

## Do we remember the soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-1918 too?

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It's that time of year again. I haven't seen many people where I live wearing paper poppies yet, but the politicians are sporting theirs, and sooner or later I'm sure all public figures, especially on television, will be decorated with an obligatory red flower. Ordinary folks like you and me will have our chance to acquire our own when making a donation to the Royal British Legion, perhaps at the checkout of a local shop or at a busy transport hub during a commute. And we can also expect some public debate about the sensitivities of the symbolic poppy, with some folks refusing to wear the poppy in demonstration against the wars currently being fought by this nation. Putting aside such contemporary debate, the original purpose for this act of remembrance, especially performed every year on the 11th of November, is to remember the soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-1918. Churches across the country will hold remembrance services on Sunday 9th November to honor the dead of all wars since and express gratitude for their sacrifice.



This year, however, will be especially significant as it is 100 years since the beginning of the Great War, which later became known as the First World War. "The lamps are going out all over Europe," said British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey on 3rd August 1914 as Europe descended into war; "we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." On the 4th of August earlier this year, this image was recreated as lights were switched off and candles were lit in an act of reflection. I plan to take my family to visit the Tower of London in the next week or two to see the 888,246 ceramic poppies that have filled the Tower's moat. Making up an artistic installation entitled *Blood Swept Land and Seas of Red*, each poppy represents a British soldier who died during the First World War.



Through observing this horrifying and humbling sea of poppies, I want my children to engrave memories onto their subconscious mind that will help them appreciate the sacrifices made long before even their grandparents were born. It is possible to purchase a ceramic poppy once the installation has been removed after the events of remembrance next month. My wife and I have already reserved some for our family. I hope that these souvenirs will help my children to remember.

But why do I want them to remember? Why reflect on the pain and suffering of the past? Why not make a decision to put that past behind us and move on, holding onto only good memories?



One of the themes I explored in the dissertation I wrote for my MA in pastoral theology was how memories, and in particular stories, shape our identity. In the context of wider research about lineage, I reflected on how the stories we pass on to our descendants will mold their sense of identity. A shared history and a shared story connects our descendants with others who share those stories. I feel that the story of the Great War, and indeed all the World Wars of the twentieth century, are pivotally important to the contemporary and future identity of the population, not only of Europe, but of the whole world. For, although the Great War was mainly fought on European soil, it involved soldiers from across the whole Commonwealth and the USA. I recently discovered a twitter account, We Remember Too, devoted to remembering the Commonwealth soldiers of different faiths and ethnicities who fought in the First and Second World Wars. Evidently, my history and my children's history is connected to the sacrifices made by people from around the whole world.

The First World War is especially significant for Unificationists as it is understood as a worldwide conflict between the Abel-type and Cain-type spheres of the world, with a partial victory for the Abel-type side. The results of this victory, as explained in the relevant section of the Exposition of the Divine Principle, included the "foundation for the birth of the returning Christ, who is destined to be the Lord of God's world." Thus, the victory of the First World War created the conditions to allow Sun Myung Moon to be born. His birth, shortly afterwards in 1920, took place in the context of great geopolitical transitions borne out of the Great War. While it might seem quite a stretch of the imagination to connect the horrific and wasteful suffering of war to the birth of the True Parent of Heaven, Earth & Humankind,\* the consequences of the First World War set in motion changes across the globe with which students of

history may be familiar.

I want to maintain the tradition of remembering the World Wars because they are intimately connected to my True Parents. In remembering the World Wars, I want my descendants to remember their connection to who they themselves are. Their identity is related to these historical events in more ways than might initially be expected: Not only did those wars guarantee freedom for us today, but they also bought the birth of the returning messiah. By maintaining the tradition of remembering, I hope that my descendants' sense of identity will be strengthened. So on Remembrance Sunday, 9th November, the Bromley Unification Community will hold a special worship service suitable for the occasion. We will choose to remember, and in so doing, we will choose to reconnect to our original identity.

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\*The True Parents of Heaven, Earth & Humankind (in Korean 천지인참부모님, cheon-ji-in-cham-bu-mo-nim) is an honorific title for Sun Myung Moon and his wife Hak Ja Han Moon reflecting their parental authority over the created cosmos and all humanity.

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remembrance\\_poppy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remembrance_poppy)

<http://www.scentedcandleshop.com/candle-news/index.php/symbolism-of-candles-in-dreams/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11021743/Row-on-row-the-poppies-flow-at-the-Tower-of-London.html>

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