

CHARLES STRONG

Thoughts on Armistice Day - 2018

In 1918 I stated that 'I don't mean that Armistice Day was not a day to be thankful for, or that we should not remember our fellow countrymen who fell in battle. I would have the latter remembered for more than two minutes.

Upon my return to the Armistice Day commemorations, a hundred years later, however, I am appalled at the history of warfare and violence that has persisted. The so-called war to end all wars seems to have become the war to justify all wars. A hundred years ago in the 'Manifesto' published in the newspaper we said,

Today we southern peoples, in common with our king, will solemnly, silently, gratefully honor yet again the memory of our unforgettable fallen, by whose crimson sacrifice we live in chastened peace, our powers for world embracing good enhanced, our opportunities for God-directed service, everywhere enlarged.

At that time we believed that the sacrifice of our fallen would activate an era a peaceful relations between world powers and local communities under the guidance of God. Instead, we now remember numerous unwarranted wars across the globe, thousands more human lives sacrificed in vain and the need for an international charter for peace totally forgotten.

In that same Manifesto a hundred years ago we boldly confessed,

And today, lest we forget, let us not fail to give God the glory and thanks for the Armistice and the Peace: remembering that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of Earth. Hallelujah!

I do not know my friends how you felt on reading this to day.. To me it seems the smuggest and most disgusting cant—a perfect parody on Christian Religion. And then the whole of this self-righteous appeal, winding up with 'Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' O the irony of it! Is this Christianity? Not as I understand it. It is paganism and a return to the days of Joshua and David.'

Jesus said, 'Love you enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute you.' I do not find in the celebrations of Armistice Day any sign of this spirit, any prayer for Germans, Russians, Iranians. Do they not need our prayers? Are they not our brothers and sisters? And are we not supposed, if one be overtaken in fault, to 'restore such an one', and so to 'bear one another's burdens?'

Armistice Day also makes us think about our share in the guilt and the shame of the great Christian war, in which Christian Governments,, supported by Christian Churches, offered up millions of Europe's and India's best and bravest men as sacrifice to Mars.

Did we not explain away our Christian principles—'Overcome evil with good'—twisting and turning texts of Scripture to show that war was consistent with Christian religion; that Jesus Christ Himself would have donned khaki?

I fear that Armistice Day did not bring any repentance, any sense of responsibility for the war, any sense of the awful scandal to Christendom with such a spectacle as that of Christians of one nation killing Christians of another nation—in the name of Christ!

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