



The New Internationalism Charles S. Macfarland (1915)

Charles Macfarland was a white New Englander and Congregational minister. At the time he wrote the text excerpted here, he was a leader in the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), an ecumenical body with which some thirty Protestant denominations in the United States were affiliated. One of the FCC's functions was to speak on social issues in the name of its affiliate denominations; in the first years after its founding in 1908, the FCC was vocal in advocating for US workers and in supporting arbitration as a peaceful solution to international conflicts. Literally as World War I began, Macfarland was in Europe representing the FCC at a Christian peace conference. Prior to the United States entering the war, the FCC raised funds for European war relief. After the United States entered the war, the FCC provided the US military with Protestant chaplains.

Excerpted here is a chapter from a book Macfarland published under the title Christian Service and the Modern World. Although not an FCC publication, the book exemplifies the social gospel outlook that Macfarland brought to his leadership in the FCC. Macfarland urges Americans—whom he addresses as a nation of white Christians—to see the ongoing war in Europe as a warning. Americans must purge their nation of its own social sins: racism, oppression of workers, and exploitation of other nations. Only then can Americans “become the world’s messiah,” leading the way to worldwide brotherhood and peace.

[“We reckon with the same forces as have ruined Europe”]

[...L]ife has fallen largely into the order of the survival of the fittest. To him that hath is given, from him that hath not is taken away; the weak become weaker, and the strong stronger [...] In Europe, the main division is by nations; in America, by classes. Each of those nations is fighting, in others, the very sins which it has itself committed. [...] All have, in varying degree, either talked or acted an arrogant imperialism, and each has constantly increased the suspicions of the other. [...] The conflict over there was no mere accident. Its ultimate causes are material ambition, selfish competition, unfair advantage, suspicion, the doctrine that might makes the only right, the confusion of moral with physical power, the ruthless law of the survival of the fittest. [...] Are we free from the danger of these ultimate causes?

[...L]et us not forget that the nations of Europe are suffering, not only because of their immediate sins, but because of their past records. Admit even that some one of these nations is primarily at fault, how about the past conquests of the others? But let us pursue the historical method further. How about our methods of the past? Let the Red Man answer. And the Black Man. [...] Have we, as a nation, been free from responsibility for the exploitation of the poor people of Mexico, and have we cause to wonder because they do not trust us and have little confidence in our benevolent intentions? The peoples of the Far East have had occasion to exercise great patience with us, and they have been very forbearing. We have sent others to them than our missionaries. Our present treatment of Japan is irritating to her national sense of honor; and our flimsy methods for the protection of the aliens in our midst, who have as much right in our midst as did our own fathers, are things to give us pause and cause the native hue of a self-glorying satisfaction to become sicklied o’er with the pale cast of humiliating thought. [...]

It is sad indeed to witness, in Europe, race antagonism and a tribal contempt crushing out Christian sympathy and love, but have we within our borders a brotherhood and sisterhood which constitutes a divine democracy? I think it was a German philosopher who once uttered the beautiful thought that religion was reverence for inferior beings. Have we attained that height of thought in our estimate of other states and races? [...]

Another cause of the world conflict is the rise of submerged peoples, and we have here inundated thousands struggling for air and light and freedom of opportunity. If you think this is not so, read a few of the papers and magazines published by our organizations of labor, [...] and then read the magazines published by our industrial manufacturers. [...] Great masses of our people are looking, for their uplifting, towards a revolution, while our rich gaily flaunt their riches in the face of the poor and emphasize the wide gulf between Dives at his table and Lazarus at the gate. [...] The overseas pronouncements about nations crushing each other sound very much as though they might have been made at a dinner of a great association of manufacturers held recently, or at a gathering in some dingy hall of their open foes in the world of industry. We have [...] a class hatred [here] as clear-cut as the shameful breach between the striving nations [...]

[...L]et us not fail to remember that we are to reckon with the same demoniac forces as those which have ruined Europe. Let us profit by the sad example and learn as a nation not to ask God to be on our side, but to pray with Lincoln that we may be found upon the side of God. Let us not forget that we must purge ourselves in order that we may be ready to take the great part to which God and our age are about to call us. [...] The greatest prophet of the Old Testament [...] declared that the protection and peace of Israel, in her international relations, were to be secured only when within her own borders oppression ceased and justice found its way to the abode of her children, and not until then could the sword be beaten into the plowshare. [...]

[“Let the nations see the power of our ideals”]

Ours is as yet a bewildered and confused democracy. The nations are still suspicious of us. Japan has an attitude of watchful waiting. China has her alternate hope and doubt and is mercurial in her temper towards us. The little nations to the south are not quite sure of us [...] Mexico is really waiting to see if we shall disclaim and repudiate and perhaps bring her exploiters to the mind of Zaccheus, and whether we shall send into her midst the messengers of light. And now the eyes of the whole world are on us. It does not yet know whether our democracy is real or specious, and whether the whited sepulchers without are inwardly filled with dead men's bones.

[...] But if our own house only can be set in order, we shall, under the hand of God, become the world's messiah. [...N]ow, when all else has broken down and the darkness about them is so dense that the light cannot be mistaken, let the nations see in us a national greatness that rests upon the power of our ideals; whose domination is that of moral power, which can weld together divergent forces and peoples in her midst by mutual interest and affection; whose people have equal rights and justice because the strong help the weak; whose patriotism is that of duty and service rather than of rights and privilege; a nation that will rather suffer wrong than do a wrong—and they will see the power of moral conquest. Our seed shall possess the nations and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. The nations shall come to our light, and kings to the brightness of our rising. [...]

The church has surrendered to economists and jurists a leadership that belonged to herself [...U]tilitarianism [...] and [...] materialism [...] cannot give the constructive, vital power for the healing of the world. The nations must have some power that will transform their feelings, their jealousies, their passions, and will open their eyes to their poor little racial distinctions. [...] Christianity has never yet declared, so that men should understand it, that God knows nothing about races or nations, and that the words *white*, *yellow*, *Slav*, *Teuton*, and *Anglo-Saxon* are not found in the divine vocabulary [...] The child must be taught to feel, and to feel it deeply, that the black man at home and the black man in Africa belong to the same race and state as himself; that the yellow man in the laundry and the yellow man in the Far East are of his own blood and live, not only in the same house, but in the same Father's house. Not until then will the great mass of the world's toilers shake off the hypnotism of statecraft and diplomacy and witness the brotherhood of the world, bereft of the commercial title "limited." [...]

There is no emblem in the world that has been used to greater dishonor than the flag; and our own Stars and Stripes, in foreign lands and in those of our near neighbors, has been used to cover and protect the infamy of private exploitation. [...] Our children [...] should be taught to pray that God shall preserve their nation from other nations, while they should also be taught to pray that other nations should also be preserved from theirs. [...] The secular history in our public schools, the sacred history in our Sunday schools, has glorified conquest in the one and glorified conquest in the other [...]; and today [our children] breathe the sense of class distinction. The sense of race prejudice becomes their natural heritage on every hand. [...] In our public schools [...], we should expunge the discriminations of *civilized*, *semi-civilized*, *barbarian*, and substitute a new distinction which shall be grounded upon historical perspective and the principle of relativity; likewise, in our Sunday school, such words as *heathen* and *pagan*. The greatest task that awaits our experts in education today is [...] the teaching in childhood of the principles of a worldwide brotherhood that breaks down every social and political barrier that has been created by the failing vision of man. [...]

Let us think with more of affection than of scorn of all our misguided brethren over the sea, led as lambs to the slaughter—for even though we may deem them stricken, smitten, and afflicted of God, let us not forget that they bear our griefs and carry our sorrows; that they are wounded for our transgressions, are bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace is upon them; and that, perhaps, by their stripes we may be healed.

Source: Charles S. Macfarland, *Christian Service and the Modern World* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915), 114-140, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ia.ark:/13960/t4gm8944x>. Public domain.

Excerpts edited by John-Charles Duffy. Paragraph breaks adjusted in the excerpted text to more clearly mark shifts of topic or for a more condensed presentation of the text. A long sentence broken up. An unnecessary conjunction omitted from a dependent clause to avoid confusion. The placing of two prepositions reversed in order to render an archaic phrasing more intelligible to present-day readers. Spelling modernized and Americanized. Punctuation emended for readability. Words used as words italicized. The word *church* has been converted here to lowercase to clarify that it isn't standing in for the name of a specific denomination; extending the use of a “down” style for religious terminology, the word *divine* has also been converted to lowercase. The capitalizing of *Stars and Stripes* replicates the source publication. So does the capitalizing or not of racial labels, which the source capitalizes when referring to racial groups collectively (e.g., “Let the Red Man answer”) but places in lowercase when referring to individuals (e.g., “the yellow man in the laundry and the yellow man in the Far East”).

These edited excerpts from Macfarland's book are intended for *teaching* purposes only. For *research* purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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