

Church of God, The Eternal

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Greetings To You All, Brethren:

We have reached the end of another winter; here in Europe the weather was relatively mild; up to the end of January we had more rain than snow. It was only in February that it really started to snow. Generally speaking, all the brethren here have had good winter months.

For the elect of God, a new year is like adding another link to the never interrupted chain of the Truth of God. We can indeed be absolutely confident that God will not change His plan and the purpose for which He called us. His promises are immutable, and His Holy Days are a proof thereof in their own right.

God Almighty never intended that we should start a new year with the heavy load of doubts, misgivings, and anxieties -- under the yoke of our sins. Not at all! The first thing of which God reminds us each year is freedom from the burden of our sins. God wants to pull down the wall which we have built during the past year with our doubts, weaknesses, agitations, mistakes, and pride -- our lack of submission to His Law which delivers us from the bondage of the self. This is why the Bible says that God's Law is a Law of liberty. God wants us to start this new year feeling washed, purified, made white, and cleansed from all the elements of the wall which separated us from Him.

Billions of human beings around us worry about their lives, their families, and the circumstances which surround them; and we are naturally inclined to do the same. But we, brethren, were called by God and are going through the process of conversion. Being motivated by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can understand what God expects of us. In Isaiah 1:4, we read, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." How tragic! Human beings are called and chosen by God; but because of the iniquities and corruption present in their lives, God says of them, "they are gone away backward." We had better be different, brethren. God renews such an opportunity for us each year. Through His beginning Holy Days He gives us the possibility of moving forward and not backward.

Why did we keep another Passover of the Lord? To be reminded each year of God's command to His people. When we were baptized we were spiritually cleansed and given a clear conscience (I Pet. 3:21). This is why the Bible tells us, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:16-18). The God whom we serve is not a man that He should lie. Neither does He harbor feelings of rancor. Quite the contrary! Through the Passover,

God beseeches His people, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). Brethren, let us, as the called of God, not be easily satisfied with our conduct; let us really search our lives and let us come truly to respect God's Truth, the life of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of God the Father who gave His Son as a ransom while we all were yet sinners. Let us respect our call in faith and let us manifest the desire to endure until the end day, growing unto perfection. In Psalm 103:8-14, we read, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." God does not want us to continually drag the heavy ball and chain of our sins behind us. He liberates us both spiritually and mentally, provided we are willing to repent before Him with a right spirit and heart.

As soon as God removes our transgressions from us, He makes us understand through the Days of Unleavened Bread that we must change our conduct. That is, we must not repeat the same mistakes which would only build another wall of separation between God and us. Let us not allow ourselves to be affected by corruption, hatred, resentment, jealousy, contempt, and all the terrible and filthy things which prevail around us. Let us live this new year in honesty, in the simplicity of God's Truth. Let us be honest, kind, merciful, and understanding. Let us learn to forgive as God forgives. For, let us remember that in the day of the final judgment God will use the same measure as we did. He will forgive as we did.

God grants us life so that we can learn how to do well. And if we present ourselves before God in loyalty and faithfulness to His Truth, our sins are completely buried under the shed blood of Jesus Christ. God gives us such a privilege to be reminded of this at the beginning of the year. We can then enter this new year being filled with confidence and fervor to live God's will.

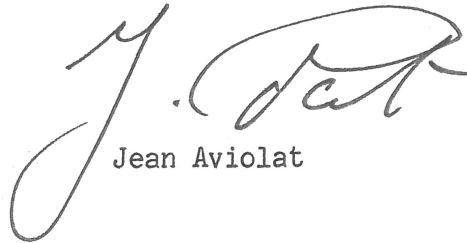
As years go by, living can become more difficult. Many of us go through all kinds of painful circumstances. I am aware of that, and with you, brethren, I suffer the same things. But let us look back. Up to this very day God has blessed us; we have always found Him faithful. Suffering may not be over. Trials may still be difficult, but, brethren, let us show courage, and worship our God by our faithfulness. For, God still wants to bless us. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Ps. 86:5). Whenever sorrow is on our path, He comforts us. He has helped us to bear the weight of pains and contempt, and whatever happens to us our God is our Comforter. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted" (Isa. 49:13). Up to this day we have been able to lean on His powerful hand for the necessary support. The future of this world may be dark and uncertain, but God will remain our light. And the night will ultimately give way to the dawn. Brethren, let us rejoice, for God is with us. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

Day after day, if we are ill, He gives us His peace as a balm for our pains. Bad days may be extremely long, but let us not lose confidence. Let us show to those who do not know it that God is still our help. "Great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make them stumble" (Ps. 119:165, RSV). Brethren, during this new year let us be firm and valiant. Up to this day God has been our support, and as an aid remains on our side. ". . . The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (II Chron. 15:2). Ever valiant in the Truth, let our courage honor our God who still blesses us. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22).

Thank you for the faith which you manifest in the promises of our God. Thank you for your goodwill. Let us remember that we are not our own, but we belong to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

We, your brothers and sisters in Europe, greet you; and rest assured that our affection for you all is only increasing as years go by.

Sincerely and respectfully,

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