impact on writing history of the Jesuits. According to John O'Malley Vatican II was first of all “a language-event” (O'Malley 2008, 12). I have asked O'Malley if it is appropriate to use the word “rupture” in relation to the documents of Vatican II, and he answered me in an email as follows:

I would avoid the word rupture. First of all, it has become the litmus test for conservatives and will bring you unneeded grief and distract people from what you are trying to say. Secondly, it is pretty much what the followers of Lefebvre have been saying, and you do not want to be identified with them. Thirdly, it's not a really helpful word, too absolute in its implications. In historical happenings, even French Revolution, the continuities are stronger than the "rupture". Look for another way of speaking, e. g., paradigm shift, values-shift, or something like that".¹

So perhaps it is really a kind of continuation for the Church, but for some scholars it makes sense to describe what happened at Vatican II as a dramatic rupture with the past of the Catholic Church. Michel de Certeau was the first Catholic historian who drew attention to the second approach. In accordance with the first approach of writing history we have a support of political-religious system, which is conceived as all-embracing, and in the second approach we are invited to abandon the system, and to observe the Jesuits' history from the outside, in its social context, one part in a pluralistic society. In the history of the Jesuit order there were moments of tension between them and the Church. In other words, Jesuits obeyed the Vatican orders, but from time to time they responded to the needs of people to whom they were sent despite the Vatican dissatisfaction.

Although the first approach to writing history tends to describe and explain the history of the Jesuits within the system, one cannot ignore the fact that during its history this organization disagreed with the system due to a conflict of interests between them and the Catholic monarchs and even the papacy, which resulted in a suppression of the order.

The Jesuits are members of a religious order which I know from the inside. I also appreciate them to a great extent for their contribution to cross-cultural studies, or more precisely, for their involvement in religious and cultural dialogue. The best known example of these activities are the so called "Jesuit Reductions" which were founded and flourished in eastern Paraguay for about 150 years, until their destruction by the Spanish crown in 1767. The "Jesuit Reductions" were communities of local people ruled by Jesuits, which constitute a controversial chapter in the history of Latin America. They are variously described, either as socialist jungle utopias, or as authoritarian theocratic regimes. On the missions in colonial Latin America the Jesuits built some of their most original and influential foundations, which remains an episode in the history of Latin America.

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¹ John O'Malley in an email to me (May 20, 2011).

Another good example of Jesuit activity is the history of their mission in China. It is considered to be one of the most important events in the early history of the relations between China and the Western world. It could be described by four major characteristics: 1) a policy of adaptation to Chinese culture; 2) propagation of Christian doctrine “from the top down”; 3) using European science in order to attract the educated Chinese; and 4) openness and tolerance toward Chinese culture. This mission is a prominent example of successful relations between two cultures and belief systems in the pre-modern age. At the time of their peak influence, the members of the Jesuit delegation were considered some of the emperor’s most valued and trusted advisors, holding numerous prestigious posts in the imperial government (Standaert 2008, 172-173). Unfortunately, the policy of the Vatican made it impossible to implement this original method of cultural and religious dialogue in China in seventeenth and eighteenth century (Standaert 2012).

A different situation occurred in the sixteenth century Poland where the Jesuits were invited in 1564 to fight against the Reformation. From the beginning they started to play an important religious and also political role. The reasons for seeking help from the outside were multifarious. There was the growing popularity of the new religious ideas among Polish and particularly Lithuanian Catholics, where the powerful Radziwiłł family gave full support to the Calvinist Church (Obirek 2008). In addition, the first officially Lutheran country in Europe was founded in the year 1525 in the neighbourhood of Poland: Prussia, with an important intellectual centre in Königsberg. At that time the Polish episcopate was more interested in politics than in religious renovation of the Church. This fact is understandable if we remember that Polish Catholic bishops were, automatically, members of the parliament, and the primate of Poland had an important function in the period between the death of a king and the election of a new one as *interrex*—responsible for the legal aspect of the new king’s election.

Janusz Tazbir wrote in his article “Anti-Jesuit literature in Poland” that there is a need for a new perspective in dealing with the Jesuits’ past:

For long time there were those who looked on its history [Jesuits] through panegyric glasses, others only through pamphlets. Today we try to take the middle road, remembering that only indifference kills. In fact, pamphlets are usually written only about movements and people that leave a permanent sign on the history of politics and culture. (Tazbir 1993, 333)

If we take the number of pamphlets written against the Jesuits as a measure for their political and cultural importance, we, indeed, will be surprised. It is enough to think of the extraordinary popularity of *Monita secreta* written by the former Polish Jesuit Hieronim Zahorowski, which became a world bestseller and a source for many slanderous stereotypes about the Jesuits (Pavone 2005).

When the Jesuits finally arrived in Poland, they rapidly became the most dynamic element in the confrontation with the Reformation movement, which was carried out in various ways, from education to court preaching. The most decisive impact on this process was that of the first generation of the Polish Jesuits. Many entered the Society of Jesus in Rome and were educated at the Roman College. Some of the most important included: Jakub Wujek (1541-1597), an erudite Biblical scholar; his Polish translation of the Bible shaped the style of Polish Biblical language for centuries. Piotr Skarga (1536-1612), the author of *Lives of Saints*, which influenced enormously the religious imagination, not only of Poland, but of all the Slavic world. He was also the court preacher of Sigismund III for twenty-five years (1588-1611). Stanisław Warszewicki (1530-1591) who, before joining the Jesuit order, studied under Melanchton in Wittenberg; as a Jesuit he was sent as the papal envoy to Stockholm in 1574, when King John III of Sweden showed interest in becoming a Catholic. Warszewicki was also involved in educating the king's son Sigismund, the future king of Poland.

Those individuals were very important for the creation of a positive image of Jesuits. The next generations of Jesuits made an important contribution to Central and Eastern European culture. Let us recall just three names: Mateusz Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640), who was described as the Horace of Poland, the author of *Lycorum libri tres* ["Three Books of Lyrics"], and the court preacher of Władysław IV; Adam Adamandy Kochański (1631-1700), the courtier mathematician of John III Sobieski, who left extensive correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz; and Marcin Poczebout (1728-1810), also a mathematician and an astronomer, a member of the Royal Academy of Science (London), and of the French Royal Academy. The question of whether they were excellent scholars because they were Jesuits, or simply because of their personal talents, has remained open.

The fate of the Jesuits universities and schools was similar to the fate of the Society of Jesus as such. In some places they were welcomed and in some violently rejected. In the huge Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth they experienced

differentiated reception, from enthusiasm (in Vilnius) to open hostility (in Cracow). Indeed, in Cracow the Jesuits spent a lot of energy trying to fight the monopoly of the old *Akademia Krakowska* without any positive result, and in Vilnius they founded their own Academy, and created a cultural centre, which spread Western culture not only in Lithuania, but also in Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Russia. We are still far from a complete picture of the impact of Jesuit's education on Eastern and Central European culture. Nevertheless, we can say, following Eugenio Garin's opinion, that it was the education with a strong ideological aspiration, and probably it was also the reason why other denominations were so critical towards the Jesuits almost successful attempt to have an educational monopoly in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Garin 1957).

What made the Central and Eastern European situation of the Society of Jesus in eighteenth and nineteenth century unique was the suppression of the Order, in 1773 by the pope Clement XIV. In that year, two hundred members of the Order who worked as Jesuits in the Polish Commonwealth found themselves, after the first partition of Poland, henceforth part of Russia, as subjects of Tsarina Catharine II the Great. Most of them worked in Połock College, which soon became an Academy. The Tsarina, after visiting Połock and after a debate with her counselors, decided to preserve the Jesuits as teachers, and gave them extensive autonomy (Kadulska 2004). Thanks to her decision, the Society of Jesus survived.

Yet, in Prussia, the Jesuit educational system did not meet the expectations of Frederick the Great, who preferred to control all education systems, and after a few years he simply expelled the Jesuits from his territory. This explains why the fate of the Jesuits who became the subjects of Frederick the Great in Prussia was different from the fate of the Jesuits in Russia. This new attitude towards the Jesuit order after its Papal suppression could also be an interesting case study of the complex relationship between politics and religion. In the rest of Poland, under the Polish king Stanislaw August, most of the former Jesuits² became active in the Commission of National Education, founded in 1773 by the King himself. This fact can be seen as the Jesuits' contribution to the Polish Enlightenment. In fact, most of those who were prepared for teaching had made their studies in Western Europe, mainly in Italy and France. A good example is Marcin Poczobut, who after the suppression of the Society of Jesus became the rector of Vilnius Academy and later became actively involved in the Commission for National Education (Popłatek 1973).

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² After the suppression of the Order all the Jesuits were forced to look for new work.

There was a real paradox and unusual coincidence: Catholic religious order, which was known for its fidelity to the papacy, was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, and was saved by non-Catholic monarchs. And more than that: the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided between three neighbours—Orthodox Russia, Protestant Prussia and Catholic Austria (1772) and yet Jesuits, working in Russia (from 1773 till 1820) and Prussia (for a few years), could continue their activity, while in the Catholic Austria and the rest of the Polish Kingdom they were suppressed. This paradox was expressed wittily by Frederick the Great of Prussia: “despite the exertions of his Most Catholic Majesty of Spain, his Most Apostolic Majesty of Portugal, his Most Christian Majesty of France, and the Holy Roman Emperor, the Jesuits had been saved by his Most Heretical Majesty and her Most Schismatically Majesty” (Padberg 2000, 142). But in sixteenth and seventeenth century the Jesuits were part of the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and even more so—they were the decisive element of the successful Catholic reform.

The presence of the Jesuits in the royal courts of Europe has been extensively studied, but the historians did not pay enough attention to the Polish Commonwealth. The decisive impact of the Jesuits upon the religious situation began with their collaboration with the Polish king Stephen Bathory (1574-1584) who, as a fervent Catholic monarch, was very much interested in ideological support of the Society of Jesus. Therefore, he gave them full support in founding new colleges, including the most important educational institution, the *Academy of Vilnius* that he founded in 1579. Also his successor, Zygmunt (Sigmund) III (1588-1632), was educated by Jesuits, and was well known for his leaning toward the Society. Piotr Skarga, for example, was not only the court preacher for almost twenty-five years, but also a close friend of the royal family. It is likely that this close association of the Jesuits with the royal court contributed to the opinion that they were more interested in politics than in religion.

The reason why kings were looking for Jesuits as advisers, preachers and confessors was that the new religious order was strongly supporting the existing political system. To Skarga, the division between the state and the Church did not exist, because, in his opinion, both of them were supposed to serve the same purpose. One Church within one state—that was his idea. He was strongly influenced by biblical models, and he used the example of God as the model of kingship in the patristic tradition. God was said to recommend autocracy, or government under one leader. Such a leader is like God who alone rules heaven and earth. Strongly criticized, Skarga tried to confute the criticism of such

an idea by pointing out the differences between absolute dominion, based on God's law, and tyranny. Here he quoted the Old Testament tradition according to which Israel's kings ruled thanks to God's grace, and on the basis of His law (Obirek 1994).

One of the most characteristic qualities of the Society of Jesus is its ability to inculcate the Christian message in different cultural and religious contexts. As a matter of fact, this "inculturation" practice became a kind of trade mark of the Jesuits' pastoral activity, and was the cause of many conflicts with the Roman Curia, and it probably was one of the reasons why the Order was suppressed in 1773. Today it is accepted as a positive, and in a way a prophetic – policy of the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s (Standaert 1994). The most important intuition of the Jesuits related to their practice of inculturation was the realization that the Western form of Christianity which was only one of many possible ways to be a Christian. This realization may be obvious today, but in the sixteenth century it was viewed by many as heresy. In fact, there can be ambiguous results of a strategy of inculturation. The Polish, or Central and Eastern European experience can be an interesting case study. Perhaps it might be more appropriate to name inculturation a syncretic process. It is also important to remember that the Society of Jesus was a part of the history of Christianity, which was characterized by melting with European culture (Jenkins 2008). This perspective (Christianity identified with Western culture) was largely overcome by Vatican II, particularly through two small documents; one dedicated to the liberty of conscience *De libertate religiosa* and the second to the relationship of the Catholic Church to other religions *Nostra aetate* (O'Malley 2008). The most interesting consequences resulting from this new position of the Church were drawn by the French Jesuit Michel de Certeau (Davis 2008).

The Jesuits Order, as an institution, was much more a part of European political and cultural system of the sixteenth century than a religious community. The members of the Order gave priority to defending the existing western institution of the Catholic Church and its claim to be the embodiment of the only true explanation of the Christian message. This is also true concerning the Jesuit presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When Jesuits arrived in Poland, they intended to change Polish society, but with time they actually became a part of that society.

What I have in mind here is the phenomenon conventionally known as the sarmatization of Polish Catholicism. The concept was first used by Janusz Tazbir. For him more interesting than the question of the Jesuits' influence on

the Polish society is the question of the “sarmatization” of the Order’s members, and the price which the Jesuits paid for it. It seems that the Jesuits contributed to the construction of a theological justification for the concept of the state and its structure held by the majority of the *szlachta* (gentry). It seems that with the passing years they felt more and more at home with this concept, and became an integral part of the state. In other words, in the Jesuits’ balance of accounts for work accomplished in the seventeenth century it would be hard to overlook the fact that ultimately sarmatism had the upper hand of the Society’s cultural elite (Obirek 1999).

The concept of “Sarmatism”, familiar to Polish historiography, may need explanation: sarmatism—the influence of pre-Christians customs and behavior on the Christian society as a whole. To a similar phenomenon, although in different context, would draw attention De Certeau in the introduction to his *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

The ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonizers’ “success” in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. (Certeau 1988, XIII)

Obviously, the Polish Jesuits were not the “conquerors” of Poles, but in a way the final effect of their activity was similar to that of the Spanish colonizers in Latin America. Carl F. Starkloff, drawing attention to his experience in North America, elaborated the concept of theology based on syncretic process. For him the elements of the spirituality of indigenous Indian enriched the traditional Christian theology (Starkloff 2002).

The same could be said about the cultural impact of the Jesuits on Polish religiosity which is constructed of a mixture of Roman Catholicism and East European sentimentality. The Jesuits were not only contributing to the education of the Poles but they were also shaped by Polish customs. And exactly this evolution of the Order was seen with suspicion by the Vatican.

With the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 this cultural experiment came to its end, as it happened in China and Latin America. The short episode of collaboration of the Jesuits with Orthodox Monarch of Russia—Catherine the Great and the foundation of Academy of Połock—shows that the separa-

tion from the religious and political centre of Catholicism was very creative in paving new ways for being a religious community. Unfortunately, this tradition is almost completely forgotten and the present day activity of the Jesuits consists almost exclusively of providing commentary on the Vatican official documents.

In other parts of the world we can observe a plethora of successful attempts to elaborate a new form of theology in the spirit of seventeenth century tradition in Asia and Latin America. It is enough to mention a few names of liberation theologians like Ignation Ellacuria (1930-1989) assassinated (with his five Jesuit brothers) from San Salvador or Jon Sobrino (1938) also from San Salvador. Less known is Engelbert Mveng (1930-1995) from Cameroon, one of the first promoters of African liberation theology and considered to be the “father of the Church” in Africa. He coined two terms which aptly describe the way how Christianity was introduced in the African continent, namely “anthropological impoverishment” to describe the European colonization and “anthropological annihilation” to indicate the arrogance of Christian missionaries in Africa and their attitudes toward indigenous cultures and religions (Hinsdale 2008).

About forty years ago it seemed as if the Church was taking a new theological path with the declaration of “*Nostra aetate*” and “*De libertate religiosa*” which were mentioned above. Both documents were written by Jesuits. The first by Cardinal Augustin Bea, a German Jesuit, and the second by John Courtney Murray, an American Jesuit. For the first time Catholic theology spoke in a positive way about other religions, as well as on the capacity of human being to take responsibility of their religious choices. New language in theology was a sign of a new attitude toward the possibility of formulating religious conviction in words. I think that we can say that the Catholic Church has changed the paradigm of its view of other religions—it moved from religious exclusivism towards inclusivism or even pluralism (Dupuis 2001).

One of the most important Catholic thinkers to articulate this new way of thinking (independently of the Vatican II) was an American Jesuit Walter Ong (1912-2003). As far as I can see, he was the first Catholic theologian in the twentieth century who was looking for inspiration outside of Christian theology and took seriously the possibility to change religious conviction as an outcome of a dialogue with other cultures and religions. According to Ong, the centre of the Christian message should be the human being as such, namely an individual person, and not the Holy Scripture, or dogmatic formulations:

The person of every human being, for believers and non believers, lies in a way beyond statement. The “I” that any one of us speaks lies beyond statement in the sense that although every statement originates, ultimately, from an “I”, no mere statement can ever make clear what constitutes this “I” as against any other “I” spoken by any other human being. (Ong 1995, 20)

The theological consequences of this way of thinking are enormous. Namely, it means that it is not doctrinal formulations at the centre of theological reflection, but rather human beings. In other words, before we start a dialogue between religions, we have to realize that we meet as human beings.

How far this new approach will lead us, it is impossible to say. It seems that this kind of dialogue is the only way to avoid the dangerous aspects of any fundamentalism. Ong speaks about American culture, but his observation is also appropriate for the European context. Ong claims that each and every text should not be treated as a final truth that cannot be interpreted further. This conviction also applies to the Church’s doctrinal formulations. In Ong’s thinking we can find a basis, and a support, for a fundamental scepticism toward an uncritical acceptance of written tradition, including Christian one. In other words, what is needed is a new form of interreligious dialogue in which not the texts, but the people involved, will play the most important role.

There is a similar way of thinking in Karl Rahner’s writings. In 1954 he wrote an essay, entitled “Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang?” [“Chalcedon: Ending or Beginning”], for the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon, formulating the most important Christological concepts. As for the question of “ending or beginning” his answer was “both”! A dogmatic and clear formulation is, usually, the end of a long and painful process of searching for a theological solution as well as the beginning of a new understanding (Rahner 1963).

Rahner’s point is basically that we cannot look on a written text as dead letters, but rather must see it as a point of departure for a living and dynamic interpretation of the concrete Church community context. It is also important to emphasize that Karl Rahner was one of the most influential theologians during the debates of Vatican Council II and his interpretation of the documents is particularly significant (Rahner 1979). Speaking at the Weston School of Theology in 1979 Rahner stated: “The Second Vatican Council is, in a rudimentary form still groping for identity, the Church’s first official self-actualization *as* a world Church.” (Rahner 1979, 717). This search for identity is particularly salient in regard to other world religions. Rahner, as well as Ong, does not sanctify any single text, even holy one. Rather the opposite; both encourage the search

for new and more adequate theological and dogmatic formulations, and a new interpretation of the Holy Scripture.

In the same manner we should look upon the documents of the last ecumenical council—as the end of a long process of clarification, but also as the beginning of a new situation for the Church. The tormented history of the declaration *Nostra aetate* is well known and it is not our aim to rehearse it here. What is interesting for us, the readers, is the comment made by its main author, Cardinal Augustin Bea.³ His observation is very similar to Rahner's:

The Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions is indeed an important and promising beginning, yet no more than the beginning of a long and demanding way towards the arduous goal of a humanity whose members feel themselves truly to be sons and daughters of the same Father and act on this conviction. (Neudecker 1989, 289)

It is important to notice that *Nostra aetate* is seen as “an important and promising beginning.” It also means that it is only a starting point for a new approach toward other religions. In other words, traditional theology could be declared as no longer fitting to describe the current situation of the Christian religion among other world religions—a change is needed!

The proclamation of Vatican Council II by the Pope John XXIII was seen as a “new spring” in the history of the Church, and there was a great enthusiasm for the possible change. When he passed away during the Council, and his successor Paul VI influenced the sessions of the Council some theologian started to speak about “winter time” and the theological debate became frozen (Kueng 2011). The culmination of this process was the publication of the declaration “*Dominus Iesus*” by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 2000, which stated the universal meaning of salvation in Jesus Christ (*Dominus Iesus* 2000).

On the other hand, the positive openness toward other religions has brought a new perception of what it means to be a Catholic. I would like to recall the already classical division of the Church's history made by Karl Rahner:

Theologically speaking, there are three great epochs in Church history, of which the third has only just begun and made itself observable officially at Vatican II: First, the short period of Jewish Christianity. Second, the period of the Church in distinct cultural regions, namely, that of Hellenism and of European culture and civilization. Third, the period in which the sphere of the Church's life is, in fact, the entire world. (1979, 721)

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³ The comment was made at the press conference on the day of its promulgation on October 28th 1965.

The development of this third period is still in its initial stage, hence its result is unknown, and this also explains why the Catholic Church is still looking for its own identity as a world religion. One can learn a great deal from those Christians theologians who went to Asia and returned transformed by their exposure to Asian religions.⁴ Asia, in particular, is the place where Catholic theologians elaborate new christological approaches. For example, Jacques Dupuis, Belgian Jesuit who worked for many years in India, invented there the concept of “pluralistic inclusivism” (Dupuis 2001, 94).

Also theologians of the new generation, as Peter Phan, an American theologian from Georgetown University, writes in a similar spirit when he speaks about “being religious interreligiously” (Phan 2004), or about multiplying religious belonging. According to him:

There is then a reciprocal relationship between Christianity and the other religions. Not only are the non-Christian religions complemented by Christianity, but also Christianity is complemented by other religions. In other words, the process of complementation, enrichment and even correction is two-way or reciprocal. (Phan 2003, 502)

This theological insight is particularly important for the Jewish-Christian relation to which the declaration “Nostra aetate” was dedicated. Exactly to this perspective draws attention one of the most important Jewish theologian of twentieth century Abraham J. Heschel in his exquisite essay “No Religion is an Island”. From the many words of Heschel I would like to quote the final part of this famous lecture, in which he asks about the purpose of interreligious cooperation:

It is neither to flatter nor to refute one another, but to help one another; to share insight and learning, to cooperate in academic ventures on the highest scholarly level, and what is even more important, to search in the wilderness for well-springs of devotion, for treasures of stillness, for the power of love and care of [humankind]. (Heschel 1996, 249-250)

In this search for the new fields of mutual cooperation Michel de Certeau could be a real master.

Michel de Certeau was born in 1925 and joined the Jesuit Order in 1950. At the beginning of his academic activity he wrote extensively on the history
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⁴ Like: Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths, Enomiya Lassalle, Heinrich Dumoulin, William Johnston, Anthony de Mello, Raimundo Panikkar.

of French Jesuits and particularly on mysticism. Yet, from the time of the student riots in Paris in May 1968 de Certeau changed his interest into daily life practice, although his interest in Christianity remained constant. As Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt wrote:

In many ways the work of de Certeau displays a sensibility which seems characteristically postmodern: an awareness of the inescapableness of linguistic representation, an overturning of traditional hierarchies of presence and absence, a recognition of the shattering of meta-narratives, and, perhaps above all, a concern with otherness. Yet unlike many postmodern thinkers, de Certeau's sensibilities are profoundly marked by Christian faith and tradition. (Bauerschmidt 1997, 135)

Luce Giard, who for many years collaborated with de Certeau and who takes care of his writing, stated that: "de Certeau belonged to this minority of historians who are not afraid of calling for a thorough rethinking of the prerequisites and presuppositions which rule the profession as a social body and guide its intellectual commitment" (Giard 2000, 18). And it was also Giard who added an important consequence connected to this approach toward writing history: "For followers of this line, historiography stands as an elucidatory activity which is inherent to any writing of history. They believe that the historiographical debate opens to historians a royal path toward clarification and validation of their craft (Giard 2000, 18).

Stephen Greenblatt considers that *The Possession at Loudun* is the masterpiece of de Certeau's historical writings. Originally published in French in 1970 the book is a kind of passage from the old to the new style which is aptly captured by Greenblatt:

Committed. to justice, decency, and the unvarnished truth, de Certeau has no interest in remystifying a shameful episode. On the contrary, he ruthlessly uncovers the tangle of bad faith, ignorant fanaticism, and conspiratorial lies—but he makes us feel the full force of what was at stake and what was in the process of being forever lost. (Greenblatt 2000, XI)

The abovementioned qualities of de Certeau's style are even visible in his political pamphlet published in May 1968, after the students' revolt in Paris. Some of his observations were later published by Luce Giard, first in French in 1994 and a few years later in English as *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*.

The book is a good illustration of the positive attitude of de Certeau towards the students' expectations (Certeau 1998). Some of these essays were

written as a response to the revolutionary events of May 1968, others as his response to Latin America experience, and also as fruits of his cultural and political activities in France. Altogether, they established de Certeau's public reputation as an intellectual with great insight into the ramifications and possibilities of those revolts. These essays show de Certeau's political thought, particularly his preoccupation with social discrimination and his definitive departure from theological thinking. His preoccupation with diverse language, labeled by him "heterologies" helped him to include in anthropological reflections all kinds of manifestation of daily life; from cooking to walking down the street. In this sense, de Certeau was different from Walter Ong who was mainly interested in relation between orality and literacy (Ong 1982).

In 1971 Michel de Certeau published his dissertation *La rupture instaurationnelle ou le christianisme dans la culture contemporaine* ["The Founding Rupture, or Christianity in the Contemporary World"] which could be seen as the beginning of a new approach toward the heritage of the Jesuits and of Christianity in Europe. No wonder that this new approach was not accepted by Institut Catholique in Paris as a doctorate thesis in theology. De Certeau was not interested in Christian theology, but he was stating that in the modern time we have to do away with "refunding rupture" (Certeau 1971) and we need to start a new way of reflection on the presence of religion. In other words, he was asking: how is Christianity thinkable today at all? (Certeau 1997).

De Certeau does not question Christianity as a religious system, but shows that the daily practice has nothing to do with official doctrine: "The history of religion has gradually shown, as it has become more and more sensitive to the contribution of sociology, that the practice of Christians has always been, and remains today, something other than official laws and theological teaching" (Certeau 1997, 152). Therefore, there is no point studying the history of Christian institutions, for example—Jesuits, and its doctrinal documents, but one would rather concentrate on the daily life practices. Even the most important and funding event for Christianity should be seen in this perspective:

The death of Jesus and his resurrection within a multiplicity of Christian languages made and continues to make a faithful freedom *possible*. But only new departures manifest and will continue to manifest Christianity as still *alive*. That is the first question: no longer to know whether God exists, but to *exists* as Christian communities. It is impossible to be Christian without a common risk, without the creation of a new divergence in relation to our past and to our present, without being alive. (Certeau 1997, 155)

It is not easy to grasp the real meaning of this statement. But perhaps Natalie Zemon Davis is right identifying de Certeau's words as a kind of departure from Christianity in its traditional form: "Feeling the Christian ground on which I thought I was walking disappear, seeing the messengers of an ending, long time under way, approach, recognizing in this my relation to history as a death with no proper future of its own, and a belief stripped of any secure site, I discover the violence of an instant" (Davis 2008, 59). Davis is calling this statement "his own inner dialogue about how to validate his religious belief other than through Church authority" ((Davis 2008, 59).

I think that Michel de Certeau found in it a new community, similar to this of the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz. Indeed, in "General Introduction" to *The Practice of Everyday Life* de Certeau quoted Witold Gombrowicz and named him "an acute visionary" and one of the representatives of a new sensitivity, together with Robert Musil and Sigmund Freud (Certeau 1988, XXIV). In fact Gombrowicz was the first in Polish literature who, after losing his faith in God, concentrated his life and literary oeuvre on daily life, and on human relations. It is particularly evident in his *A Kind of Testament* where he presented the main goal of his literary activity: "*The Marriage* [Gombrowicz's drama, SO] should become a Mount Sinai, a place full of mystical revelations; a cloud, pregnant with a thousand meanings; a galloping work of imagination and intuition; a Grand Guignol, full of play; a puzzling *missa solemnis* on the threshold of time, at the foot of an unknown altar" (Gombrowicz 1973, 65). In other words, in *A Kind of Testament* Gombrowicz presented a sort of new religion, this time without God: "I wanted to show humanity in its transition from the church of God to the church of man" (Gombrowicz 1973, 97). As I have stated in another essay:

Gombrowicz the atheist was not resigning from a new revelation and new rituals, he himself brought them to life in his writings, there adherents can find an explanation for a new religion, a religion without God. Its essence is responsibility in front of another person, God was left outside the horizon of his interest. Even if in his stories and dramas he created new rituals it is obvious that what is important is their impact on other people, and their importance lays exactly in this. Therefore, ethics replaced religion. (Obirek 2010, 254)

Similar evolution I observe in Michel de Certeau, although I can understand Luce Giard who insists that it is not appropriate to call him "former Jesuit" (Giard 1987, IV), despite the fact that his anthropology is far from the orthodox approach.

The impact of his thought on Catholic theology is limited, or perhaps does not exist at all. We may think of many reasons why it is so, but the most important is that de Certeau saw the history of Christianity as a part of ideological construction of Western Christianity, and proposed an interesting way to deconstruct it. The most important declaration in this regard was his already mentioned *The Practice of Everyday Life* in which de Certeau declares his interest in the present moment instead of the past:

By adopting the point of view of enunciation—which is the subject of our study—we privilege the act of speaking: according to that point of view, speaking operates within the field of linguistic system; it effects an appropriation, or reappropriation, of language by the speaker; it establishes a *present* relative to a time and place; and it posits a *contract with the other* (the interlocutor) in a network of places and relations. (Certeau 1988, XIII)

His protest against Christian tradition is particularly visible when de Certeau shows the culture of writing and education as a way to control and as a source of violence (Certeau 1988, 139). Even the Reformation, as a movement based on the return to the scriptural sources of Christianity, and European Enlightenment with its axiom that theory must transform nature “become violence, cutting its way through the irrationality of superstitious peoples or religions still under the spell of sorcery” (Certeau 1988, 144). Naturally, in this analysis of social and cultural reality we can detect the affinity with Michel Foucault and even Marxist thought. On many pages of *The Practice of Everyday Life* these inspirations are evident. Also in other books like *Culture in the Plural* and *Heterologies. Discourse on the Other* the interaction with modern and even postmodern thought is evident (Certeau 1997; 1986). This analysis, though, we have to leave for another occasion.