

## **Even if the world ignores its own heart**

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The unity of the church is not set over against the unity of the world because the church is not in a relationship of opposition to the created world. She is the icon of what humanity will become. The church is in this respect the meaning of the world, its intelligibility, or in the very significant expression of Origen, the 'cosmos of the cosmos'. The church is still the heart of the world even if the world ignores its heart. For this reason her life is symbolic in the strongest sense of the term. She recognizes the unity of the world by her own unity revealed through the Spirit until the parousia, when the world and the church will be the one spouse of the Lord of glory.

Certainly the world and the church can best be seen in an identical destiny of involvement, in a historic will to build up the earth. But the church through the mysterious bond which ties her to Christ, through the Spirit who reveals his plans to her and who judges history, lives in a permanent tension with the world. She herself is the tension of the world. For this reason, she is always a thorn in the flesh of history. She proclaims a light which is to come, a kingdom which is not of this world. She proclaims the hope of a salvation which is given to her, which she awaits in prayer, which she tastes in the sacrament, and which is not purely and simply identified with the energy of men building their own city. The church is plunged in a bath of eternity which no common work of humanity could fully manifest. Her relation with the end is not a simple, ascending linear history. There is in her a catastrophic dimension, for in the world of nature a split has appeared which only the peace of the Kingdom will heal.

Hence the quest of the Christian is not ultimately identifiable with any other quest. The Christian is a disturbing element who questions every settled order, who is more at home in the movement than in the 'establishment.' He demands a constant acceleration of achievement and is for this reason regarded as a corrosive element. That is why he is never accepted by his own people, by those who have transformed struggle into a left-wing or right-wing legalistic system. At the very heart of this theology of communion between the church and the world there exists an ethic of rupture or at least an ethic of distance. The Christian has done well to leave the temple to live out the mediation of Christ in work, art, and politics. To him a presence of Christ is revealed in the world of man, and it is through this cosmic priesthood with which the Christian is endued that all human aspirations to justice and beauty ascend towards the heavenly temple. He knows that by taking the body of the Lord he hears within the whole body of humanity. He pledges an infinite compassion of this humanity. And he is ready to lose his soul so that this humanity may recover its freedom. In this gesture he shakes off from the body of the church the dust of the synagogue, its ritualistic lethargy, but he is simultaneously crucified by the companions of his earthly loyalty on the cross of an irremediable solitude.