

The Temple of the Living God

In Jesus' thought, the Temple of Jerusalem will be destroyed, and in Paul's thought, this Temple has no importance anymore because God doesn't live in temples made with hands. God replaced the temple by living in people himself. "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people".

When he says "I will live with them", he means that he will make them a Church for him and a holy nation as he lives in the heart of the believer through the Holy Spirit. As for his saying "And I will be their God, and they will be my people", it is in the present tense i.e. a continuous act, and this indicates that God's love to his people will stay forever and the Lord's divinity appears through his constant attention towards his people. This Lord will have his own people when these people know that they are loved. There is no "people" in the social sense. A nation for God will be formed when people respond to God's love by obeying the Lord. God loves, and people obey his words. God forms his people; they can't form themselves.

This special thing that these people have, i.e. God's love, pushes them to accept the Lord's word: "Come out from them and be separate". This is a moral separation through faith from paganism and not a social separation because the civil and political societies must still exist, but some people are for God through faith and others don't have this faith.

God clarifies one of the faces of his divinity which is that he becomes a father for us and we become his sons and daughters. This is the family of the Father as Paul names it. This is the new birth or the birth from above as the Lord described it in the fourth Gospel. And if we were the Father's family, we are asked to continue in this family, and therefore the Apostle commands us to purify ourselves from "everything that contaminates the body and spirit". Some sins are committed through the body, and others are committed only through the soul such as pride, aversion and all kinds of hatred.

When we try to stay away from every sin, "we make holiness perfect out of reverence for God" because holiness is trying to be like God who is pure from all wrong and sin. In this sense the Lord said: "Be Holy, because I am Holy". This requires having reverence for God. Educationally, the New Testament still had the thought of having fear for God, having fear from punishment. There is no joking with God; there is no softness even if we had a special status with him. Fearing God doesn't mean being afraid in his presence but means being serious in fulfilling the Lord's commands. There is no possible compromise between you and sin. You must know that sin is death, and that your life with the Lord requires obeying all

his words and living with him in full trust and dependence and asking for his mercy.

In the New Testament, we continue to have fear from punishment and at the same time we hope to get the reward through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us and to taste the Kingdom in us from now and hope to gain it on the last day.

We become together the people of God through ecclesiastic communion and through God's transfiguration in the Church and in individuals together. The important thing is to feel that we are his sons and daughters because we have known him as an embracing father for us, and become able to tell him: "Our Father who art in heaven" because we have tasted through grace his daily renewal to us through his grace.

Metropolitan George of Mount Lebanon