

Church of God, The Eternal

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Greetings to you all, Brethren:

These few lines give me the opportunity to express my feelings of attachment and respect to all those who continue to cling to the knowledge of the Truth of God. The faithful brothers and sisters in Christ -- including all those who suffer from loneliness, illness, family problems, unemployment, and so many other difficulties, but who know the voice of the One who says, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," -- bear with courage and patience, through an ever-increasing faith, the marks of the wounds of Jesus Christ, waiting with hope for the promised deliverance.

We are happy to think that it will be easier for most of you to gather to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles since you can choose between two sites in the United States.

We -- the very small group of brethren here in Europe -- will still meet in the Bernese Alps in Kandersteg. It is a peaceful area where the mountaintops seem to want to free themselves from the earth to rise and sometimes disappear into the clouds. The area is rich in escarpments; irregular depressions; light and twisted trees which are tormented by harsh weather; meadows covered with typical and varying vegetation; sterile, dark, and yellowish rocks; and rapid streams flowing from vast domes which are perpetually covered with ice and snow.

A human being who is sensitive to God's Creation is fascinated by these numerous alpine curiosities. The mountains seem to call with an insistent and irresistible voice, "Come here, higher, still higher."

The alpinist hears well that voice. Having little equipment, he despises fear; he is not afraid of the strain of climbing. Quite the contrary! Difficulties and dangers keep strengthening his courage. He scales the mountain very slowly, and you can see him disappear progressively till he reaches the summit. And up there he finally stops.

Now the horizon has just been revealed to him in all its vastness. Here reigns a peace which seems true, solemn, magnificent, eternal. From this summit he can see in his own mind the lights and shadows of

the world, all the distant swarming peoples. If a noise or a sound reaches his ears, he seems to hear the distant and idealized echo of a voice which says to him, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? . . ." (Job 38: 4-6).

Up there in the quietness he seems to have gotten closer to the imperishable Kingdom which is to be established some day. How inspiring the mountains are! They invite one to choose the narrow way which always leads higher, toward holiness, separating one from those who prefer the wide and even way which suddenly slopes down to changing God's Truth into a lie.

Our happiness, brethren, is to climb the mountain of holiness. ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). To come to live God's Way perfectly is to be at the top of our mountain, which is composed of all the laws, statutes, judgments, and ordinances of God.

While ascending the mountain of holiness, one sometimes feels overwhelmed; you are afraid of ditches, valleys, and crevasses, but do not stop to look back or try to go back. Brethren, keep your eyes on the summit where a wonderful future is shining, where the magnificent and awesome panorama of God's Plan for the salvation of mankind unfolds before your eyes till the farthest ends of the horizon. God gave you an extraordinary power -- His Holy Spirit -- which will allow you to despise fear, not to be afraid of strain, and to be strengthened by the difficulties and trials which you encounter during your ascent. Once you are at the top, you will be able to behold with amazement this unseen hand which lifted you powerfully up above the marshlands, above a world which wants to live fast, and which kills fast. The folly of human beings is to run without even knowing where they are going. We live in times in which everything must be done in a hurry: "I must hurry here, I must hurry there." We must work fast, eat fast, sleep fast, love fast. We have lost the habit of giving things the time they deserve. Whatever country and area we live in, we are witnesses to this force which constantly drives man to be the enemy of happiness.

But, brethren, the Feast of Tabernacles is a lapse of time during which God invites us to taste some happiness. It is a foretaste of the millennium and total restoration for all humankind. A period during which human beings will be compelled to learn to live happily. A time when our Elder Brother Jesus Christ will be a King who will rule all the kings of the world and whose sword will be the Word of God -- the Truth. In Isaiah 11:2-5 we read: "And the spirit of the Lord shall

rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

To human beings in general it seems difficult, indeed impossible, that God means what He says, that His Words will be carried out. Only the chosen ones know that the divine promises are irrevocable and that nothing on this earth will prevent them from being fulfilled when God decides that the time has come. Even Job had to learn that lesson. He said, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? . . ." (Job 42:2-3).

Indeed, the day comes when an imperishable Kingdom will be established on this earth. Fear, suffering caused by injustice, and hunger will be banished. As we behold this panorama, can we express our feelings of confidence and gratitude to our God and His Son Jesus Christ? Once again we will be able to have a foretaste of the Kingdom of God; and to taste it is to live it, to practice what we know God expects of us.

Let us see to it that there is no offense, nothing that hinders our relationship with one another. We want peace, we want righteousness; let us therefore practice peace and let the righteousness of God be our girdle.

Let us listen carefully to the messages -- the Words of God. They are the signs which indicate the path which we must follow to reach the summit. So let us not be somnolent, blasé, or abstracted. It is very easy to take the wrong path and yet think that we are on the right one. It can cause us a considerable loss of time if we have to turn back and find the right way again, or it can lead us into a place where the panorama will not be at all the one which we expected. Thus, as Jesus Christ said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear . . ." (Luke 8:18). If we want to love God with all our heart and with all our soul, we must obey Him; and to do so, we must receive His instructions with a willing heart and mind.

Let us be grateful and thank God for the privilege He gives us of attending His Holy Days, for the spiritual and physical food which He gives us every day; and furthermore, for the friends who are with us during the Feast and with whom we can share. Through His Plan God

reminds us that originally we all descended from one blood; we are therefore all brothers and sisters. On the basis that nothing can be put into a closed fist, one often needs only to offer one's hand for somebody else to put his in. Let us not be weighed down with the regret that we did not help him when there was still time to do it. Loneliness is as lethal as famine, and the one who dies for want of bread dies also for want of friendship. So, every day, let us keep our eyes open to the grief of others; let us take time to listen to them and have a heart willing to help them. Let us manifest patience and forgiveness, all that which we ourselves expect to receive from God.

Every good thing is the result of work and effort; keep on, brethren, for the "mountain of holiness" is very high, but life throughout all eternity shines therefrom. David wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore" (Ps. 121:1-8).

To all those who have been wounded by the briars which were in their path; to those whose hearts are grieved and afflicted; to those who can't go to the Feast because of legitimate circumstances in God's sight, we present our greatest feelings of confidence and gratitude for their courage and faithfulness. May you have God's greatest blessings because of your faith in His promises. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

To you brethren, my sincerest wishes for a blessed and meaningful Feast for you all.

With all the brethren here, we greet you, we love you, and remember you in our prayers.

With all our affection,

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 tail that loops back under the name.

Jean Aviolat