

The peace congress in the church. On its resonance within Swiss Protestantism

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The fact that the main ceremony of the Socialist International's peace congress took place in the Basel cathedral, a religious space, was unusual. It was by no means self-evident that this could be arranged within the short amount of time available. Did this cooperation go further than concerns of a purely organisation nature? Was this the beginning, in the shared responsibility for peace, of a reconciliation between the church and the labour movement – something which would hardly have seemed possible just a short time before?

Religious socialism, a movement that arose in the first years of the 20th century, aimed at just such a reconciliation. Although clearly supported only by a minority in church circles, these endeavours were particularly pronounced in pre-war Switzerland. The Basel Peace Congress raised hopes within this movement that it could engender 'a new era of world history' which would transform both the church and the labour movement. As Leonhard Ragaz stated in the newspaper *Neue Wege*, it was not priests who had come to preach peace, but 'men and women of the world, "non-believers", politicians and labourers'.

The shared hopes were frustrated by the course of history. Nevertheless, movements had been born which were guided by common and even religious values and were dedicated to the pursuit of peace and greater justice in this life on earth.