

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren Called of God,

The Spring Feasts which we have just observed reminded us that self-examination is indispensable if we want to receive more of the power of God's Holy Spirit. That Spirit will enable us to reach the stature of the fullness of Christ.

God called us to learn how to live; He called us to receive an education according to His Character, that is, to learn certain things and then apply them in our daily living, although they do not fit in with the lifestyle of the society in which we live. That is what Jesus Christ did when He lived on this earth. He knew that the honor and the respect which He owed to His Father demanded His obedience to that education which He had received from Him.

It is common to see many once called of God, who have their own convictions in many areas, and who want to live according to these convictions. The problem is that most of those convictions are not based on the rules, the laws, the judgments, and the ordinances of God. Rather, they cater to the whims of the self. "To live as we please" preoccupies us much more than to obey God. That is why God requires a self-examination periodically. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . ." (II Cor. 13:5). Such an examination done scrupulously and with honesty results in surprising revelations. We thought we knew ourselves, but the Spirit of God which searches the depths of man's heart and mind reveals the real truth in many areas of our own lives. It enlightens us about the causes of certain experiences which we have had to endure. It reveals to us that some of our "own" convictions are nothing more than the result of certain weaknesses of which we have not yet managed to rid ourselves or to replace with the spiritual traits provided by God. God is a very wise Father. He does not want His children to run before they have learned to walk. Therefore, He grants us time. It is all done in stages. Everyone takes part in the school of life by putting into practice what he has learned. The more he is willing to be educated, the more aware he will be of the difficulties which he must overcome, and the more he will receive strength and capability to perfect his education.

A young man who wants to learn the trade of a carpenter needs to be guided and instructed by someone who is experienced in that field. He will have to learn how to sharpen his tools, how to use them. Then there is how to regulate certain machines, and there are the various ways in which he can use them without taking the risk of being the victim of an accident which in turn could jeopardize his training. He is entrusted with diverse means and possibilities as a certain maturity and capability develops in him. One does not learn a trade without making some mistakes, without going through certain experiences which are sometimes painful or discouraging. By dint of perseverance he eventually is someone who is skillful and experienced—a qualified worker on whom his employer can rely.

The situation is hardly different for us apart from the fact that the learning is much longer and requires much more determination. It will come to an end when we have acquired the maturity of God's character and when ". . . we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). But until then a sustained effort is indispensable in the subjugation of our own nature so that the maturity of our Father may develop in us and we may be good workers with Christ in His future government, capable of acting with prudence and discernment by making wise decisions.

Christ promised the called He would give them all the necessary capability and strength that the objective might be reached in their lives. He said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . ." (John 16:13). Here is one reason why God wants us to begin the year with a very thorough self-examination. That Spirit working in us is going to reveal the truth about ourselves. It is going to show where we stand and what we must do and change in our lives so that the education of God may progress in us. To be guided into all truth does not mean only to know intellectually the laws, the commandments, the ordinances, the judgments of God, as well as His plan which is revealed to us through the holy days. To be guided into all truth is also a revelation of what we are, what is imperfect in us, the mistakes which we make in our marriages, in the upbringing of our children, in our relationships with others, in all the areas of life where we make mistakes very often because of our self-righteousness. This is revealed to us by the power of God's Holy Spirit through the laws, the commandments, the judgments established by God, and through the instruction which God gives by His ministry. By this means we may be able to effect the necessary corrections in our own convictions and bring them into conformity to the way of God. This is how we can grow in the education which is indispensable to becoming a brother or a sister of Jesus Christ. "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa. 119:133). Here is the reason for these periodic examinations: To come to know the iniquities which have dominion over our lives. Any revelation in this domain demands repentance and the pursuit of necessary steps to eliminate what needs to be eliminated. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). That is why we are not capable of seeing

with our own eyes certain things in our own lives. God's Holy Spirit has to reveal these defects to us by guiding us into all truth, and it does so when we fulfill that requirement of self-examination. As called, we do not have the right to live as we want to or according to our own convictions unless they are in conformity with the education which God established and by which He wants to train us.

In order to progress in this school of life, it is important to submit our lives to the power of the Spirit of God and not to render it stagnant by the natural attitude of the self or by a lethargy which creeps very naturally into the lives of the called. Did Jesus Christ not say that the Kingdom of God shall be likened unto ten virgins, and while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept? Read Matthew 25:1–13. Theoretical knowledge which we have been able to accumulate over the years, concerning this way of life, is useful providing it is not distorted by our own concepts and is active in our lives by the power of the Spirit of God. What use would it be to our young apprentice carpenter to come to know all the technology of the wood, the reading of a construction plan for a house, and to be well-equipped with wonderful tools, if he does not set to work because he believes that he can sleep day and night? Despite all his knowledge he will never fulfill the purpose for which he learned his trade.

The Holy Spirit accompanies us, gives us help, strength, the capability to see, understand, and persevere in the right way. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:15–17). Christ said, ". . . that he may abide with you for ever . . ." God's Holy Spirit is always ready to act if we *will* it so. It is a Spirit which leads us in the way of Truth; it is a power which is going to enable us to suffer all our failures, and to overcome all our weaknesses. It is our Comforter, it heals us of our spiritual and physical illnesses. Therefore, brethren, you can have the assurance that you will never be alone in your daily problems, that you will never be forsaken if you accept being guided into all truth. The will of our Father is that this Comforter abides in you forever. That power is there at your disposal, ready to intercede for you, ready to help you; that Spirit is there to bring to your mind—as you need it—all the truth of God's way of life which you received. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). It reminds us of what we have learned so that we may not let ourselves be carried away by the deceptions of our own minds.

Every one of us writes his own experiences. That is part of our learning how to live. Through Pentecost God wants us to know that we are not alone, because the power of God's Holy Spirit is at our disposal.

So let us live more than ever by the power, by the exhortation, by the comfort of God's Holy Spirit. The more we will let it work in our lives and be yielded to its power, the more God will increase it in us and the more we will acquire the essential education needful to be part of the family of God.

With all my respect and my warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', with a large, sweeping initial 'J' and a stylized 'A'.

Jean Aviolat