

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren and Friends:

Respectful greetings to you all. Time passes by very swiftly, and it is already my turn to write the Monthly Letter again.

The daily news about the state of this world is, to say the least, most discouraging. Frankly speaking, nothing good is foretold for the immediate future. Frightening news is coming from everywhere, and fear seems to overcome all hearts.

And yet, how privileged we are! We are physically blessed with shelter, clothing, and daily food. Many people take these things for granted and therefore unscrupulously throw away the one- or two-day-old bread.

Via the news media, we know that only a few hours away (by plane) are millions of homeless people who wear rags and starve. "But after all," people reason, "their color is different, they belong to another racial stock, and they do not look at life as we do. The idea that we could find ourselves in similar conditions is ludicrous."

And yet, in our affluent society — where principles become more and more perverted, schooling inclines more and more toward paganism, advertising is more and more deceitful, and hate and rebellion become more and more rampant — some physical and material restrictions, premonitory signs of dark days, are beginning to be required.

How will we react? For, we also may have to endure some restrictions and face some difficulties. Even the apostle Paul said he had suffered hunger, nakedness, abuses, etc. (I Cor. 4:11).

We were called and chosen by Almighty God to know the only principles which will bring peace and blessings to the underprivileged, agonized nations of this world. We know we were called and the Truth was given to us. We know God does not lie or change, but allows tests to try and purify us. Yet — even with this knowledge — how quickly we become angry, depressed, discouraged, and worried when we encounter small difficulties in our lives! In other words, at times we find our crosses too heavy and we complain. Did we take lightly the statement of

Jesus Christ to those wanting to follow Him? ". . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Christ warns us that in following Him we shall not finish the course without difficulties and trials.

But how can we be sure that we shall be able to pursue our present walk in this sick world and reach the ultimate goal? In Psalm 91:14-16, we read promises which are most encouraging:

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Verses 3 to 7 of this Psalm inform us of trying conditions — very hard and perilous circumstances. But God says: ". . . I will deliver him; I will protect him I will answer him . . ." (verses 14-15, RSV). And He even gives us an example to show how far we can rely on Him — "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee" (verse 7).

However rocky the road may become at any time — however depressing difficulties or circumstances may be — God has inexorably bound Himself, by His Word, to protect us, deliver us, and even be with us in trouble. But, brethren, note that all this is conditional: "Because he hath set his love upon me" It does not say, "Because he became embittered, because he became discouraged, because he complained." Brethren, this is what many of us did in the past; and I am afraid there are still, in the recesses of our own minds and hearts, traces of these tendencies which are totally opposed to God's requirements. The circumstances we went through in the Worldwide Church of God revealed a significant fact: the frailty of our love for God. He gave us the pearl of great price, and then we were put to the test. God wanted to know whether we would keep intact that pearl — for, such tenacity is the ingredient which proves we love Him with all our strength, heart, soul, and mind. What a failure! For a while, we neglected to fulfill in our lives the basic requirement which God defines here: "Because he hath set his love upon me"

Thanks be to God, who loved us more than we loved Him. Once again, He first loved us and delivered us from the doctrinal deviation, contempt, and hatred which existed in our lives. God put us back on the right track. But Christ's command remains: We must bear our crosses while setting our love upon God.

How is God going to determine whether we love Him? Jesus Christ Himself gives us the answer: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). That is, we must live by the Commandments, bringing our daily lives into conformity with that way. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (verse 21). Thus, God's way of life was given to us and we accepted it — now it is our personal responsibility to keep that way, thereby proving our love for God. In his first epistle, John was divinely inspired to write: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:4-5). John further shows that when we manifest disrespect or a feeling of animosity toward a brother, while saying we love God, we deceive ourselves: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4:20-21).

There is nothing new in what has been said heretofore. All of us know these texts by heart. But to know a principle is one thing, and to live it is quite another. We all desire to acquire knowledge; however, the experiences and circumstances we undergo during the year reveal whether we are really able to LIVE these principles, so that in the day of trouble God can say this: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him" Brethren, let us not be too easily satisfied with ourselves — saying, "My life is not so bad." Are we able to truly love a brother who has offended us? Could we repeat Jesus Christ's example, sincerely addressing a Judas as "Friend"? Our Bible tells us to walk as Christ walked. Therefore, we must love as Christ loved.

Can we love God when we are tried or in trouble? Can we, in the face of trial, manifest the attitude Job had when he lost all his possessions and even his children? He ". . . worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:20-22). And for him, the test was not over. His whole body was to endure the atrocious pain of boils. But the Bible records that ". . . In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). Job is the example of a man who loved God. God was able to say of him: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him" And then, as the end of the book shows, Job received from the Lord more blessings than ever before.

Brethren, let us ask this question: How do we love God? Do we have the capability to thank Him when He tries us? Or do we complain

and sin with our lips? Are we happy and thankful to celebrate God's Holy Days in the place which He chooses, or do we manifest discontent and dissatisfaction? Can we receive and fulfill a command of God without complaining? If so, we show one of the proofs of our love for God.

When God ordered Abram to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, ". . . Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him . . ." (Gen. 12:4). When God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his only son, he did not argue; rather, ". . . Abraham rose up early in the morning . . . and went unto the place of which God had told him" (Gen. 22:3). Abraham loved God. Therefore it is written, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23).

Do we have this capability to obey without complaining? When we have to go through relatively hard circumstances, can we be patient and uncomplaining — knowing that ". . . all things work together for good to them that love God . . ." (Rom. 8:28)?

Brethren, as I said at the beginning of this letter, frightening news is coming from everywhere and fear seems to overcome all hearts. Gold is regarded by many as their last hope; its price is prohibitive, but it is in great demand, for people think that yellow metal will ensure their subsistence.

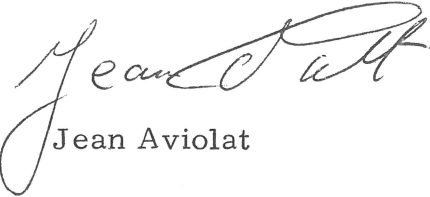
What about us, the called of God? Do we dread the future? Are we afraid of encountering thorns on the road and getting hurt by them? Do we find our crosses too heavy to bear? When we are tried, do we think that death would be preferable? Are our hearts saddened and afflicted?

Brethren, Jesus Christ sustained the most cruel martyrdom for us. He was nailed to the stake and died to redeem us. Therefore, let us go on with courage. Let us not become weary in loving God — but rather, in all circumstances, be faithful and loyal to His way of life. God remains faithful! He knows our strength and leads our steps. The day is coming when the Lord will make all things new. Let us patiently wait on Him, without complaining. God wants to know whether we love Him. And when we have shown proof of our love for Him, He will say the following:

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

We shall see the salvation of God! We shall live in the New Jerusalem, the city of God — where pain, sorrow, hatred, contempt, disease, torment, and tears will be banished forever. If we continue to love God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds, we need not dread the future. For us, God reserves a glorious and magnificent future where we shall live in joy and peace for eternity. Once again, let us wait patiently and not complain. Let us merely be obedient, and pray for one another without ceasing.

With all my affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Aviolat". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends across the name.

Jean Aviolat