

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Source of a Good and Happy Year

January 1990

Dear brothers and sisters:

For many people in this world, this month is the beginning of a new year. For them it is like sailing an unknown ocean where nobody has been before; they do not know what kind of dangers are hidden in its deep waters. Many have tried to rejoice a little by giving presents to one another, by eating and drinking, by offering one another—more or less sincerely, or merely out of tradition—good wishes for a happy year. Through all kinds of means, man tries to find a little joy, a little security; but, whatever philosophy he has created for himself, whatever position he holds in this society, whatever his income or material possessions, the security and joy which he longs for seem to be terribly hard to attain, because his road is full of shadows. He walks in the dark and the unknown where what he must face frightens him.

My dear brethren, do you think about your past occasionally—when we were in the same boat, when we experienced the same anxieties and frustrations, when we, too, were enslaved by traditions, falsehoods, and darkness? God says to us, ". . . thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes" (Deut. 16:12). For us, Egypt symbolizes the way of this world which is totally opposed to God's Way and plunges humanity into darkness and bondage to sin. Thus, at a given time, most of us had the sad experience of being in bondage to the philosophies of this world.

God tells us to remember that fact and to observe His laws and His Way of life, which we must put into practice.

What is one of the purposes for which God wants us to put His Way of life into practice? We read:

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever (Deut. 4:39–40).

God does not intend for us to become *again* enslaved by confusion, fear, this world's traditions—in a word, by sin. Those who return to it are fully responsible, for, at some point in time, God delivered them from servitude and bondage. The same holds true for our young people who have been reared in the Truth; if they do not learn to appreciate such a privilege for its true value, and want to forsake the light to taste life in the darkness of this world, they are fully responsible for their choice and will suffer painful consequences for it. For God says:

Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God (Deut. 12:28).

So, God gives instructions to the human beings whom He has chosen, so that they may give direction to their lives and experience the joys of life which are produced by His Way of life.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Those things which God has ordained are what man must obey if he does not want to find himself back on a road full of shadows, where anguish, fear, and frustration will be his lot again. Jesus Christ Himself made the following statement: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Christ said that man shall live! Not by his own conceptions or convictions, not by a partial acceptance of God's Way, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. That is what man shall live by if he does not want to return to darkness and bondage again.

Those who have been called, and our young people—those who have been brought up in the Truth—have all received the privilege of being delivered from bondage. And it is from that time on that God says to us, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19). Consequently, my dear brethren and young friends, our responsibility is great. We become responsible for our choices, decisions, and behavior. Whether we have lives full of satisfaction and meaning in the development of our character, with all the blessings that derive from it, or whether we have lives full of frustration and painful experiences, bringing only grief and sorrow to us and those around us, depends upon the choices we make. On the one hand, we must remember what we came out of. We were delivered from the bondage of darkness, where anguish, confusion, and all the deceptive seductions which drive men into darkness reign. On the other hand, we must remember what God has given to us so that we can be children of light. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). What is going to enable us to walk as children of light in the midst of a society where darkness is becoming more and more intense? David wrote, "Thy word is a

lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:105–106). We, too, have sworn (promised). Our duty is to perform it.

Man is extremely clever at accusing somebody else for what he has created himself. We create our doubts, fears, and darkness ourselves. For God has never required of us anything which depends on someone else's conduct. Our problem is that sometimes, under certain circumstances, because we are not in control of our feelings and emotions, we do not come to accept what God calls good and what He calls evil. In a way, we want to live by a mixture of this world's ways and God's ways. That leads us into the way of anxiety, sadness, dissatisfaction, and discontent—a result which is quite opposed to the fruits of the way which God gave to us. David, who had to go through many trials and torments because of certain things which he allowed in his life, had to write for our instruction:

My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way (Ps. 119:28–37).

David understood that the natural way of man is the way of suffering, sorrow, frustration, fear—so many things which lead man to become weary of life. God's Way is the way of peace and righteousness; it is a way which leads man to a glorious goal. We do not like the problems of this present life. Therefore, we do not let these things triumph over us. "More than that, we rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Rom. 5:3–4, *RSV*).

David said, "Make me understand the way of thy precepts, and I will meditate on thy wondrous works" (Ps. 119:27, *RSV*). If we are troubled, dissatisfied, not able to have a grateful attitude toward God, then, brethren, let us take the time to meditate on the wondrous works of God's Way. Like David, let us ask God to make us understand the way of His precepts. Let us remember that God gave them to us "that it may go well with [us], and with [our] children after [us]." If we react willfully, with hostility to the understanding given us by God, if we react to it with contemptuous words because we do not want to humble ourselves and accept the righteousness of God, then we can fall back into the thickest darkness, whence our fate will be most tragic. God illustrates such a condition by the example of the dog which returns to its own vomit, and the sow, which was washed, which returns to its wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:22).

By nature, man loves to alter, twist, and adjust God's Way as he thinks fit. And we are proud of our conceptions and we enjoy spreading them. And yet, our daily responsibility is to accept in all simplicity, and live steadfastly, that way which God designed for the happiness of mankind. Very often we understand, but we cannot accept that what God calls good is good and what God calls evil is evil.

After meditating on his situation, David said, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." That was a good decision, a good evaluation which made David a man after God's own heart. Let us do the same when we are overwhelmed with the problems of this life; let us make the same choice as David, let us choose the way of Truth, and let God's law be our lamp. Thereon will depend the kind of happiness which all humanity will ultimately experience. Then people will know what is the source of a good and happy year. For "unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (Ps. 119:92).

Brethren, let us rid our lives of error and let us offer to God the observance of His way. I sincerely thank you for your victory over the wicked one and for your faithfulness and honesty in the Way of God which abides in you.

With brotherly greetings and deep respect,

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

Jean Aviolat