

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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OUR PASSOVER

The subject for discussion at the most recent Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District, involved the Jewish Passover (and whether Jesus ate the last passover on the authorised day, or met a day previously.) This has ramifications, of course, on the question of whether Jesus was crucified on the Thursday or Friday, and the calculation of the three days and three nights Jesus spent in the tomb. In preparing for this meeting, I was prompted to pursue a completely incidental matter which has always intrigued me: viz. why the passover procedures and attitude seemed to change so radically over the span of Jewish history, and why the change seemed to bring no comment from Jesus. Obviously the passover was about fifteen hundred years old when Jesus kept it for the final time, but nevertheless one would have imagined that the Jews would have zealously preserved the feast (one of their major feasts) in every detail, and kept it exactly as God imparted it to Moses.

When the passover was instituted (Ex. 12), it was intended to form one of the most important annual memorials in the Jewish calendar: indeed the calendar was re-arranged to accommodate it. It was to commemorate the sudden departure of Israel from their long and arduous captivity in Egypt, and the "passing over" of God's death angel over their dwellings. Occupants of each home were required to assemble in their houses (not less than ten persons or more than twenty): kill a lamb of the first year (unblemished) from their flocks, and shed its blood. The blood was then to be applied, with a bunch of hyssop, to the lintel and doorposts of their houses so that the death angel, that night, seeing the blood would "passover" such dwellings, but bring destruction to the houses not so marked, occupied by the Egyptians. This was the last drastic but decisive step taken by God in the liberation of Israel from captivity. When day dawned next morning the grief and lamentation throughout Egypt (at the death of the first-born in nearly every home) was such that the Egyptians could not get rid of the Israelites quick enough. After the blood of the lamb had been utilised in this way, the lamb itself was to be roasted and eaten that night. It was eaten with "bitter herbs" to remind the Jews of their bitter years in bondage: and also eaten with unleavened bread: **"even the bread of affliction, for thou camest out of the land of Egypt in haste"**. (Deut. 16:3). This emphasis on haste is heightened somewhat by the fact that, in any case the Jews had no opportunity to leaven their bread that night for their kneading troughs were bound up in the bundles of clothes upon their shoulders. (Ex. 12:34). Thus the Israelites kept the first passover, not in any relaxed and leisurely kind of fashion, but as Moses said, **"....ye shall eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's**

passover" (Ex. 12.11). And Moses added (v.14) **"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."**

Some 1,500 years later, when Jesus kept the passover (the last valid passover) (Matt. 26) significant changes in the passover seem to have taken place. No longer did the participants partake of it in a state of readiness, standing with staves in their hands, feet shod and loins girt; but rather partook of it over a protracted period of time, in a very relaxed manner, and obviously reclining upon sofas. Apparently they also drank wine at the passover, for at the close of the passover Jesus used one of the cups of wine to institute the Lord's Supper; and wine is of course, something never mentioned at the first passover. How could this have come about; and who could have had the authority to interpolate wine into a God-ordained feast of the Jews? Did the passover, like the sabbath, over a long period of time, gradually receive the degree of contempt that familiarity brings, or was the change authorised in God's word?

A QUICK HISTORY

In Num. 9: 1-13 it is recorded that God spoke to Moses in the wilderness confirming the obligation of the passover. He says, **"In the 14th day of the month at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: ACCORDING TO ALL THE RITES OF IT, AND ACCORDING TO ALL THE CEREMONIES THEREOF, shall ye keep it."** That seems to mean that God wanted the passover to be observed in the wilderness **just as it was in its original form:** and does not seem to encourage any change, or the injection of wine. In the same passage there were representations from some, who by reason of defilement at a funeral, could not attend on the first month, and after consultation between Moses and God, were allowed to keep the passover a month later. The fact that Moses had to consult God on the matter shows the seriousness God attached to this feast. The Jews were faithful in this, and some forty years later we read **"the children of Israel encamped at Gilgal, and kept the passover on the 14th day of the month, at even, in the plains of Jericho."** (Josh 5:10).

Zeal for the passover, like the religious temperature of the Jews in general, fluctuated over the years and although there is insufficient space to quote every reference to the feast in the O.T. yet there seems to be no evidence to justify any change, and certainly no amendments came from God. When the kingdom was divided, both Israel and Judah had a long string of good and bad kings: but mainly bad ones, and men who led the Jews more deeply into idolatry. The occasional good king tried to restore God's ordinances; including, of course, the passover. Hezekiah was one such good king, of Judah, and he sent invitations to all Israel and Judah urging them to come to Jerusalem and keep the passover: an invitation based on the fact that **"they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written"**, or as the N.E.B. puts it, **"never before had so many kept it ACCORDING TO THE PRESCRIBED FORM"**. The one slight departure from "the prescribed form" on that occasion, (some not sanctified) was referred to God and forgiven. (2 Chron. 30).

This prayer to God for forgiveness was because **"many had not cleansed themselves and did eat the passover otherwise than it was written"**. These references to **"as it was written"** and **"according to prescribed form"** seem to indicate that Jewish reformers, realising that God had not authorised change, did their utmost to keep it as originally given. Only 100 years later, Josiah, another good king of Judah, had to pursue another reformation of the Jewish religion. At once he re-introduced the passover and said, **"So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that THEY MAY DO ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD BY THE HAND OF MOSES."** (2 Chron. 35:6) or **"Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of the covenant"**. (2 Kings 23:21). This passover was in the 18th year of the reign of Josiah **"And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from**

the days of Samuel the prophet, neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept. Finally, about 100 years later when the children of Israel were emerging from captivity, with the help of King Darius, we read that **“the children of the captivity kept the passover on the 14th day of the month”**. Again there seems to be no reason to suppose that it was not observed as originally given. Perhaps the only material change was God’s directive that the passover must be kept not just anywhere, but only in places where God chose to place His name. (Deut. 16:2).

WHENCE THE CHANGE?

Some might say that it is unrealistic to imagine that the passover would, or could, have remained exactly similar to the first. In the first place, participants in subsequent passovers could not be expected to take hyssop and splash the blood of the lamb on their lintels and doorposts: the purpose of that had gone, and doubtless that is why the priests, in subsequent passovers, simply sprinkled the blood from their hands (2 Chron. 35:11). Again, at the first passover, everyone had, for obvious reasons, to remain indoors until the morning whereas Jesus and His disciples seem to have left the upper room well before “morning”: and certainly well before cockcrow. Because the reason for remaining indoors had gone, perhaps the practice had also gone. However, reclining on sofas to eat the passover seems to me, a far cry from the picture we have of Israelites all loaded up with their belongings and ready to run. Jesus appears to have made no comment on these things and probably accepted them on the basis that He was going to abolish the passover in any case. We can be fairly sure that He had already attended a passover nearly every year of His life, for His parents brought him to the feast every year to Jerusalem (the place where God’s name was) (Luke 2:41) and perhaps He had already made some comments. The Jewish historian Josephus refers several times to the passover, but sparsely, and says nothing really interesting, apart, perhaps, from the fact that nearly three million Jews often crammed the, smallish, city of Jerusalem for this feast. The Talmud and the Jewish Rabbins also refer to the passover but their words are only Jewish opinion and worth no more than that: they certainly can’t be equated with a “Thus saith the Lord”. The Rabbins say that Jews recline at the passover to show that they are no longer in bondage but are free men, but this, to me, does not seem to reflect the atmosphere of the night when the death angel was on his way. And there still seems to be no substantial explanation as to how cups of wine were incorporated into the observance. **The point of all this is**, of course, that if men can add and subtract, in this way, to one of the major religious feasts of the Jews, then perhaps men should feel able to do the same to God’s ordinances today. There can be no doubt, even from the few verses quoted above, that God took the passover very seriously indeed: whether the place; the time; the manner; the attitude (sanctified); or the participants. There was even a very severe penalty for non-attendance. God said, **“But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, that soul shall be cut off from his people, because he offered not the oblation of the Lord in its appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.”** (Num. 9:13). If, for instance, the wine was added, just because some of the Rabbins thought it a good idea, but had no God-given authority for it; what is to restrain men today from adding to, or subtracting from, the things of God? If God was quite happy to have wine added by the Rabbins, then perhaps He is much more easy-going than we thought He was: and not really “a stickler” for detail. Yet, we know better than this.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

Whereas all that has gone before could be regarded as largely academic, the remainder is very factual. **CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER**. Whereas only the Jews had a passover: now we can all, Jew and Gentile, have our own personal passover, for Paul says, **“For even Christ, OUR passover, is sacrificed for us ...”** (1 Cor. 5:7).

A serious form of sin had manifested itself in the church at Corinth and Paul demanded that the cause be isolated: on the principle that it takes only a tiny part of leaven to eventually leaven the whole lump (or contaminate the whole church, in this case). He says, **“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out, therefore, the whole leaven, that ye may be a new lump. For even Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”** Paul was evidently alluding to the fact that leaven, in the scriptures, is often associated with the pernicious effect of sin (i.e. like a spreading cancer) and he obviously had in mind the Mosaic practice amongst the Jews, at the passover, of removing every vestige of leaven from their houses and eating unleavened bread. Thus he talks of **“the leaven of malice and wickedness”** being replaced by **“the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”**. Paul is one of those writers who make frequent reference to type and antitype in the scriptures, and evidently he sees Christ as the type of the antitypical passover lamb. This might come strange to the ears of many of the Gentiles in the church, and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but they would never-the-less be greatly excited and thrilled by the fact that they too had a passover, and that passover was Christ. On the question of type and antitype Paul was not exaggerating, for there are some striking similarities between Christ and the Jewish passover.

First of all, as we have seen, a **lamb** (without blemish) had to be slain and its blood shed. Jesus was, more than once, referred to as **“the lamb”** and indeed is thus described in the Book of Revelation some 25 times. And John the Baptist, on seeing Christ approach him, said, **“Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”** The passover lamb required to be **“without blemish”** and that is exactly how Peter portrays Jesus when he describes the purchase price of man’s redemption: i.e. as **“the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot”**. (1 Peter 1:19). Christ challenged His enemies, **“Which of you convicteth Me of sin”**, but no one could reply. Paul described Jesus as One **“who knew no sin”** and who, although **“tempted in all points such as we are, was yet without sin”** (Heb. 4:15). Christ was certainly the lamb without blemish.

Again, the lamb **had to be slain**, in the evening of the passover. Likewise Jesus had to die a violent death **“according to the scriptures”**. Jesus **could** have died in several ways: he could have died naturally (of old age); he could have been drowned or could have been poisoned etc. but that would have been of no avail. He had to die a sacrificial death and His blood had to be shed. As Paul says, **“even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”**. In “the scriptures” Isaiah foresaw Jesus as oppressed, afflicted and as a lamb to the slaughter, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the One upon whom the Lord would lay the iniquity of us all. Certainly His blood was shed.

It is desperately sad to think that the sufferings and death of Christ are matters of complete indifference to the world at large. Few avail themselves of the saving properties of the shed blood of the Lamb. The Jews had to **avail themselves** of God’s protection from the death angel by striking the blood upon their lintels and doorposts. Doubtless God could have saved them without this, but their faith and trust in God had to be given expression, even to the bunches of hyssop (which by some might have been regarded as a non-essential). Likewise men, today, must seek refuge in the precious blood of Christ: being prewarned that, on Judgement Day, God’s death angels will **“pass over”** the contrite but will **“take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Thess. 1:8). This must be done now, before it is too late. We must confess Christ as our Lord and our Saviour now by obeying His gospel: repenting of our careless lives and by being baptised

(immersed) into Christ for the remission of sins. **“Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”**

CONCLUSION

I suppose other similarities, between type and antitype, might include the fact that the Israelites for their own safety that night were required to remain in their houses until the morning. Now, in N.T. times, our safety is contingent upon us **“abiding in Christ”**. Jesus said, **“Abide in Me and I in you. If a man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch”** (John 15:4). Having the protection of Christ we must remain in it “until the morning” when the shadows flee away. Having come out of “the world” we must not return.

Again, the Jews had not only to kill the lamb: they also had to eat it. Those “in Christ” must also “feed upon Him” growing in grace in the knowledge of God. Jesus said, **“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. But who so eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life: and I will raise Him up at the last day”**. (John 6:53). Jesus is, of course speaking figuratively and means that He must be ‘meat and drink’, in terms of zeal, to all those who would follow Him.

And so, while there might well be other analogies in a consideration of Jesus as “our passover” let us return, in closing, to the specific purpose Paul had in mind: i.e. that of purging the old leaven (or old sins) not only from our lives but also from our various congregations. At the first passover, leaven was a symbol of **the corruptions of Egypt**, and the Jews, prior to the passover, had to make a thorough and diligent search of their houses and a casting out of all leaven until not a trace was left. This, says Paul, we must also do in our lives regarding the leaven of sin. **“Therefore”** he says, **“Let us keep the feast not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice or wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”**.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

“Let her glean even among the sheaves.” (Ruth 2:15)

TO THEE

“I bring my grief to Thee,
The grief I cannot tell;
No words shall needed be,
Thou knowest all so well
I bring the sorrow laid on me,
O suffering Saviour, now to Thee.”

F.R.H.

AN HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” (Isaiah 35:8)

THE GOSPEL IN PERSON

GOD LOVES ME

“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.”

John 3:16.

A GIFT — “GOD SO LOVED — THAT HE GAVE”

“That he gave ... HIS ... ONLY ... BEGOTTEN ... SON.”

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him”

Isaiah 53:10

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama

sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:46.

God loves me, Christ died for me. God loves you. Christ died for you.

"WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS"

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8.

**WHAT DOES THE SEARCHLIGHT OF GOD TELL US OF
MAN'S SINFULNESS?**

Job:- "Then Job answered the LORD, and said Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."

Job 40:3,4.

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42: 5-6.

David:- "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: ..."

Psalm 51: 2-4.

Isaiah:- "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them."

Isaiah 59:12.

Jeremiah:- "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17:9,10.

The Prodigal:- "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

Luke 15:18.

The publican in the temple:- "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Luke 18:13.

Paul:- "There is none righteous, no, not one."

Romans 3:10.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 3:23.

"but what I hate, that do I."

Romans 7:15.

"but sin that dwelleth in me."

Romans 7:17.

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Romans 7:14.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Romans 7:24.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

1 Timothy 1:15.

Jonathan Edwards:- "It has often appeared to me, that if God were to mark my heart-iniquity, my bed would be in hell."

Samuel Rutherford:- "When I look at my sinfulness, my salvation is to me my Saviour's greatest miracle. He has done nothing in heaven or on earth like my salvation."

Luther:- "When a man like me, comes to know the plague of his own heart, he is not miserable only — he is absolute misery itself; he is not sinful only — he is absolute sin itself."

William Guthrie:- "The saints of God are far too sharp-sighted for their own self-satisfaction."

Leonard Morgan:- "The word of God takes my photograph, and I am honest enough to say that I do not like the result."

"I suppose no man is the worse for knowing the worst of himself."

"I cannot run away from God, and it is also true, I cannot run away from myself."

"I can never hide myself from me, I see what others fail to see."

"What a blessing for us that He sees us at our worst and loves us with His best. He loves the unlovely."

W. Riley, said, through one of his characters:- "He takes the raw material of humanity and makes something good out of it."

John said:- "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."

John 3:16.

Jesus said:- "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them. They that be whole need not be a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Matthew 9:12-13.

John the Baptist:- "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1: 1-29.

David:- "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Psalms 32:5.

Peter said:- "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Acts 3:19.

Paul said:- "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Romans:5-20

A GIFT – "GOD SO LOVED – THAT HE GAVE . . ."

"God loves me. Christ died for me. God loves you. Christ died for you."

Leonard Morgan.

THREE COMMENDABLE VIRTUES

When we speak of 'commendable', we mean of course, something which is worthy of our consideration, something to be cherished, something to be preserved, something to strive for. There are many other virtues but I would like to introduce, for consideration, the virtues of FAITH, COURAGE, and CONFIDENCE. Do we, at present, possess such virtues? We shall not know, really until we are put to the test and in any case it will be other people who will see in us such virtues, or see the absence of them.

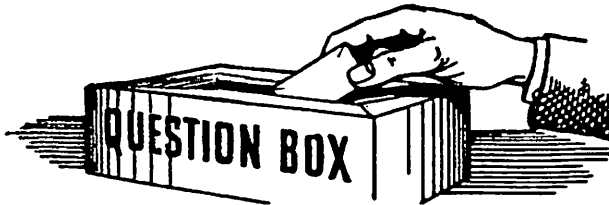
The Old Testament abounds with characters, both men and women, in whom such virtues were plain to see. We might think, first of all, of faithful Abraham. In (Gen. 22:1-3) we read of his testing time and of how he met the challenge with 'flying colours'. He was asked, of God, to sacrifice his son, his only son, the son given by long-awaited promise. Did any single person ever demonstrate such faith, courage and confidence in his God? Think of how he coped with his son's terrible question. "But where is the sacrifice ..." and note the complete confidence in the reply, "My son, God will provide the sacrifice." Then there were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who went through unswervingly with the ordeal laid before them with the words, "God shall deliver us out of thine hand." (Dan. 3: 6-11). Think also of that wonderful man Daniel who, disregarding the men who were scheming his violent death continued in his prayers to God, in full view of his enemies, "praying as aforetime", and prepared himself to take 'head on' the deadly and horrible consequences. Talk about faith, courage and confidence? In 1 Sam. 17:32 we are confronted, as Goliath was, with the little shepherd boy David. He came out to fight when all the usual men of valour were searching for some place to hide. His counsel to Israel (referring to Goliath) was, "Let no man's heart fail because of him ..." The secret of David's success was not the sling and the stone but the virtues of faith, courage and confidence. His confidence was not mis-placed.

In the New Testament too there are many instances recorded of men and women who displayed great quantities of these three virtues. None of the threats or actions of some of the despotic rulers of that time could possibly have caused these courageous people to have doubted the prevailing power and ability of their God. What a marvellous example they set to their fellow contemporaries and to us today.

We, as followers of Christ, should try and not let the side down in this but should try and emulate the worthies of the Bible. We see also, however, in the Bible, the results of human weakness in times of trial and adversity, and we are perhaps disgusted at what we read. May we be just as disgusted with ourselves when we allow ourselves to fail and to be intimidated by the forces of evil. Let us be strong and of good courage. Let us have the confidence which rings out in the voice of Paul when he says, **“For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”** (2 Tim. 1:12). Many may claim faith in Jesus but fail in the time of testing and have not the courage to DO what is expected of them, and do not appear to have the confidence in the things promised. Our heart and minds must be free of all doubts or hesitation and for inspiration we need only look back at the valiant souls of by-gone days and take courage. All kinds of difficult situations have to be met each day; all kinds of decisions have to be made and very often unpleasant tasks have to be performed. Let us try and meet them in a manner worthy of our profession and of our Lord Jesus.

How great is my faith? How strong is my courage? How complete is my confidence? Ponder, if you will those three wonderful virtues and perhaps re-appraise their value. If as a Christian, or a non-Christian, you have as yet failed to fully appreciate them, or failed sadly to implement them, then try again, and again. **FAITH. COURAGE. CONFIDENCE.**

THOMAS W. HARTLE,
Cape Town.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“During one of your lessons fairly recently, I heard you say that you did not believe that the Church was fully integrated. What did you mean by that?”

During a lesson of, say, some 20 minutes duration, it is never easy to explain fully every statement which one may make, especially if one is not quoting verbatim from notes. So it is good when someone picks up something which has not been adequately explained; at the very least it proves they were listening. Therefore, I'll try to explain further. Furthermore, the reader will understand that when we speak about 'the Church' we are speaking about the individual members who comprise it, and not about inanimate buildings.

I want to put before you three ways in which I believe some sort of relationship can be established:

- (a) We can establish some sort of 'union' with other people based on the similarity of ideas and ideals.
- (b) We can ostensibly be 'united' with others, so that the individual coheres with others, the idea being to consolidate into a constituent whole, or
- (c) We can be 'fully integrated' (in the Christian sense) with each other and with the One who is the initial object of our relationship.

I would like to examine some aspects of the above, and see how they fit in with my perception of what the Bible means when it talks about what 'living in Christ' means to the Christian.

THE UNION

In the Political sense, we often refer to the union of parties as a 'coalition'. To 'coalesce' means to come together in an attempt to form one whole. This attempted fusion into one whole is, in this sense, merely a temporary combination between parties who want to retain distinctive principles of their own; when such principles would seem to be threatened, then the coalition will fail.

A union based on the 'fusion' of a number of constituent parts is fraught with difficulty. I can take several pieces of copper wire, a heated soldering iron, and some solder, and fuse the individual pieces by blobs of solder into any length I may require. This does not, however, tell me the tensile or compressive strengths of each union so formed; furthermore, if I subject the wire to greater degrees of heat than that engendered by the soldering iron, it is quite probable that de-fusion will occur, and the individual pieces will fall apart, thus destroying the whole. I have used this example from physical science because I believe it to have spiritual implications.

It seems to me that in the religious sense, ecumenism has striven to make a world-wide communion by attempting to bring together Christians from diverse doctrinal and cultural backgrounds. It looks good, and the idea is good, but in the cauldron of doctrinal stubbornness the whole thing falls apart as an effective force, and at best can achieve only limited success; at worst, it can cause dismay and confusion, and does little to exalt Christ.

As regards individual Christians in the Church, there are what I would call 'peripheral Christians'. If one could look at a 'blown-up' picture of an atom, one would see a nucleus around which were electrons, (negatively charged particles), tightly held by the nucleus (usually protons, or positively particles). Other electrons at the outer edges of the atom, would be loosely held, and consequently able to move at random; these are peripheral, and they can move from atom to atom, or in the interstices **between** atoms (this theory, incidentally, accounts for the flow of electrical energy in a wire when a potential is applied to the ends of the wire). In the spiritual sense, have you seen Christians like this? I'm sure you have. They seem to have little cohesion with their fellow-Christians, and therefore they are not tightly held by **their** nucleus, Christ. Indeed, they can be so peripheral that they wander away from the Church altogether. They evidently formed a **loose union** with Christ in the first instance, and that, quite simply, is of an unending nature.

UNITY

What a grand-sounding word this is. How many sermons and lessons have you heard on Church unity, and how many times have you seen the attempted practice of unity fall far short of the expressed theory? There's certainly nothing wrong with the word because it means by definition 'oneness; being formed of parts that constitute a whole; due coherence of parts'. The real difficulty lies in the fact that it is **people** who have to be united, and therein lies the problem.

One of the main obstacles to achieving unity is self-interest. Take for example, the United Nations. It's a noble idea for nations to unite in order to be mutually supportive, and to prevent any one nation from stepping out of line to the detriment of world peace, but does it actually work in practice? Recent events in Bosnia and other places would seem to indicate only **limited** success. Proposals to bring about a more united approach are sometimes vetoed because some nations see their self-interest, either economically or militarily, threatened. Proposals which would seem to be right with regard to prevailing circumstances, are sacrificed on the altar of self-interest. Some of us can remember the old League of Nations, and **that** organisation

never really worked either, and generally for much the same reasons.

We Christians shouldn't be surprised at this. All down the ages God's witness has been dimmed by those who were ostensibly His children. Different so-called Christian communions, supposedly united, have insisted on maintaining their individual dogmas, even when these clearly and blatantly contradict God's revealed Will in the Bible; indeed, as the Editor pointed out in the August editorial in the S.S., their apologists go to great lengths to denounce the Bible from which they purport to teach God's Will. Could anything be more cynical, and could anything be more confusing to those who truly seek God?

There is a true scriptural way to maintain unity; Paul spells it out in **'Eph. 4:2,3. "I ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation where with ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"**. Now obviously, 'the unity of the Spirit' must mean **Oneness**. I have often said that it would be monstrous to think of the Holy Spirit as being at variance in any way with God and His Christ, and that being the case, the in-dwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians will produce, if allowed to, the sort of accord as exists in the Godhead. Coll.3:14 reminds us that **love (AGAPE)** is the bond; without love there can be no peace, no unity, no progress, both for individuals and the Church. We are to "forbear one another in love", and the measure of how we achieve this is a measure of our appreciation of the unifying influence of the Holy Spirit. We Christians should not allow self-interest to get in the way. However, God gives us an insight into something greater than the high ideal of unity.

COMPLETE INTEGRATION

This, I believe, is the ultimate step in relationships. One might say that 'union' and 'unity' could be steps that we have to take in order to reach this desirable goal. Let's look at the word 'integration' and some of its derivatives.

An 'integer', as I'm sure you all remember, is a whole number; something complete in itself. If I am 'integral' to something, then I am essential to the whole. If I 'integrate' with others, then I combine to make a whole; not fractional in any sense. It is the knowledge of **essentiality** which makes integration so unique a concept. Once I, as a member of a family, realise that I am **essential** to the well-being of that family, then my whole attitude to family relationships should change; I **have** to become family-orientated otherwise the family is bound to suffer to the degree that I am not rendering my essential service to its well being.

Applying this reasoning to the Church, the family of God, you will perhaps understand, dear questioner, why I made the remark which is the basis of your question. There **must** be many Christians who have opted for salvation, not appreciating the fact that they have become, in so doing, an **essential** part of the strategy of God's redemptive plan for the whole world. What prompts me to say this?

In the first place I refer you to Christ's prayer to His Father as recorded in John 17. After praying for the Apostles, the Lord turns His attention to all believers. **"Neither pray I for these alone (the Apostles), but for them also which shall believe on me through their word (this puts us into the frame because the Gospel is Christocentric and Apostolic), That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us ... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"** (John 17:20-23. The words in brackets are my own). That, to me, is complete integration with a perfect Source.

Secondly, we must never forget what Peter teaches us. When we become Christians we are made **'partakers of the divine nature'**, with all that such a statement implies. 2 Peter 1:4. We must then go on adding to our faith until we reach the ultimate goal. We sometimes sing a hymn 'Lord plant my feet on higher ground'. The Lord isn't

going to plant anyone's feet on higher ground. He has **prepared** the higher ground. We have to obey the upward call. We have to work, struggle, climb, until we reach that high ground which He has prepared. But when we reach it, I believe the air will be pure and rarefied. **Then** we shall be glad to 'pitch our tents' on the beautiful and spiritual Plains of God. **Then** we shall know what true integration with God and His Christ really means. The other Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, will have unerringly led us there, if we will but obey His promptings.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden,
20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan WN3 6ES.)

THE POWER OF LOVE

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good". (Rom. 12:20,21).

Of all the forces in the universe, love is the most powerful. More powerful is it than physical force than sarcasm, than rebuke, than argument. By the power of love the Lord lifts us, changes us, leads us upward and onward to a brighter and better world. We shall consider the power of love from **three angles**.

FIRST: *The power of love on ourselves*

Every emotion, good or bad, that we experience reacts upon ourselves. The man we hate suffers as a result of our hatred, but not to the degree that we suffer. To hurt our brother without hurting ourselves is an impossibility. Malice is a mental poison, which destroys the finest qualities of the soul. The man we love is blessed by our love, but not to the degree that we are blessed. The Master said, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."** We cannot help a man without helping ourselves. Though love may fail to touch an enemy's heart, it is never in vain. Love purifies (Rom. 13:8-10); it makes us more Godlike (Matt. 5:44,45; 1 John 4:5); it fits us for heaven where love prevails.

SECOND: *The power of love on our fellows.*

When we bestow our love on others, happy results will flow. For us to overcome evil with evil is an impossibility; but we can overcome evil with good. This is made plain in the words of the apostle Paul. Now, let us focus our attention on the following.

1. Love overcomes malice — hatred harboured in the heart. It disarms the foe, puts to shame the enemy, hushes the cynic. When drastic methods fail, as they always do, love wins. **"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stirreth up anger"**. (Prov. 15:1).

2. It draws them. **"Jehovah appeared of old unto me saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with long kindness have I drawn thee"** (Jer. 31:3). While hatred drives, love draws; while hatred isolates — makes man lonely in life, love makes friends.

3. It binds them. Not only does love draw, but it also binds brother to brother, people to people. It is the element — the bond, the cement — that preserves the unity of God's people (Col. 2:2; 3:14).

4. And love ennobles. It encourages. It makes life worth living. The love of one person causes a man to desire to live.

THIRD: *The Power of love on God.*

Love causes the great spiritual force in the universe to operate in our favour. It reaches up and takes hold of the throne of the Almighty and moves it. In the loving heart, God makes his abode (John 14:23). In the loving heart he finds the atmosphere most congenial to his nature — **"God is love."** For the people who love him, he makes all things — whether sweet or bitter — work together for their good (Rom. 8:28). Let us love God supremely and remember this precious promise.

Though we are weak, a mighty force is within our grasp. Let us lay hold on it and use it — not selfishly: for when the element of selfishness enters, it ceases to be love. Life is sweeter, the circle of our influence is wider, and we are powerful when we are motivated by love. Hatred is weak, but love is powerful — it makes us kings.

F.L. Cox.

MAN'S FAILURE IN THE HOME

Little difficulty is experienced in thinking of outstanding Bible women in the home: Hannah, Mary, Elizabeth, Jochabed, Eunice. Efforts to think of a comparable list of men, however, are not easy, for many of the great men of the Bible were failures in their homes: David, Lot, Eli, Samuel, Jacob, etc. A look at the causes of their failure might help our male readers to avoid their mistakes.

1. **Immorality.** David's adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah, resulted in the ruin of David's home. Noah's drunkenness, after his success in bringing up his sons to fear the Lord in a society of unparalleled wickedness, contributed to trouble within his family. Men today, if they live in drunkenness, adultery, and other forms of immorality, cannot hope to be successes in their homes.

2. **Lack of discipline.** Destruction came upon Eli and his family because "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:13). The Bible says "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

3. **Greed.** "Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere ... even as the garden of the Lord" (Gen. 13:10) and, apparently motivated by a desire for material abundance, moved his family into Sodom. The consequences of this sad mistake are well known to our readers. Many Christians today are making the same mistake as they sacrifice their children on the altar of greed, being willing to move their children anywhere for the sake of a promotion or more money.

4. **Partiality.** This often committed mistake brought trouble to the homes of Isaac and Jacob.

What can men do to avoid failure in the home? They can develop greater worthiness of their place of headship in the home through increased strength of character and conviction. They can become more thoughtful of wife and children. They can turn their attention away from the T.V., and spend time with their family. They can lead the family in prayer, Bible reading and devotion. They can pray without ceasing for the Lord's help.

We are reminded of the little boy who turned to his dad after hearing a preacher's description of a **Christian**, and asked, "Dad have I ever seen one?" Does **YOUR** child see a Christian when he sees you?

Bill Hall.

THE DENOMINATIONS

Churches with Peculiar Doctrines

6. — CHRISTADELPHIANISM

Here we have another definitely heretical Church. It originated in the work of one, Dr. Thomas, who was originally influenced by the work of Alexander Campbell and a member of a Disciple Church in America. He was undoubtedly a pedantic man, a qualified physician, but much less qualified in other fields, especially that of theology and Church history. He soon began to develop peculiar views about the millennium, the state of the dead and other matters, and the Disciples in America withdrew from him. This was about the year 1847. He then came to London and there associated with the Kentish Town Church of Christ, they being unaware for some time that the Disciples in America had withdrawn from him. It soon became obvious to them that

he was teaching heretical doctrine. The matter also spread to Birmingham. Before Churches of Christ actually withdrew from him, much damage had been done and many carried away by his teaching. Thus began the Christadelphian Ecclesia, though the name was not adopted till 1864. His chief disciple in this country was R. Roberts, whose book, setting forth his beliefs and entitled *Christendom Astray*, was published posthumously in 1910. Within living memory it was their custom to stand outside Churches of Christ in Birmingham distributing their tracts. Birmingham and Balham are their chief strongholds to this day.

Christendom Astray.

They claim to be the one true Church. Christendom has gone astray in many things; in teaching the doctrine of immortality (the dead are unconscious until the resurrection); in teaching the pre-existence of Christ (Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, but He was not the pre-existent Son of God. Literally He was a man born miraculously and exalted to a divine position); in teaching the personality of the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit is merely energy, like electricity); in teaching belief in a personal Devil (the Devil is merely the personification of evil); in teaching belief in Hell and the punishment of the wicked (the wicked are to be exterminated after being raised from the dead at the Second Advent); in teaching belief in a substitutionary view of the Atonement (in His death Christ is merely representative); in failing to teach the doctrine of a millennium. It may be asked how they support some of these things while accepting verbal inspiration. The answer is by a skilful manipulation of certain texts and the ignoring of others..

Organisation and Practice.

Even so they have not avoided division. There are two main bodies; The Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia Group; and the Christadelphian Hall, Suffolk Street Group, dating from 1885. The periodical of the former is *The Christadelphian* (monthly), and the latter *The Fraternal Visitor* (monthly). Like most millenarians they spend much time in discussing 'prophecy,' including Apocalypses, and prognosticating future events, and, like most of these people, their prognostications usually prove to be wrong. During the war (1945) they gained some notoriety by claiming to be Pacifists, but they are only Pacifists in the sense that they will not fight *for any earthly kingdom*. 'Christadelphian' is a somewhat pedantic word which etymologically means 'followers of the brethren of Christ'. Traces of their Campbellite origin are seen in that they practise the Baptism of penitent believers only, by immersion, for remission of sins, and that the chief service every Sunday is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Each ecclesia is self-governing, but the assemblies are grouped together and federated. The Officers are Presiding Brethren on the spiritual side, and Managing Brethren on the temporal side. There are also such offices as Secretary, Treasurer, Lecturer, Door-keeper, Visitor. Most office-bearers are elected annually.

They are all thoroughly instructed in the tenets of their faith, have a sound textual knowledge of the Bible, avoid emotionalism, are not pietistic, conduct their services with a quiet dignity, and lead upright lives though they take no part in civic or political affairs.

W. Robinson.

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

I wish to thank the brethren who sent cards, letters, and flowers during my recent bereavement. Also to those who attended the funeral of my husband Reg in Buckie. Your love and support was greatly appreciated by my family and I.

Ruth B. Coles.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 7	Zech. 13	Matt. 26:26-46
Nov. 14	Psalms 41	Matt. 26:47-58
Nov. 21	Psalms 31	Matt. 26:59-75
Nov. 28	Zech. 11	Matt. 27: 1-25

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's supper is a simple memorial feast. It was personally instituted by Jesus in memory of Him. Jesus knows our frailties better than anyone and He saw the need for His beloved disciples to meet together on the first day of every week to renew their strength around the table of their Lord. Of course, the first day of the week is so significant to all believers because it is the day in which Jesus triumphed over Satan and the grave.

I have just been reading the Church of Scotland magazine *Life and Work* for the month of September 1993 and it is a letter from an ex-Methodist, who gave his reason for leaving the Methodist church and becoming a Presbyterian as the increased frequency of Holy Communion, depriving him and his wife of two ingredients essential to their health — namely, an emphasis on the preaching of the Word and the singing of hymns and songs. Now, I would be the first to declare the importance of preaching the Word and praising God's name when the saints meet together. But I should like to tell my Presbyterian friend that partaking of the Lord's supper is really the central object of the fellowship meeting. Nay, it is more. It is the **very object** of our coming together. In partaking of the loaf and wine we remember our Lord in His own appointed way, lest we forget the price paid for our redemption.

We read that on that dark betrayal night "Jesus took bread and blessed it and break it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for

the remission of sins" (26:26-28). Campbell has written: "While he participates of the symbolic loaf, he shows his faith in, and his life upon, the Bread of Life. While he tastes the emblematic cup, he remembers the new covenant confirmed by the blood of the Lord ... When he reaches forth those lively emblems of His Saviour's love to his Christian brethren the philanthropy of God fills his heart and excites correspondent feelings to those sharing with the salvation of the Lord."

GETHSEMANE

Many great hymns have been written under the title: *The Lord's Supper*. One of them penned by a J. Montgomery contains these two verses:

Obedient to Thy gracious word,
In deep humility,
This will we do, redeeming Lord,
We will remember Thee.

Now e'er Gethsemane forget,
But there Thy conflict see;
Thine agony and blood-like sweat,
And so remember Thee.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: "**O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt**" (26:39). Jesus, of course, spoke of the cup of suffering. In the end, the Father gave Him sufficient strength to see Him through. We are reminded of God's words later on to Paul when he had asked Him three times to remove "**the thorn in the flesh**". The reply came: "**My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness**" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The problem of pain and suffering in this world has taxed the brains of many brilliant writers and commentators. For example, C.S. Lewis wrote a whole book on the subject. But Jesus has shown us that as He suffered so we must suffer too. He once said: "**Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your**

reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5: 10-12). The apostle Paul later echoed these words in his epistle to the Romans: "**For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us**" (8:18).

PETER

The apostle Peter was a man of strong character. However, at the time of Jesus' arrest and trial he showed great weakness out of fear of the consequences of admitting his allegiance to the Master. (How would we have reacted in the circumstances?) Jesus had prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times prior to the crowing of the cock (26:34) and this is exactly what happened (26:69-75). No wonder he shed bitter tears! (26:75).

Thanks be to God that Peter later on became a changed man by the power of the Holy Spirit. A study of *The Acts of the Apostles* and his two epistles reveal a courageous and fearless servant of Christ. In the end he suffered the very same death as his Master (John 21:18-19). His name is in the foundations of the heavenly city (Revelation 21:14).

PILATE

Pontius Pilatus became governor of Judea in 26 A.D. He will always be remembered as the man who, under pressure, condemned Jesus to death. Luke records these words of Peter to follow Jews: "**The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, had glorified His Son Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go**" (Acts 3:13).

What sort of man was Pilate? Philo described him as "by nature rigid and stubbornly harsh" and "of spiteful disposition and an exceeding wrathful man" and speaks of "bribes, the acts of pride, the acts of violence, the outrages, the cases of spiteful treatment, the constant murders without trial, the ceaseless and most grievous brutality" of which the Jews might accuse him. D.H.

Wheaton has written: "The verdict of the N.T. is that he was a weak man, ready to serve expediency rather than principle, whose authorisation of the judicial murder of the Saviour was due to the desire to please the Jewish authorities than to fear imperial displeasure if Tiberius heard of further unrest in Judea".

Pilate was well warned about his dealings with Jesus from none other than his wife: "Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (27:19). Like all good husbands, he should have listened more closely to his wife's words, but sadly did not. The consequences of his unjust actions do not bear thinking about.

BARABBAS

Mark said of Barabbas that he "**had committed murder in the insurrection**" (15:7). It was at the instigation of the chief priests and the elders that the multitude demanded the release of this murderer and the condemnation of Jesus (Matthew 27:20). How evil men can become! We read: "**Then released he (Pilate) Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified**" (27:26). The man of violence was preferred to the man of love. Did Barabbas change after his release? Did he cease from his acts of insurrection? Did hearing of Jesus' resurrection have any impact upon his life? We briefly wonder. But our attention from now on is fully and rightly set upon our Master, Lord and King.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

GHANA APPEAL

As the church continues to grow in Ghana so also does the requests for help. In the past three months the funds were sent as directed and met about half of the requests.

The Medical needs have been higher than at any time since we began this appeal. Brother Kodwo Mensah, a preacher in Takoradi, suffered a heart

attack and a baby only eight months old required an operation to remove fluid from the head. The surgeons would not begin until the cost of the operation was met. Each case required £150 and we sent from the funds £400 by express banking to cover the costs.

We are happy to inform you that brother Kodwo Mensah has recovered. I have also received a letter saying that the money had arrived and that the baby would be operated on the next day. Please remember not only these two cases, but our brethren in Ghana in your prayers.

Last year we mentioned a church in Afiao in the Volta Region which began with one man's desire to follow the New Testament pattern. Earlier this year we heard about another congregation in the Volta Region in Ho. Reports (not yet confirmed) of eight congregations in the Volta Region requesting help has been sent to me. The church continues to grow in Ashanti Region.

If anyone wishes to help in this work, please send cheques made out to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0DU. (Telephone 0383 728624).

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Ruth B. Coles now resides at 6 Heimdall Gardens, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 6TZ. Tel. No. (0592) 621094

CHANGE OF MEETING PLACE

CLEVELEYS: We now meet in the Stanley Hall, Rossendale Avenue South, (off Victoria Road East Thornton-Cleveleys.

Please send all correspondence to the Secretary (not to the hall) who will send directions to anyone needing them.

Eric Winter,
77 Kelvin Road,
Thornton Cleveleys,
Lancs.
Tel. No. 0253 866528.

COMING EVENTS

Newtongrange Social: The Church at Newtongrange intends, God willing to hold its Annual Social On Saturday 9th October, 1993 at 4 p.m. in the meeting place. Speakers: Bro. Bill Cook, Dunfermline. Bro. John Wilson, Slamannan. Chairman: John Wilson.

We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the various congregations, and our Lord.

Joe Currie (Sec/Treas).

Kentish Town: Anniversary Meeting, Kentish Town, London, 122nd Anniversary. Saturday October, 2nd 1993, 3.00 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Tea 4.45 p.m. Speaker: Bro Geoff Daniell — A warm welcome to all.

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