

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

Switzerland
Case Postale 2 701
CH 1002 Lausanne

Canada
P. O. Box 76946, Station "S"
Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5T3

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Dearest Brethren:

I am writing you these few lines during the last week of February, since it is my turn to write the *Monthly Letter*. By the time it travels through the mail, and is translated and printed, April will be here; time goes so fast.

Here Winter was cold; we still have a little snow, but the ground is progressively thawing. Soon we will see a few wild crocuses here and there and then a little later a few yellow patches of wild primroses; they will be the first signs of Spring.

The love of our Creator shines in the reawakening of His creation. We can picture the world tomorrow when the meadows will be a carpet of flowers, our valleys censers of perfumes, and our homes hymns of joy.

Of course, as you know, this is not the picture of our era. The world in which we live is far from reflecting these wonderful characteristics which God is going to reestablish when He restores this earth. In these times of the end, desolation is increasing rapidly, year after year. Trees perish, animals perish, human beings perish from incurable diseases. Yes, our environment is sad and agonizing, and we know that such conditions will only grow worse. Therefore, the called of God need a lot of courage and determination to maintain confidence and to fulfill the purpose of this present existence. For the closer we get to our goal the more severe the tests become and the more frequent and violent Satan's attacks are. Satan wants to destroy, to create divisions, to break up families; in a nutshell, he wants to discourage us. And by means of these things God wants to know if our submission to His will means more to us than anything else in our life.

So today, as in the time of ancient Israel, there are many circumstances which make the people of God lose courage. We read, "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deut. 1:21). But because of certain circumstances, we read: "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart. . ." (Deut. 1:27-28). Many called of God today lose courage because of the circumstances which surround them or because they do not succeed in overcoming certain weaknesses and mental problems, and they eventually believe that God forsakes and hates them. And yet how many times have they experienced God's deliverance and intervention in innumerable areas since they came out of "Egypt," since their baptism!

Today, as in the past, God continues to exhort His people to be courageous. God says to us, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them [of all the circumstances which surround us, of all the things which we still have to overcome to achieve the purpose of our call]: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut. 31:6). "And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and be of a good courage. . . . And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed" (vss. 7-8). "And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage. . ." (vs. 23). Brethren, the same exhortation, the same order is given to every one of us. At the beginning of each year God reminds us that He Himself walks with us and will not fail us nor forsake us. But God expects us to be courageous, not only to face the difficulties or circumstances which surround us, but also to search our own life and make the necessary improvements thereto. Yes, indeed, it takes courage to recognize our imperfections, to see the reality of our defects and failures, to confess them to God and to set about the task in order to make the progress which God expects of us.

God wants us to begin the year relieved of the weight of our failures of the past year. This is why, before the observance of Passover, we must have the courage to examine and evaluate the way we lived during the past year. We must be realistic, we must see the reality of our imperfections. Individually, we can ask ourselves the following questions:

My life, my conduct, my attitudes — what are they like?

Does my conduct foreshadow the beauty of tomorrow when the meadows will be a carpet of flowers? Or, does my conduct still reflect the desolation and corruption which are manifest all around us in this world?

Have my prayers been a censer filled with perfume in the nostrils of God? Or, do my prayers reflect the agony and uncertainty which prevail all around me?

Has my home been in the area where I live a sanctuary of peace, a hymn of joy, a candle on a candlestick? Or does my home reflect the wars, strifes, and hate which prevail all around me?

God gives us the following order at the beginning of this new year: Be strong and of a good courage! Take the time to examine your life! Be honest and strict *with yourself!*

How many times have we — like our ancestors — murmured unnecessarily in our homes because we did not give a proper orientation to our mind when God chastened us in order for us to learn our lessons.

Brethren, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread remind us that God is with us and that He does not want us to be condemned with the world. But God also wants us to have the courage to weigh our own lives so that we will repent and demonstrate the respect owed the sacrifice of Christ — as God's Spirit leads and rules in our lives during this new year. God speaks to us through His Word; He shows us the standards, criteria, and measures which we must use; He expounds them through His ministry, and so we know the direction which we must give to our lives. On the other hand, our bad experiences, our failures, frustrations, dissatisfactions, our murmurings show us that we have not always been the example and light

which God wants. But God, who is merciful and rich in kindness, says to us at the beginning of this new year: Be strong and of a good courage! Once again we have the opportunity to renew our covenant with God by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and crucify all in our lives that is not acceptable in God's sight; and we can ask God Himself to walk before us and thus we can make considerable progress during this new year.

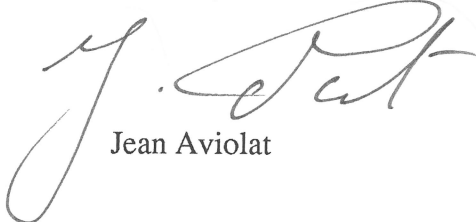
What an awesome privilege we have! It is well worth a little effort and courage on our part, is it not? If we do it, the day will come when we will manifest the character of the unchanging nature of God. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). When we have the vision of that which God has prepared for us, how foolish, how stupid we are when we want to turn back to the rudiments of this world which we buried at our baptism.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:1-3). The night is becoming darker and darker and we should not vacillate anymore because of discouragement. Let us be determined and stable; let us remain firmly rooted in this immovable foundation which was given to us. In all ages, the people of God have let themselves become discouraged and failed to be obedient to God; and sad and painful consequences resulted therefrom. When King Hezekiah reestablished God's Way in Judah, he made the following statement to a small remnant, "My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense" (II Chron. 29:11).

Brethren, let us take this Passover with a correctly repentant mind and heart, being grounded and steadfast in the faith; and then may our conduct, our life, our prayers during this new year be perfumes which we offer to God. Then with assurance we can accept these encouraging words of Jesus Christ, ". . . Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2).

The day will come when those who will not have lost courage will be the vessels filled with the eternal blessings of our Father and of our elder Brother Jesus Christ.

Greetings and sincere affection to you all,

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

Jean Aviolat