

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Significance of Christ's Sacrifice

April 1981

Greetings to All Our Brethren and Friends:

The winter season is nearing its end. In Switzerland and France winter has been rigorous: cold weather persisted for several months and snowfalls were abundant. Similar winter conditions had not been experienced for a very long time. Those in charge of road maintenance had to work relentlessly so that the traffic would not be impeded.

But now spring is at the doors. This beautiful season is the time when nature comes out of its dormant state again. It also has a reviving effect on the lives of most human beings. But to us who were called by Almighty God to know His way of life, springtime takes on much more meaning. According to God's sacred calendar, it is the first month of the year. It is also the beginning of God's feasts.

Passover is a most important feast, for it really represents a beginning. As a manifestation of His great love for humankind, God the Father gave His only begotten Son. In John 3:16 we read: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this first month of the year the first thing which we are reminded of is that God loves those to whom He gave the breath of life—human beings. Jesus Christ made them the gift of His life—the gift which He consummated with His death before being exalted again in heaven.

But, as far as *we* are concerned, what is the *significance* of Christ's death?

We are delivered from the domination of sin. Christ gave His life so that all human beings could be released from the tyranny of sin. Thanks to God's love and mercy we can be liberated from the yoke of our own natures—natures of sin, violence, wrath, contention, hatred, and all that which seems right in man's eyes. But how are we freed from sin? By accepting Jesus Christ who was the Word of God made flesh. Therefore Paul says in Romans 6:1–2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Sin is living

contrary to God's perfect and unalterable way of life. Our hope lies in the faith which we have accepted from the beginning.

Passover marks the beginning of our acceptance of all of God's Word. In the first month of every year we renew our covenant with God by partaking of the very emblems of our obedience and implicit submission to Him. And God expects us to live His Way more and more perfectly. Jesus Christ offered His life as a sacrifice. He is the Passover Lamb; having shed His own blood, He became the door of hope for us and all other humans.

Our civilization thinks that man's knowledge will ultimately triumph over all things. Matter, sound, atom, wave, etc., have become toys in the hands of man. By means of transport man has overcome the obstacle of distances. He has created very sophisticated machines which perform under his control. But his pride prevails over his reason and man's achievements do not soften his heart and fill it with love—even though he thinks such feats attest to his goodness. Men have destroyed the true values. We all carry horrible dross within us. Bloody conflicts, cries, rage, slaughters, nefarious murders: We—human beings—devour one another cruelly. We have built luxurious cities, but unemployment is rampant and deprived children starve. The conditions are such that we cannot close our eyes to our black crime, confusion and unworthiness of God's love. And how much more guilty are the called and chosen of God who accept in a cowardly manner—without living up to the given Truth—Christ's sacrifice, His life which He willingly offered up so that our salvation could be possible?

The Apostle Paul speaks of the punishment reserved for those called of God who have *willfully* departed from His way of life. Comparing the punishment administered in ancient Israel with those who transgressed the New Testament Law of God, he says:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:29).

For if we sin *willfully* after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Heb. 10:26–27).

To profane the blood of the covenant is to depart deliberately from the faith once delivered; it is to reject *willfully* God's way of life and to turn back to the wisdom of this world after having tasted of the heavenly gift. In Hebrews 6:4–6 we read the following:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Brethren, these words were written for you and me; we are those who have tasted of the heavenly gift and the good Word of God; we were made partakers of the Holy Spirit. Will we fall away? Will we adhere to the very principles of this world again? Remember, Christ ". . . gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world . . ." (Gal. 1:4).

Brethren, let us not count on the promises of this world. Let us readily give up all its vanities, and let us not become weary in truly crucifying the self with all its lusts, arrogance and hatred. God is the One who gives us life. Therefore it is He whom we must love. We have witnessed the fulfillment of the prophesied apostasy. Who and/or what could restrain us from honoring Christ's sacrifice unto the end? An established religious or political system? Arrogant men whose prestige mystifies all the inhabitants of the earth? Their power compared to God is insignificant. Like us, they are human and mortal beings. Who then can prevent us from honoring and respecting the great and powerful sacrifice of Jesus Christ? What can make us fail? The self? This nature which dwells in each of us because of its arrogance and self-righteousness often blinds us to our defects. Brethren, let us not fall into any such pitfalls. Let us be willing to obey God's way of life, let us remain teachable. Then we will honor humbly and worthily Christ's sacrifice, the priceless gift which we were tendered. If we do so, laying aside all corruption, perversion and human reasoning, crucifying our own nature, the whole life of Jesus Christ will be fully lived in us. Let faith and assurance keep our lives.

Remember, Christ, who was willing to make us a gift of His life, had the same nature as you and I; but never did He succumb to its dictates. He too was confronted with all the trials, temptations, difficulties and weaknesses to which we are submitted. But He overcame each one of them. He used the power which God had given to Him and was victorious. He resolved to follow a line of action without wavering. This is why *He* is our Savior. We can confidently draw near to Him to bury our mistakes, weaknesses and lack of character in His blood and let Him—by our submission to His will—fully live His life in us.

Brethren, to struggle against the self is the hardest fight there is, but to overcome is the most glorious victory there is. The *sacrifice of Jesus Christ* and the *power of God's Holy Spirit* have made us capable of achieving that victory. With you, brethren, I am working towards it, and great is the task in my own life, but I am convinced that God loves us, that

with Him all things are possible. Let us manifest the kind of confidence which David expressed in Psalm 13:5–6: "But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

On behalf of all the brethren here in Europe, I greet you. We love and respect you. We pray for you and are convinced that you too pray for us. Thank you brethren; may God be with you and bless you.

With all my affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in black ink.

Jean Aviolat