

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Greetings from all of us here in Europe. After a very hot summer with violent thunderstorms here, we are almost at the end of the year 1982. And yet it seems as though Mr. and Mrs. Cole have just left us. Their stay among us was appreciated by all the brethren. It gave each of us the privilege to be strengthened, to receive abundant spiritual food.

This is now the season when the crops are gathered in. In His great mercy and kindness God made the earth once again produce the fruits which are necessary for our subsistence. But this season is also the time when God commands us to present ourselves before Him on His Holy Days.

For the small group here, the Feast of Ingathering will take place in the little resort area called Kandersteg. To all of us, it is another opportunity to see where we stand, what are the fruits of the Spirit which we have produced, and what we do with the knowledge which is given to us. It is therefore ever imperative to examine our own lives. Do we produce good fruits? Or do we still bear a lot of thorns? Through His Word, God tells us that He will gather the good seed only.

Fellowshipping with one another for eight days allows us to express our gratitude to God, to offer Him our ingathered fruit by showing the kind of respect, affection, understanding, and mercy which we owe to one another.

Brethren, how often during the past year have we been blessed? But how often, also, have we taken this for granted? Sometimes to such extent that we come to think God does not bless us anymore. When we are ill and we ask for an anointed cloth or an anointment, we tend to take healing for granted, rather than consider it as a blessing. We forget that hospitals are replete with people who are in suffering, and that we could be one of them. We forget that many homes are broken as a result of divorce or children who have become drug addicts. If God had not intervened in our lives, we could be from one of these broken homes. Taking everything for granted is indeed a manifestation of ingratitude.

In modern Israel, many throw away their excess of food without even a guilty conscience. Because they take it for granted.

What about us, the called of God? What do we do with all the spiritual food which God gives to us? Do we absorb only the food which we like, and set aside the rest? That is, do we convince ourselves that certain things do not apply to us and consequently we do not have to put them into practice in our lives?

In Amos 4:6, God speaks of famine. Brethren, let us realize that for the majority of God's people there is now a famine of God's Word. And again, if God had not intervened in our lives, we could be part of those who are deprived of spiritual food. To receive every Sabbath, every Holy Day, all year long, an abundance of spiritual food, is this to be taken for granted?

In Amos 4:12, God warns us that we had better prepare to meet our God. He said, ". . . prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Are we prepared to meet our God? During the past year have we prepared ourselves with zeal, or have we regressed and thrown away the food which we do not like, as people in this world throw away physical food?

Do we appreciate that which this Feast of Tabernacles represents — God's government? Do we rejoice or does Christ's coming frighten us? In II John 1:8 we read: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought . . . ." We must then be diligent, we must continuously fulfill our responsibilities without despising one crumb or one iota of the spiritual food which God gives to us. God warns us because He has something in store for us, brethren. A great purpose, a great and marvelous crown of righteousness which will be given to each human being who uses wisely this food in his own life. Our God blesses us continuously, but we must not take it for granted. Jesus Christ made a statement which shows that all things should not be taken for granted. In Luke 8:18, He says: "Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away (R. S. V.)."

People who have not taken John's statement seriously, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought . . . , " have not prepared to meet their God. They think (taking actions for granted) about others rather than themselves. And yet the only way to come to see clearly where we stand is by self-examination. James said: ". . . be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1:22). Notice: Hearing is insufficient. Jesus Christ's warning is to take heed how we listen.

The Feast of Tabernacles is certainly not a time to relax, to yawn and doze during services. It is the Ingathering Feast, and God the Father who is the husbandman wants the branches to bear fruit. We must then assimilate the food which is given to us, and put it into practice. We may not be able to put everything perfectly into practice. But let us strive to be honest, to have more love, to be sincere, to fulfill the Ten Commandments in all their ramifications, within the full scope of God's Word itself. If we do so, brethren, we shall be branches attached to the vine, and we shall bear good fruits; we shall be prepared to meet our God and we shall not be frightened when Jesus Christ appears.

Brethren, all of us here wish you a most blessed Feast of Tabernacles. As we know, eight days are short-lived: We love and fellowship with one another and then leave one another. But that is our lot in the present life and world where everything is uncertain, unstable, and temporary. But happy are those who by faith wait for a new homeland where nothing will decline or change anymore.

We must be able to say, and then without deceiving ourselves: "I have prepared to meet my God. Come, Lord Jesus!"

May such happiness be yours, dear brethren and friends. May the above be the portion of you all whom we love.

With the affection and most sincere regards of us all here:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Jean Aviolat