

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren and Friends:

Warmest greetings on these beautiful days of Spring. The snow and cold are defeated once again. After being completely dormant for several months, nature has reawakened. Flowers which are so delicate that they can be crushed by the hand of a little child have opened their buds to show their purity and brightness. How beautiful they are! So pleasing to the eye. Birds, too, have started chirping again; early in the morning their songs fill the air; it is their own way of expressing their gratitude to God, for they, too, triumphed over the hard trials of Winter.

Job said, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:7-10). As a matter of fact, each season shows us the power of our Creator. Although man has been incapable of fulfilling his duty -- taking care of such a magnificent creation -- although he continues to defile it more and more, despite his behavior meadows put on their charming finery year after year, dormant buds come back to life in Spring, flowers open up, and birds sing. What a glorious example and witness God set before our very eyes constantly! Job adds, "With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13). Thus, all around us we see birth, growth, death, and rebirth. Despite all the difficulties and problems which exist every Spring, God's creation manifests its revival.

Brethren, it must be the same for us spiritually. Every Spring gives us the opportunity of manifesting to God a renewal of attitude, mind, and heart in order to obey and serve Him better throughout the new year. Like the creation of God which surrounds us, we have to face certain difficulties and problems; but these things which God allows in our lives are of the importance which we attach to them, in the sense that God, being above all these things, is not going to let us be tried beyond our strength. As God works with every one of us, He creates situations to refine us, but He sees to it that every one can

bear them. So the Apostle Paul tells us, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13). We are also told, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

But besides the means by which God refines and trains us, there are problems and difficulties which are most harmful to God's people. They can be likened to the pollution of nature around us. Brethren, how often are our lives polluted with problems which we create for ourselves through bad and corrupt thoughts which encumber our minds, plague us, and can ultimately lead one called of God to become embittered against his brethren and eventually against God and His Truth? It seems almost impossible for us to control our minds perfectly and give them the right orientation in order to subdue our natures completely -- natures which fill us with self-righteousness in such a way that we hold whatever crosses our minds to be right and good. Satan knows that if the called of God do not struggle against this tendency they will end up someday questioning what was given to them and thus destroy themselves. Therefore, it is no wonder that Satan has become extremely active; his goal is to destroy God's people, and he undertakes it through the natural mind of human beings. Every time we let our minds and hearts become encumbered with criticism toward others, bitterness, negative thoughts, self-righteousness, we show that we are bowing down before the god of this world and are going contrary to God's will.

Brethren, the most tragic state into which one called of God can sink is when he comes to question the Way of life which was given to him. And he usually tries to justify his attitude by searching for technical things, ". . . endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith. . ." (I Tim. 1:4).

God does not require great intellectual capacities of human beings so that they will come to understand His Way of life and see His Plan. In fact, whatever our intelligence, we can understand only what God wants us to understand. And the more we manifest this renewal -- which I talked about -- in order to get closer to God and obey Him better, the greater understanding and the stronger faith we will be given. Jesus Christ made the following statement, ". . . I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25-26). Many have been enlightened; they have understood the beauty and simplicity of God's Way of life; they have seen the greatness and splendor of God's Plan through the Holy Days; they have beheld God's power through

the countless interventions which have taken place in their lives; they have tasted God's mercy and kindness; they have experienced God's patience and compassion in their lives; and how many other things are there which are living proofs that God has called them to become members of His family!

Again, brethren, to question what was given to us, what we have lived for years, is tragic behavior which will eventually destroy us.

Let us remember that the difficulties which we encounter because of our obedience to God's Way of life are of the importance which we attach to them according to the level of our faith, since God is above all these things and can intervene when and how He wants to. For example, in Acts 16 we see the attitude and behavior of two men who, after having been beaten, were momentarily in prison. We read, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). These men were fully aware that they were partakers of Christ's sufferings; they did not withdraw into themselves; on the contrary they praised God, knowing that He could deliver them from such a situation at any moment -- which He did. In like manner God intervened in our lives to deliver us from the dungeon of ignorance and darkness by giving us the understanding of His Plan and a Way which is going to lead us to the full development of a balanced and worthwhile life and, as the final reward, eternal life. Furthermore, God, knowing that human beings of themselves -- whatever strength and capabilities they claim to have -- are simply incapable of remembering and living these things, filled us with the power of His Spirit so that we could be led in the Way of Truth. Jesus Christ said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . ." (John 16:13).

Brethren, to question what was given to us is to accuse Jesus Christ of being a liar; it is to deny the Spirit which God gave us so that we would be guided into all Truth; it is a blasphemy against the Spirit of God. Christ said, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy [Spirit] shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy [Spirit], it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31-32). Brethren, let us not take this risk; let us not allow ourselves to be deceived by the arrogance of our natural mind to the point of speaking against the Holy Spirit while thinking that we do what is right and pleasing to God. Every natural thought must be severely judged on the basis of the Truth (revealed) and brought into subjugation to the simplicity of God's Way. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the

living God" (Heb. 3:12). Prudence is imperative indeed. We had better use and control our minds in the way which God expects of us.

As nature around us manifests its revival, can we so manifest in our lives the purity and brightness of that which God gave us? Can we live confidently and honor God as David did? "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" (Ps. 138:1-3). Yes, God reassures us year after year by the fulfillment of His promises in all His creation. The day is coming when God will renew and revive us -- adorn with beauty and youthful vitality those whom He finds faithful. And even when our bodies fade like the flowers of the field and return to dust, they will do so only to sleep until they rise someday holy, immortal, and brilliant.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2). Great will be the reward for such a man.

In this Spring, 1986, God reminds us that His promises stand and that He has given us the privilege of receiving this reward someday. Brethren, may it be yours and may I share it with you. This is my greatest wish for you all.

With all my affection and respect,

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