

Passover in the Trenches

By Kelly Dack

Here's a subject for meditation that I'll suggest as having a lot to do with Passover and the Night to be Much Observed. A time of forgiving, being forgiven and giving up sin, I often think of the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914 around Passover time. Let me explain. Do you know that some people -- even in the [Churches of God](#) called "brethren" -- can't get along throughout the year? They coldly mistrust each other because of their different takes on Christianity and loyalty to God's "true" church. At Passover time some of these people mysteriously "lay down their arms" for the sacred religious observance. Feet are washed, a meal is shared, smiles and hugs are exchanged but sadly, after the "glow" of the observance is over so are the warm acts of fellowship.

Where do feelings of mistrust and intolerance in a *religious* group come from?

The account of the Christmas truce of 1914 contains a simple, yet noble message. It's about some WWI soldiers in the trenches of France who stopped following orders to engage the enemy. They fired upon and killed each other from their opposing ranks every day. Then, during a particular holiday occasion, a few soldiers on either side of the field spontaneously came to the realization that they didn't even know the basis of their orders or the root cause of their fighting and said "enough!"

Read what happened: [Holiday Truce](#)

"Many of the officers on each side attempted to prevent the event from occurring but the soldiers ignored the risk of a court-martial or of being shot."

What I find particularly interesting in this account are the attitudes of the soldiers who'd had enough of battle. They reached out and "fraternized" with the enemy in a self-styled truce in spite of strict orders from their high commanders to get back to fighting. The war for many of the men had stopped that evening as they enjoyed holiday festivities, sharing family photos and even a moonlit soccer match.

I'm sure that these soldiers began to think: "Suppose they gave a war and nobody came?" long before Charlotte E. Keyes ever coined the phrase.

Here are a couple of links to a song by [John MacCutcheon](#) about the story. The song is called "Christmas in the Trenches." This one makes me cry: [Song](#) [Lyrics](#)

So another Passover has come and gone. It's no secret that the war of doctrine, exclusion and intolerance between the COG organizations continues. Will some of those in command continue to judge and shun, exclude and disfellowship based on whether or not laymen "soldiers" or their leaders hold the line and remain in their respective trenches?

I never consigned myself to be a soldier in that kind of war. If you're a commander in that kind of army, consider me AWOL (Absent Without Leave) – headed for spiritual Canada.

I consider myself a layman in the Church of God. I am not a doctrinal expert. During my spiritual trek on this Earth I ask questions and compare notes from many sources. I encourage people who I meet and fellowship with to do the same – it thwarts spiritual ["intellectual inbreeding."](#)

This year I plan to continue to seek out and spend time in many spiritual COG "no man's lands", shake hands, and to try to be friendly like the guys in the song. I'm looking for any excuse to not go back to the trenches. Hey, if you happen to see me through any of those spiritual "tear-gas clouds," please come out and say hi. I won't shoot. I am unarmed.

And to any of my spiritual fellow "Doughboys" who happen to remain in the "trenches" over the holy days, I'll ask you to reflect again on the words ending John MacCutcheon's song:

"The ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame – and on each end of the rifle we're the same."

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