The Rise of the Global South and the Protestant Peace with Socialism

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This article explores a major shift in European Protestant thought about socialism during the mid-twentieth century, from intense hostility to acceptance. During the twentieth century's early decades it was common for European Protestant theologians, church leaders and thinkers to condemn socialism as a threat to Christianity. Socialist ideology, many believed, was inherently secular, and its triumph would spell anarchy and violence. In the decades after the Second World War, however, this hostility began to wane, as European Protestant elites increasingly joined Christian-socialist associations and organisations. By focusing on the Protestant ecumenical movement, this article argues that one of the forces in this change was decolonisation, and in particular the rise of Christian and socialist thinkers in the Global South. It shows how concerns about Christianity's future in Asia and Africa helped some European Protestants to rethink their long-held suspicion towards state-led economic management and distribution.

Geneva was rarely the centre of socialist thought and activism, but this all changed for a brief moment in July 1966. For four days its conference halls hosted hundreds of Protestant thinkers, church leaders and politicians from around the globe, who gathered to discuss how their communities could be mobilised towards economic egalitarianism. For many of the speakers, such as West German theologian Heinz Dietrich Wendland and Uruguayan writer Emilio Castro, it was self-evident that Christian solidarity and grace could only be realised when governments the world over regulated economic relations, thus eliminating wealth disparities at home and between the global North and South. 'The Church of Christ . . . recognised all men as its neighbours', explained one attendee, and was obliged to rescue all humanity from economic subjugation. Indeed, participants in the proceedings – which were formally called 'the World Conference on Church and Society' – envisioned their economic message as the basis for a broader struggle against all forms of inequality, including racial and colonial hierarchies. Alongside distinguished writers, the line-up included addresses by internationally renowned anti-racist and anti-colonial activists, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Kwame Nkrumah. In their final statements the delegates articulated their vision for a Christian and socialist order. Only 'the nationalising of the means of production in the framework of central planning', they proclaimed, 'can form a basis for responsible participation of citizens in political life. . . . Nations and governments are true to God's calling only if they cooperate in the search for this more equitable allocation, [and] in so far as they hinder or are indifferent to it, they risk not only social and political disruption but also the judgment of God.' [1]

While proclamations on economic and political liberation were not exceptional in the mid and late 1960s, the Conference on Church and Society was nevertheless remarkable. For the engine behind it, the international ecumenical movement, had once been one of Europe's most staunchly anti-socialist forces. Emerging as a missionary association in the 1880s and then expanding into a broad network of churches and Protestant-affiliated organisations in the 1920s, the ecumenical movement was one of the twentieth century's most ambitious Christian undertakings. Seeking to unify all

Protestant churches and missions, it gathered the support of German missionaries, British politicians, French diplomats and Scandinavian church leaders; after the Second World War they joined American mainline leaders to find the World Council of Churches (WCC), the single largest international Protestant organisation. During those decades European ecumenists viewed economic planning and distribution with suspicion. Their many conferences, publications and social programmes often depicted socialism as a dangerously 'materialist' and even anti-Christian ideology, and their activism focused not on economic matters, but on securing Christian legal rights around the world, especially the right of conversion and evangelisation. [2] But beginning in the 1950s, and increasingly in the 1960s, ecumenical elites changed their position. Church leaders and laypeople alike dedicated growing attention to economic matters and began to describe wealth distribution and state management as essential to the gospel. By 1966 events like the Conference on Church and Society were commonplace in the universe of European ecumenist thought and politics. In fact, the WCC went so far to support the violent overthrow of anti-socialist regimes, and even provided funds for guerrilla organisations in Africa.

How to explain this quick change? Why did Western European Protestant writers and church leaders radically rethink their approach to left-wing politics? Because the ecumenical movement declined so sharply in Europe and the United States after the 1960s, it has received little scholarly attention, and the evolution of its thinking on society, economics and politics remained largely unexplored beyond the writings of its members. [3] Recently, however, historians have begun to recognise its significance for the history of Western Christianity, and especially the ways it helped coordinate experimental Protestant social activism. In particular, they have noted how ecumenist elites, who originally subscribed to early twentieth-century hierarchical ideologies of a Western 'civilising mission', shifted gears in the 1960s to embrace several causes of the global left, mobilising against the American war effort in Vietnam, South African racism and global sexism. [4] Yet the movement's thinking about economics, especially its embrace of socialist conceptions of economic planning and justice, has not received sustained attention. And the few scholars addressing this change have attributed it to the long tradition of American ecumenists' interest in social justice (the idea of the 'Social Gospel') or generational change, which brought more radical thinkers and activists to the fore. [5]

As important as these factors were, another principal engine in the movement's turn to the left was the rise of Christian-socialist synthesis in the postcolonial world. In the 1940s Asian, African and Latin American Protestant ecumenists began to articulate a vision of socialist Christianity. Over the next several decades they issued a series of provocative publications and conferences in which they forcefully linked the anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggles, claiming that both were demanded by the Gospel. In earlier decades such ideas would have been largely dismissed by European ecumenical elites, who felt little urgency to respond to non-Westerners. Despite their claim to represent all believers, ecumenical organisations and meetings provided minimal representation to non-Europeans well into the 1950s. But as scholars like Annegreth Schilling and Katharina Kunther have shown, the onslaught of decolonisation changed the outlook of many Europeans. The shrinking of state support for missionary work and the decline in Europe's prestige meant that many writers and missionary leaders worried about Christianity's status in the global south and felt pressure to 'indigenise' it by transferring more authority to Asians, Africans and Latin Americans. [6] This process, in turn, while protracted and uneven, also fostered new tolerance for socialism. The more Europeans conceded space and authority to non-Europeans, the more they accommodated themselves to distributionist ways of thinking and began demanding the systematic transfer of wealth inside and among nations. Indeed, it is telling that the Conference on Church and Society was not a purely European production but rather was conceived and supported also by Asians and Africans. In fact, it was the first time in the movement's century-long existence that the number of non-Western participants equalled those of Europeans. [7]

To be sure, when European ecumenists reflected on socialism, they were discussing a broad political and intellectual phenomenon, one that changed over time. Even as they condemned it as dangerous in the 1920s and embraced it in the 1960s, they repeatedly debated its precise meanings and the specific policies it dictated. For some, socialism meant relatively modest welfare programmes on the national level and general investment programmes of economic development by Western powers in the post-colonial world. For others, such visions were painfully unsatisfying, and it was self-evident that 'true' socialism meant a radical state takeover of economic practices and relationships, Western reparations and the decimation of all economic hierarchies. Indeed, like other self-identified European socialists at the time, socialist ecumenists often were locked in heated debates on the desired trade regimes, investment patterns and economic planning they hoped to see. [8] Many came to support economic redistribution and planning (on both the national and international levels) only hesitantly and cautiously, to the repeated frustration of their more radical counterparts, especially those from Latin America. Still, for all its occasional vagueness and gradual nature, the ecumenical movement's shift in economic and social thinking was substantial. It entailed a break from decades of profound suspicion towards state economic management, and the development of new theological and political languages.

The story of European ecumenism's economic conversion has implications beyond the ecumenical movement itself. Even though European Protestants did not succeed in inaugurating a socialist renaissance, their intellectual and political campaigns shed light on the ways in which decolonisation helped feed and reinforce changes in European Christianity. For decades, scholarship on European Christians' interactions with the non-European world has focused on their place in the enormous apparatus of the colonial project. A vast body of work sought to measure if and how much missionaries and missionary institutions helped legitimise the European 'civilising mission', undermine it or simultaneously do both. [9] Only very recently have historians begun to investigate how imperialism's formal *collapse* after the Second World War left its marks on Christianity in the former metropole, whether in the intellectual or organisational spheres. If decolonisation helped alter European thinking about race and welfare, as other historians have shown, what imprint did it leave on Christian self-conceptions? [10] Yet such explorations have thus far remained largely confined to the French-speaking sphere, considering how interactions with and reflections on African co-religionists led French Christians to reflect on racial theories, support for military force or Christian–Muslim relations. The story of the ecumenical movement's transformation in this time period is thus an opportunity to expand on those pioneering works, both geographically and thematically. It helps show decolonisation's impact on Christian organisations across Western Europe, and its role in remaking economic and social Christian thought. [11]

To chart the broad contours of European ecumenism's shift, this article progresses in three steps. The first part outlines the nature of ecumenical hostility to socialism during its formative decades in Europe, from the 1920s to the 1940s. It shows how ecumenist writers and leaders viewed socialism as a 'materialist' ideology, an extreme manifestation of a secular and even anti-Christian worldview. The second part briefly charts the genesis of opposition to this consensus. It explores how from the 1940s onward, Asian, African and Latin American members of the ecumenical movement blended Christianity, Marxism and anti-colonialism to claim that only radical and state-managed economic redistribution fulfilled the message of the Gospel. Finally, the article's third and longest part investigates how decolonisation and the growing belief that Christianity's future lay in the global south helped facilitate European ecumenists' reconsideration of their views on the economy. It demonstrates how some Europeans thinkers and mission leaders, in the course of engaging with Asian and African thought in the 1950s and 1960s, ventured into rethinking ecumenism's traditional stance on the economy, developed Marxist sympathies and began redirecting practical missionary efforts into more economic considerations. Those changes were sometimes too mild for writers and church activists from the global south, and at times caused considerable frustration. But they

forever transformed European ecumenism's social thought, and in some cases, also its missionary practice.

Ecumenist Anti-Socialism

During the ecumenical movement's early decades, in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, most of its leaders and thinkers spent little time thinking about socialism. As a missionary undertaking – its formal goal was to coordinate the work of all major Protestant missions to Africa and Asia – its conferences and publications mostly discussed evangelisation techniques and relations with non-Christian communities, and said little of economics. [12] The First World War and its chaotic aftermath, however, which witnessed the swelling of militant labour across Europe, propelled socialism to the centre of ecumenical attention. Was socialism's newfound power, many theologians and church leaders wondered, a threat to Christianity's historical centre, a symptom of the continent's declining Christian sensibilities? Indeed, Protestant elites were alarmed by the left's anti-clerical sentiments, even if those manifested themselves differently from one country to another. Their writings often conflated the policies of socialists and communists, and expressed anxieties both when the German Social-Democratic Party separated church and state, abolished Protestantism's traditional role as the country's official religion and sought to expand non-religious public education, and also when the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union declared an all-out war on the churches. [13] For many, socialism in all its variations seemed to represent a crude and 'materialist' conception of humanity, in which the people's loyalty was reduced to earthly' matters of power and material well-being. Like extreme nationalism – which ecumenicists also viewed as un-Christian in its demand for total obedience and hostility to international cooperation – they believed it left no room for religion and spiritual values.

The person who more than anyone articulated this growing occupation with socialism was Nathan Söderblom, the Archbishop of Uppsala and the most important European ecumenist leader of the interwar era. According to Söderblom, the principal challenge faced by Christianity was the fetish of earthly politics in Europe. Both nationalism and socialism, which he claimed to be the era's most popular ideologies, idolised the state by making it the highest moral authority and thus undermined Christian devotion. 'In our time', he lamented in his widely read *Christian Fellowship* (1923), 'the State is being deified openly or under a cloak'. In this line of thought, Europeans had arrogantly come to believe that their own polities could replace the churches' and God's living words as the source of virtue. The result was the veneration of human vices, such as greed and self-love, which Söderblom had no doubt would directly lead to evil tyranny. 'The legally constituted community is the creation and gift of God', he warned, 'but when it is raised to the position of highest value, the State becomes Antichrist, whether we are dealing with ancient Rome or with modern theories of the State'. In his many writings, Söderblom did not distinguish between the left's different strands, which he ultimately conceived as similar and identical to fascism. In his anti-statist ideology, sovereignty and economic regulation were manifestations of a frightening secular problem. [14]

Söderblom was far from alone in this way of thinking. Across national and political lines, missionary leaders and theologians included modern socialism under the banner of 'secularism', a frightening new and Western conception of humanity, which denied the existence of divine grace and human sin, and instead celebrated humans as the source of all achievement and morality. The Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, for example, lamented in *Theology of Crisis* (1929) how socialism, alongside extreme nationalism, introduced its 'poison . . . into the organism of mankind'. Siegfried Knak, Director of the Berlin Mission, concurred, and despaired in *Secularism and Mission* (1929) that it had 'overwhelmed' most of Europe's culture. [15] This understanding of secularism as a 'materialist' worldview continued to define the ecumenical movement's thinking after the onslaught of the Great Depression, especially its dual opposition to Nazism and Stalinism. Those regimes, ecumenists believed, were ultimately extreme versions of socialism's 'materialist' worldview, in which racial

purity or crude economic determinism crushed spirituality. As the influential ecumenist Swiss theologian Adolf Keller explained in his *Religion and Revolution* (1933), both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union epitomised the 'shallow materialism and a religion of "this-worldliness"', and Protestants had to 'fight strongly against this wave of modern paganism'. [16]

This approach did not mean that European Protestant ecumenists conceived of themselves as proponents of capitalism. Influential ecumenical writings of social thought, like Joseph Oldham's *Christianity and the Race Problem* (1925) or Emil Brunner's *Divine Imperative* (1932), worried that free markets reduced human relations to 'materialist' calculations and lamented what they saw as the modern economy's harsh exploitation. [17] What ecumenist writers and thinkers instead envisioned was a society in which economic and social classes were secondary to a sense of Christian spiritual solidarity. Through joining the churches and taking part in their rites, workers and entrepreneurs would transcend their mutual hostility and sense of competition and see each other as brethren in a shared destiny. Indeed, leading ecumenists often conceived their churches as providing a spiritual source for stability against what they described as reckless dreams of social revolution, ones that were shared by both socialism and capitalism. As Brunner explained, 'it is the duty of the Church . . . to revive the idea of the responsibility of all to all, the idea of concrete responsibility in mutual unity'. [18] Such statements, of course, remained painfully vague about specific economic policies. They also dodged the question of whether ecumenists' anti-statism (for example, its members' opposition to socialist welfare programme) could in fact strengthen the capitalist forces Protestantism ostensibly opposed. But for many ecumenist elites the most urgent task was not forging alternative patterns of investment or distribution. Rather, it was reducing economics' central role in defining human desires and relations and diverting their solidarities to the churches.

During the interwar period, therefore, European ecumenists began to complement their missionary cooperation in Asian and Africa with new forms of social action in Europe. Building off the earlier works of the 'inner missions', ecumenist clergy and laypeople launched multiple public campaigns to 'uplift' the lives of the working classes, such as educational initiatives against alcoholism, improving nutrition and health conditions and, especially, mobilising in support of child labour abolition. Indeed, despite the rhetorical equation of socialism with capitalism, it was the left that was the ecumenists' main social preoccupation. No parallel programmes, for example, emerged to lobby against financial speculation, unregulated trade or the evangelisation of the middle classes. In 1925 the major leaders of these efforts, such as Elie Gounelle from France and Manfred Björkquist from Sweden, joined Söderblom in founding a new pan-European organisation, the Life and Work Movement. Composed of hundreds of senior church leaders, politicians and scholars (among them Czechoslovakian President Tomáš Masaryk and German chancellor Hans Luther), its conferences, publications and mobilisation campaigns sought to emulate socialism's international scope by coordinating local and national Protestant campaigns, countering socialist materialism with Christian spirituality. As one of Life and Work's founding members, British pastor Paul Thomas Kirk, put it, 'only Christ can bridge over the opposition between capital and labour, and give the spiritual precedence over the material'. [19]

To be sure, anti-socialism was not unanimously held by ecumenical thinkers, and a few prominent members in the movement even sought to reconcile Christianity to Marxist thought. German theologian Paul Tillich, for example, claimed that Socialism's vision of a deep, sustained and material solidarity was identical to Christianity's conception of universal spiritual community. As he put it in his 1933 *The Socialist Decision*, 'the salvation of European society from a return to barbarism lies in the hands of socialism'. [20] Still, such works remained few and far between in the landscape of early Western European ecumenism, and suspicion of socialism's revolutionary impulses remained prevalent in ecumenical circles. Well into the Second World War and the early Cold War, leading

ecumenists continued to warn of socialism's potentially dangerous revolutionary impulses and to praise the church as a stabilising factor. In 1948, when hundreds of theologians and church leaders gathered in Amsterdam to formally find the World Council of Churches (whose foundation as first agreed upon in 1937 but was delayed by the war), its first general secretary, the Dutch Lutheran Visser t' Hooft, described the organisation's key mission as the protection of a 'responsible society'. This term, he and others hoped, captured the movement's reservation about revolutions, and especially ones predicated on 'materialist' considerations. As the Amsterdam Assembly formal report on politics, 'The Church and the Disorder of Society' put it, 'a responsible society is one where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility to justice and public order'. [21]

While the WCC made sure to pair its condemnation of socialism with critique of unregulated capitalism – a move which drew the ire of a few American conservatives – both its intellectual production and activism in the immediate post-war years largely steered clear of economic matters. During the late 1940s and early 1950s its advocacy efforts largely focused on legal matters, especially on efforts to secure the rights for religious liberty and conversion in international charters (such as the UN's Declaration of Human Rights) or national constitutions (such as Italy's and Egypt's). Economic redistribution, in short, and economic questions in general, remained largely marginal in ecumenical thinking. When it was discussed, socialism appeared to be a symptom of a spiritual problem, which had to be treated with reservation. [22]

The Rise of Socialist Ecumenism in the Global South

Beginning in the 1940s, however, this ecumenist consensus about Christianity and economics began to come under question. And those who articulated the most important challenge were not Westerners but Africans and Asians. As the anti-colonial struggle began to pick up steam in the aftermath of the Second World War, first in Asia and then in Africa, Protestant thinkers in the so-called 'mission countries' joined their compatriots by linking Marxism and the fight for self-determination. Capitalism, so the logic went, was an integral – if not a key – cause of Western imperialism and exploitation; post-colonial emancipation required an order based on state economic order of state planning and extensive wealth redistribution. Indeed, ecumenical writers from Asia and Africa shared the convictions of many post-colonial elites in the necessity of state planning. Like many in their countries' leadership, they put high hopes in the ambitious Five Year Plans, the popular state-led modernisation programmes that sought to modernise and industrialise national economies that proliferated from India (1951) to Ethiopia (1957) and Ghana (1963), among many. In contrast to Söderblom and his European heirs, Asian and African Protestants did not identify such measure as a potential opening for creeping materialism. Instead, they began to describe economic redistribution as an act of Christian solidarity. [23]

The individual who perhaps more than anyone provided the theological content to this new marriage of Christianity and socialism was the Indian theologian Madathilparampil Mammen (MM) Thomas, who in the post-war decades emerged as the most senior non-European figure in the ecumenist world (ultimately becoming the WCC's president). [24] A member of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church in Travancore, Thomas joined the local chapter of the missionary Student Christian Movement in the 1930s, an organ affiliated with the ecumenical movement. He then published several essays in the local press about Christianity's opposition to imperialism, a stance that only intensified after the British authorities' harsh repression of the anti-colonial 'Quit India' campaign of 1942. As the Second World War progressed, Thomas's anti-colonialism also increasingly acquired a Marxist flavour, a tendency he shared with others in the Kerala region, where communist activity was especially pronounced. Christians, Thomas claimed, shared the Marxists' struggle against oppression. Both recognised the dark impulse that animated human action – original sin for Christians, economic domination for Marxists – and sought to expose and then transcend them. 'Christianity is quite in agreement with the Marxist conception of ideology', he wrote, 'only the

concept should be enlarged to include *all* who are in the world, including Marxists and Christians'. For Thomas, who went on to briefly join the Indian Communist Party and found a para-communist student group, Marxism encapsulated the most radical contemporary promise for true liberation, and thus was the Gospel's most natural ally. 'The challenge of Communism in India', he wrote in a co-authored 1946 essay in *The Student World*, one of the missionary movement's main journals, 'is not the challenge of a far-off utopian ideal, but the application of sane politics in the present situation'. [25]

Even though Thomas ultimately broke with communism – he left the party after the 1948 communist-led coup in Czechoslovakia and the Indian Communist Party's decision to end its alliance with the Congress Party over the latter's formal neutrality in the Cold War – he continued to view anti-colonialism and radical economic redistribution as linked to each other and as integral to Christian teaching. Indeed, for the next few years he further developed his ideas, culminating in a book co-authored with the radical British theologian John Davis McCaughey, entitled *The Christian in the World Struggle* (1952). According to the book, Jesus's teachings necessitated a 'social revolution on an unprecedented scale', to realise true equality between all humans. In the modern age this call was best defined by decolonisation and socialism, which Thomas and McCaughey framed as equal parts of the struggle of 'submerged classes, nations, [and] races seeking power and responsibility which was previously denied them'. Indeed, the book posed a direct challenge to the ecumenical movement's traditional focus on religious freedom and its leaders' long-standing aversion to revolution. 'It is the human race', it claimed, 'and not just religious groups within it, which is the object of God's love and judgment', which means that Christians' mobilisation had to guarantee the well-being of all humans through 'social justice'. Thomas therefore claimed that the ecumenical movement had to reorient its energy towards economics. Redistribution, planning, labour organisation: these were the foundations for fulfilling the Gospel's promise. [26]

Thomas' departure from European ecumenist thinking was not only in his increasing attention to economics as the central field of Christian work. Equally important, his writings sought to rethink ecumenists' long-standing anti-statism, the movement's concern that expanding state power would produce paganism. According to Thomas, there was no reason for the church to oppose the expansion of state power as such, as Söderblom and others had advocated earlier. Christian charity, after all, always operated through human, and thus imperfect, institutions, and if those expanded equality, that was to be cherished. 'It is our Christian task', *The Christian in the World Struggle* explained, 'to work for political institutions which preserve in some form the reality of life as a dialogue between God and man', and democratic and distributive state organs fulfilled that task. Indeed, Thomas enthusiastically supported India's second Five Year Plan, which was announced in 1956 and promised to construct new hydroelectric power projects, heavy industry plants and new railways lines. To coincide with the Plan's inauguration, he organised in Mumbai a large conference on the 'Socialist Pattern of Society', at which local church leaders discussed with the India's economic and political elites the ways in which the churches could support the government's ambitions. For Thomas, such state-led projects were the fulfilment of the Gospel's promise. As the conference's final report declared, 'state planning is essential if economic and social change is to be realised'. [27]

Like Söderblom before him, Thomas helped articulate a widening consensus. During the following years, Church leaders and writers from Asia, Africa and Latin America embraced state-led distribution as in line with the Gospel and claimed it was necessary for the formation of a Christian and international brotherhood. What is more, ecumenical writers increasingly linked state-led distribution to the cause of global justice. A Christian, just and free world, they argued, required a massive transfer of wealth from the global north to the global south, a reparation programme that would end the 'neo-colonial' system of free trade. Cesar Augusto Espiritu, for example, a leader of

the Philippines' United Church of Christ (and later vice-president of the World Student Christian Federation), claimed that imperialism's sin could only be forgiven through economic support. The West, he wrote in his *The Principles of Economics in Philippine Setting* (1961), had to institutionalise major transfer of wealth to its former colonies, and to restrict Western corporations from meddling in their affair. [28] Emilio Castro, the leader of the Central Methodist Church in Uruguay, went further to claim that Christian brotherly love could only be fulfilled through the creation of a system of sustained economic solidarity. In 'today's impersonal society', he explained, 'love has to be expressed through social patterns. However much I may love my neighbour, I do not contribute effectively to helping him if I do not see to it that modern society has the social elements and mechanisms that serve to protect him'. [29] The Methodist professor from Sierra Leone (and later the independent country's first minister of foreign affairs) John Karefa Smart similarly maintained that the Kingdom of Christ depended on the international sharing of sources. As he put it in his widely-read *The Halting Kingdom: Christianity and the African Revolution* (1959), 'as long as some nations remain poor while others continue to increase in wealth, the tensions that threaten world peace will remain unrelaxed'. [30]

In linking anti-colonialism with left-wing critique, of course, ecumenists from the global south were far from unique. They drew on a long tradition that stretched all the way back to Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, and which was widely shared by many luminaries of the anti-colonial struggle, from Frantz Fanon to Jawaharlal Nehru. Nor were they exceptional in their commitment to a radical framework after political decolonisation formally ended European imperialism in Africa in the early 1960s, or in decrying the international economic inequality as a form of 'neo-colonialism' and demanding a radical global economic redistribution. As Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's president and one of independent Africa's greatest icons, put it in his *Neo Colonialism* (1965), 'Marx's . . . conflict between the rich and the poor has now been transferred on to the international scene', and only a global economic revolution could truly liberate the 'anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, pro-liberation masses'. [31] Where Thomas and others did break new ground, however, was in bringing those political and intellectual currents to the sphere of ecumenical Protestant writings. They sought to replace talk of 'responsible' society with theology of revolution. What remained to be seen, however, was how the WCC would respond to these efforts. Would its officials maintain their traditional aversion to socialism, or would they embark on a new path?

Socialism in the Ecumenical Metropole

At first European ecumenists did not seem to register the intellectual project that their anti-colonial counterparts sought to unleash. Consumed as they were by Atlantic affairs and the flaring of the Cold War in Europe, they showed little interest in Christianity's place in anti-colonial constellations, even after the 'first wave' of decolonisation transformed world politics by bringing independence to the Philippines (1946), India and Pakistan (1947), Syria and Burma (1947) and Indonesia (1949). Indeed, as historian Justin Reynolds aptly noted, in the 1948 assembly in Amsterdam, conversations of international politics almost universally discussed the tensions between the Cold War's two blocs, and mentioned Asian and African affairs only in the context of promoting religious liberty and anti-communism. [32] Even the ecumenical movement's main missionary organ, the International Missionary Council, mostly conceived of decolonisation as a challenge to the church, another front in the surge of 'materialist' communism and extreme nationalism. As the Anglican bishop and major missionary writer Stephen Neil glumly noted in *Cross Over Asia* (1948), a survey of church life in the continent, Asia was a site of revolutionary and dangerous 'neurosis'. [33] This meant that Thomas and others' economic message, too, did not enjoy widespread attention in Europe. Among the dozens of papers delivered in Amsterdam, socialism and economics more broadly were mentioned only rarely and in passing. [34]

Not all Europeans, however, felt that they could so easily ignore the challenge to traditional social

thinking brewing in the global south. Missionary operatives and student leaders, in particular, came to view the opinions of Thomas and others as a matter that required attention. For some, the impetus for engagement was a belief that Christianity's future laid in the non-European world, in part due to Europe's devastation in the Second World War. As the influential British missionary operative in Rhodesia and Congo J. Merle Davis wrote in *New Buildings on Old Foundations* (1945), 'the mantle of leadership will increasingly fall upon the Younger Churches in the post-war era. In the next fifty years', he prophesised, 'the source of the spiritual regeneration of the world and the leadership of its Christian destiny will more and more be found in the youthful vitality and powers of consecration of Africans and Asians'. [35] Such sentiments seemed to be bolstered by the rapid demographic shifts of the 1950s, when conversion rates in Africa surged and seemed to promise a robust Christian future on the continent. The British ecumenical writer John Taylor went so far as to muse in his popular *The Growth of the Church in Buganda* (1958) that the African church's success meant it will 'become the agent through whom the Holy Spirit will teach his people *everywhere* how to be in Christ'. [36]

For others, it was the collapse of European imperial protection that necessitated the churches' 'indigenisation' in Asia and Africa, whether by appointing local clergy to key positions or by adopting new rites and social teachings. After all, several anti-colonial regimes made the price of Christianity's long association with the West alarmingly high. The first and most traumatising was China, which in 1951 expelled all its Christian missionaries, accusing them of being Western imperialism's stooges. In response, a flurry of European publications with titles such as *Chinese Communist Criminal Acts in Persecution of Christianity* (1953) wondered how to appeal to post-colonial leaderships and populations. [37] Africa's decolonisation further boosted such anxieties, especially after French Guinea's first independent government quickly followed China's footsteps, first by limiting Christian instruction in school and then banning it altogether. [38] A series of conferences and seminars gathered in response to discuss ways to separate Christianity from its European burden, for example by adopting local music, rituals and school textbooks. For many ecumenists, addressing Asian and African demands was a matter of Christianity's survival in the decolonised world. Leslie Brown, an Anglican missionary to Asia and Africa and major ecumenical figure, expressed widespread sentiment when he wrote in his *Relevant Liturgy* (1964) that 'when the Gospel goes to Africa or Asia it must be expressed in words which are intelligible and relevant'. [39]

Whether they were motivated more by hopes or fears, some European ecumenical elites increasingly turned their attention to non-European Christians. And that, in turn, also entailed a growing tolerance for and even interest in their economic thinking. The first Westerners to actively engage with Thomas's economic thinking were members of the World Student Christian Federation, an ecumenical organisation that operated throughout the world and was thus confronted with Marxism's popularity among non-Europeans on a daily basis. Robert Mackie, a Scottish missionary operative in India and the organisation's general secretary, invited Thomas to join the Federation leadership in Geneva in 1946. Another Federation operative, the French theologian Philippe Maury, initiated the publication of Thomas's correspondence on political and economic matters with Western Christian leaders, including a discussion entitled *Christianity and Communism* (1948). Based on these works, Thomas was soon joined by the British missionary leader David McCaughy, who was impressed with Thomas' economic message. In 1949 the two joined hands in writing a report on Christianity's position in decolonised Asia, in which they explained the churches' need to support radical economic redistribution. As historians Philip Potter and Thomas Wieser chronicled, the report garnered substantial attention among European missionary officials, who organised multiple study groups and an international conference for discussing and revising its findings. In 1952 the Federation published it as *The Christian in the World Struggle* and distributed it among its members, making it Thomas's most popular work. [40]

By the mid 1950s WCC officials, too, began to show increasing interest in economic redistribution. The larger Asia and Africa loomed in their minds, the more they felt compelled to respond to the economic message expressed by their non-Western counterparts. In 1954, for example, the Swedish director of the WCC's Study Department, Nils Ehrenström, claimed that 'the social problems of underdeveloped countries' constituted the 'most important social problem confronting the churches today . . . and should be given attention to the exclusion of all other questions'. [41] The following year he invited Thomas, African supporters like Smart and European activists like the Dutch economist Egbert de Vries to launch a new study programme, called 'Common Christian Responsibility in Areas of Rapid Social Change'. Among its main purposes, as the WCC Central Committee explained, was to direct European Christians' attention to reshape Western missionary organisations' work in Asia and Africa, from traditional evangelisation to economic development and distribution. 'The way in which the West responds' to decolonisation and demands for economic justice, it stated, 'will help to determine whether [the global south's] awakening will find its creative fulfilment in the development both of a better community life in Asia and Africa and of human solidarity'. [42] Over the next few years, the programme organised a series of conferences on Africa, Asia and Latin America and sponsored publications on Christianity and economic distribution, such as Egbert de Vries, *Man in Rapid Social Change* (1961), which helped popularise Thomas' marriage of Christianity and left-leaning economics. Visser t' Hooft, the WCC's general secretary, similarly began to show his interest in Christian–socialist cooperation. In 1956 he travelled to Mumbai to participate in Thomas's conference in support of India's five year plan, and then sponsored follow-up events in Nasrapur. [43]

Indeed, even if many Western ecumenists did not fully share Thomas's and others' radical Marxism, they nevertheless began to shift their view towards economic equality. During the 1950s they slowly and progressively moved to rethink their earlier reservations about state-led economic redistribution, and began to claim that freedom from the market's economic domination and support for economic transfer was realising Jesus' teaching. A good example of this shift was the Dutch ecumenical activist and economist (and subsequent Nobel laureate) Jan Tinbergen. After visiting India, Turkey and Egypt in the early 1950s and meeting with local Christian leaders, Tinbergen became a strong advocate of large-scale Western economic investment in the post-colonial world. In his influential *The Design of Development* (1958), he sketched guidelines for Western investment in Asia and Africa, especially in schooling, health and legal institutions, which, he believed, would lead to prosperity and growing international equality. [44] In Tinbergen's eyes such an economic scheme, which he believed had to be institutionalised through global taxation so it would not be based on mere generosity, was part of an effort to bolster Christian teachings. As he bluntly wrote, 'Western culture is not something to be proud of in all aspects. It . . . has been outspokenly materialist. . . . There is a wide gap between Christian preaching and acts by so-called Christian nations or politicians: the few who have really lived up to Christian principles, among them many missionaries, are exceptions'. [45] For Tinbergen, institutional economic distribution carried out by states or international organisations was no longer akin to secularism. Instead, it was a way to weaken 'materialism' and to realise a truly Christian community. Over the following years Tinbergen became one of the world's leading advocates for massive European reparations to post-colonial countries, as well as the formation of global regulatory authorities that would manage trade to the benefit of Africa and Asia. [46]

These ideas struck a chord with European Protestant leaders. Even those who were still uncomfortable with comprehensive state economic management embraced Tinbergen's call for reform and the establishment of a North-South economic redistribution. Beginning in 1958, for example, the WCC sponsored a series of large conferences on 'European Responsibilities to Asia and Africa'. Bringing together European missionary and church leaders, Asian and African thinkers (including Thomas), and senior officials from colonial authorities, they were designed to explore how

the impending transfer of power to indigenous hands could be followed by economic compensation. Several church leaders, for example, discussed how to encourage European investors from their flocks to force corporations to fund African states' programmes in education and health. This, one participant from Holland explained, would be the most effective way to shield Africans and Asians from 'economic imperialism'. Others went further and called the education of European consumers and investors about 'capitalism's perpetuation of imperialism' the churches' most urgent task. As Hermann Witchi, the Director of the Basel Mission who presided over one of these gatherings in Denmark, explained, Protestants were called not only to mobilise against 'colonialism's evil' and in support of 'the inherent justice of the national movement for independence among the colonial peoples'. Just as important, they had to support their call for economic reform 'and their legitimate interest in socialism'. [47]

Such thinking, of course, still remained much milder than the social transformation envisioned by Thomas and his supporters. But as time passed, the WCC showed its ability to absorb and engage with even more radical propositions. This dynamic can be detected in the growing prominence of the American missionary Richard Shaull, whose encounters with Marxists in Colombia and Brazil led to rethinking of economic inequality. According to Shaull, capitalism may have brought prosperity to the West but its fruits in the global south were misery and exploitation. Free market's 'most immediate consequences in Africa, Asia and Latin America', he wrote in his influential *Encounter with Revolution* (1955), were dispossessed workforce, crowded urban slums and increased child mortality. In Shaull's mind, however, the churches' response to this injustice could not remain limited to charity. Running soup kitchens or famine relief, as they had done for decades, was perhaps noble, but could not address global disparities' root cause. Shaull therefore called on European and North American Christians to throw their weight behind socialist movements. Instead of blindly supporting free markets or arming anti-Marxist regimes, Westerners had to support the strengthening of state sovereignty, especially their control over natural resources. In Shaull's eyes, nationalisation of coalmines and the force distribution of land to dispossessed peasants were the most appropriate measures for the formation of Christian solidarity. By pressing international organisations, like the World Bank, to defend such measures, the churches were to fulfil their 'prophetic mission'. [48]

While Shaull's work initially did not make much impact on European ecumenical leaders, as time progressed it enjoyed increasing popularity. By the 1960s European officials in the WCC began translating his work into German, Dutch, French and Italian and discussed it in their meetings. What is more, the WCC sought to help Shaull himself disseminate his message among European Christians. In 1965 and 1966 it sponsored his tour of talks and lectures, in which he explained why global economic justice was Christianity's single most urgent mission. By that time, Shaull claimed that socialism was not merely a potential option for Christians, but the *only* legitimate one. 'Christian existence is revolutionary existence', he thundered in a talk in Geneva, and a truly Christian life was a 'spiritual guerrilla warfare' against inequality. Shaull also warned his audiences that failing to join the campaign to eradicate global economic inequality would doom Christianity to irrelevance and ultimately would leave the churches empty. As he put it, 'the struggle of the poor and weak nations for an opportunity to participate more fully in international life and to have a more equitable share of the wealth of an interdependent world has only just begun. . . . If we Christians hope to preserve the most important elements of our cultural, moral, and religious heritage and to contribute to the shaping of the future, we cannot remain outside the revolutionary struggle'. [49]

Indeed, the linking of anti-colonial uprising, economic redistribution and Christian teachings became increasingly common in European ecumenical circles. The German theologian Heinz-Horst Schrey, for example, explained in *The Ecumenical Review* in 1961 that the rising prominence of non-Western Christianity should lead Europeans to rethink their socio-economic hostility to Marxism. 'The

Christian faith', he wrote, 'does not need to regard' socialism 'only as a demonic perversion of power, but . . . also as a principle of integration, an order which tries to keep society from falling apart'. Visser t' Hooft similarly believed that Christianity's global landscape required new social and economic thinking. That Europe was no longer the Gospel's centre, he explained, meant that Christians must open themselves to new and alternative social theories. Perhaps the most forceful was the German theologian Heinz Dietrich Wendland, who in 1964 followed Thomas and Shaull's claim about the Gospel's revolutionary nature and the churches' need to support both anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggles. 'Christian thinking and its social ethnics', he lamented, 'could well have brought great and fecund possibilities for the transformation and development of the ideas of the revolutionary movements; but theology and the Church installed themselves in the field of the dominant powers of monarchy and, in the social and political field they preferred to place themselves by the side of the bourgeoisie and the large corporations'. For Wendland, however, non-Western Christians have shown that this alliance could be only temporary. 'We are forced to ask ourselves', he wrote, 'whether we accept and recognise as positive certain elements of truth to be found in the revolutionary conception of Karl Marx'. [50]

Few organisations showed the centrality of economic inequality to ecumenists during the 1960s more than the Committee for Society, Development and Peace (Sodepax), a Protestant-Catholic missionary project that was launched in cooperation between the WCC and the Vatican. Beginning in 1961 the Dutch Catholic bishop Joseph Blomjous and the Scottish Presbyterian missionary official Leslie Newbigin led an inter-confessional group of missionary officials, which launched an ambitious survey of Europe's missionary work in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Its purpose was to prepare both confession for the new post-colonial era, especially joint advocacy for church autonomy and funds in the new independent states. [51] After the Second Vatican Council formally embraced Catholic–Protestant cooperation in 1964, the scope of those operations expanded substantially, as Blomjous, Newbigin and others founded Sodepax as a permanent organisation that brought under its roof most of Europe's major charities and missionary organs. In a series of conferences and publications, it sought to set the priorities and coordinate the work of the Vatican's Caritas Internationalis, Belgian Catholic Emergency Relief Committee, the Austrian Central Catholic Charity and the Dutch 'People in Need' Catholic Charity, alongside the heads of the German Protestant missionary council, Swedish Lutheran missionary union, Swiss Basel Mission, British Council of Church's Aid Department and the WCC Inter-Church Aid division. In 1965 the Vatican and WCC also established permanent committees to oversee the work of this archipelago of missionary organisations. Meeting annually in Geneva and Rome, their task was to coordinate the labour of European-dominated organisations in the independent 'missionary lands'. [52]

While Sodepax's work engaged in multiple missionary undertakings, from education to medical service, it was economics and development that consumed most of its time and intellectual production. Under the label of 'development' – a clear reference to the UN's proclamation that the 1960s will be the 'decade of development' for the non-Western world – its officials proclaimed that realising the Gospel's message required first and foremost the economic liberation of the destitute, and that the churches' main mission was to support the decolonised world's quest for economic independence and modern production. Indeed, Sodepax sponsored multiple conferences and publications that reiterated economics' centrality to ecumenical thinking (one of which, in Beirut, was conducted under Thomas' leadership). Titles such as *World Development: Challenge to the Churches* (1968), *The Development Challenge* (1969) and *In Search of a Theology of Development* (1970) recorded the calls of theologians from around the globe for a society based on economic equality. [53] Such publications were complemented by economic investment, especially in Africa. In Kenya, for example, Sodepax officials launched a joint Catholic–Protestant funding scheme for the mechanisation of agricultural production. In the Ivory Coast a committee began drafting plans for joint hospitals, while in Tanzaniya it sponsored local credit unions, who supported farmers' irrigation

systems. All of those were designed to appeal to the local populations' desire for economic improvement. As one Sodepax operative in Kenya explained, the purpose of Sodepax investments was to help the missionaries' effort to make sure 'that Christianity is not labelled as a western import'. [54]

To be sure, these measures were not as radical as some had hoped, and writers from Latin America in particular complained that the 'theology of development' was not hostile enough to capitalism. Peruvian Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Brazilian Reformed theologian Ruben Alves, for example, who would soon become the leaders of the more radical 'liberation theology' school, lamented in a Sodepax conference in 1969 that Christianity's goal should be a 'theology of revolution', which would lead to the overthrow of all economic and social hierarchies. [55] Similarly, rising support for economic distribution did not mean that ecumenists abandoned the movement's earlier misgivings about 'materialism', especially in its Soviet incarnation. Even when they objected to some conservatives' framing of the Cold War as a fight between the Christian West and 'godless' totalitarianism, and hoped Christian organisations could soften international tensions, ecumenical writers held little sympathy for communist ideology, which they continued to view as dangerously anti-spiritual and even anti-Christian. [56] Some writers in fact explained that a Christian–socialist alliance was necessary exactly because it was the best antidote to the allure of communism. Thomas and McCaughey, for example, explained that Christians would often 'have to depend on American power to resist communism', while Shaull maintained that Christians' support for global economic equality was the only way to overcome 'communism's dangerous appeal in a revolutionary world'. [57] Indeed, despite ecumenical leaders' considerable efforts to transcend Cold War binaries, their logic sometimes overlapped with more hardline anti-communism. Responding to voices from the global south gained urgency in part because of fears that failing to do so would spell victory for Soviet-led infiltration.

Yet for all these qualifications and the residue of earlier reservations about 'materialist' ideologies, it was undeniable that the WCC has moved substantially to the left in economic matters. During the 1960s few warned that economic redistribution, global reparations or state management would lead to the coming of the Anti-Christ, as Söderblom and his allies had worried before; the main debates between thinkers were the scope, not desirability, of redistribution. In fact, the WCC began conceiving itself as an organ for popularising the ideals of global economic redistribution in Europe, inviting prominent socialists to tour the continent and publishing their thoughts. 'Bola Ige, for example, the Nigerian lawyer and politician (and later cabinet member), was invited in 1966 to speak about Africa's persistent exploitation by European corporations, which 'polluted the fountain of democracy and justice'. Only a massive reorganisation of the world's economy, he explained, would 'safeguard our nations from the interfering hands of our former colonial masters and their friends'. The radical Argentine economist Paul Prebisch (who headed the UN Conference on Trade Development) was similarly invited to talks in Europe to explain the urgent necessity of 'a very profound economic revolution', which would curtail capitalist exploitation. This, he mused, would entail 'a far-reaching transformation of the social structure', whereby post-colonial workers would take control over Western financial institutions. [58] By 1966 such ideas became popular enough among leading WCC functionaries that they received practical manifestation. The Council, with Thomas's advocacy, founded a new programme that funded armed liberation movement in Africa and Latin America. [59]

Such new sensitivities were not confined to thinking about international relations. As the pressures from the global south increased, they also helped legitimise efforts to engage with socialism at home. Indeed, during the late 1950s and early 1960s Protestant ecumenists in Europe began to wonder whether the socialist agenda had to restructure not only global relations, but also domestic social order. Following the efforts of left-leaning Catholics, who long had long sought to overcome

animosity with socialism, they now initiated an effort to engage with continental socialism. [60] The leading figure in this effort was the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, whose *The Community in the Authority of Christ* (1959) and *The Theology of Hope* (1964) sought to reshape the churches' traditional approach to socialism. According to Moltmann, both socialism and Christianity recognised that sin and corruption were not merely individual matters. Rather, they often stemmed from social interactions, and especially from systems of oppression, in which the weak had little control over their fates while the powerful were obsessed with controlling and managing them. Capitalism, in this line of thinking, was the contemporary world's most dominant system of such dependency. Not only did it reduce workers to poverty and misery, it also dialectically locked their employers in an exploitative position from which they could not break free. Moltmann therefore explained that both socialism and Christianity shared hope for a radical liberation, in which dependency would be eliminated and a unified spiritual community would be established. 'In so far as the vicious circle of poverty is produced by exploitation and class domination', he exclaimed, 'social justice can only be achieved by a redistribution of economic power' and 'economic co-determination'. And 'if and in so far as socialism means the satisfaction of material need and social justice in a material democracy, socialism is the symbol for the liberation of men'. [61]

As was the case with Sodepax and the WCC's funds for guerrilla organisations, such ideas quickly received their institutional manifestations. With the WCC's support, Moltmann joined the Catholic German theologian Erich Kellner, who led the International Paul Society (*Internationale Paulusgesellschaft*), an organ dedicated to reconciling Christianity and Marxism. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s the two orchestrated multiple symposia, discussions and publications that brought together the leading figures of Europe's Christian–Marxist dialogue. Alongside figures like Austrian Luther philosopher Wilhelm Dantine, who proclaimed that Marxist communal vision was in line with the Gospel, and French writer Dominique Dubarle, who wrote that it was the state's responsibility neutralise economic injustice, these events included French Marxist writer Marcel Reding, who explained why the left was not necessarily atheist. [62] In 1965 these efforts culminated in a large congress in Salzburg, where hundreds of theologians, writers and scientists from across Europe gathered to discuss the ways in which socialists and Christians could overcome 'bourgeois notions of individualist pluralism' and establish a 'truly communal and just order'. As one participant rejoiced, such cooperation marked 'an epochal transition from conflict to discussion'. [63]

All those strands ultimately culminated in 1966, when the WCC organised an international conference on the theme of 'Church and Society'. With Thomas as chairman, hundreds of writers and public figures gathered from around the world to call on Protestant communities to join the global struggle for radical economic redistribution. [64] Two years later, when thousands of delegates from around the world gathered in 1968 for the WCC's congress in Uppsala, state and international economic management had become the norm. Both, the assembly's formal resolution declared, were preconditions for brotherly love, and thus necessary for the Gospel's fulfilment. On the domestic front, the delegates agreed that 'the State . . . should be able to enthuse the people to make the sacrifices and to accept the measures necessary for development, by a programme of distributive justice'. In the international sphere they called for 'an international taxation system' that would systematise wealth distribution from north to south, and the 'creation of supra-national structures to deal with regional and world economic planning'. [65] Indeed, for its keynote speaker, the Council selected Zambia's president Kenneth Kaunda, who still basked in his reputation as a social justice advocate and a freedom fighter (before becoming an autocrat). To the cheering crowds he warned of 'the new form of imperialism of monopoly capital which is partly the source of excessive suffering and injustices in some regions including South Africa'. [66] The shift in ecumenist thinking about redistribution had been completed. Socialism, once materialism's disturbing manifestation, had become ecumenism's ally.

Conclusion

Recent historical explorations of decolonisation's impact on European economic thought have noted that it did not empower socialism. After all, even if leaders of the newly independent states succeeded in passing international conventions that declared redistribution to be an international norm, such as the UN International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), they were ultimately unable to convince European governments to support wealth transfer on a global scale. Indeed, scholars have claimed that decolonisation's impact on European economic thought seemed to empower anti-distributionist and free-market principles. When African, Asian and Latin American diplomats and economists launched a series of proposals in the 1970s that called for a radical remaking of global trade and property rules, known as the New International Economic Order (NIEO), the result was a reduction of European investment in development programmes, a decrease in the regulation on finance and trade and the ascendancy of what became known as neoliberalism. [67]

Yet as the story of the Protestant ecumenical movement shows, this was not decolonisation's only impact on European economic thinking. Some writers and social leaders came to believe that the rise of the global south in fact necessitated an economic revolution. During the interwar era and into the 1940s ecumenical church leaders, politicians and intellectuals viewed socialism with suspicion. State-led management and economic distribution, they worried, could endanger church autonomy and reduce humans to preoccupation with 'material' benefits over spiritual solidarity. When ecumenists from the global south launched a blistering critique of this vision in the post-war decades, however, their European counterparts did not brush them off, nor did they swiftly turn to the right. Believing that Christianity's future lay overseas, they gradually but decisively abandoned their earlier anti-statism and embraced socialism. Politically, this shift proved limited in its impact, as European ecumenists did not transform the world economy and were unable to reverse the neoliberal tide. It did, however, leave its mark on Protestant social thought, and the patterns of missionary practice.

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Footnotes

[1] Thomas, M. M. and Abrecht, Paul, eds., *World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12–26, 1966: Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time* (Geneva: Would Council of Churches, 1967), 91–2 Google Scholar.

[2] On the ecumenical movement's involvement in constitutions and international charters on religious matters, see for example Nurser, John, *For All People and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005) Google Scholar and Peiponen, Matti, *Ecumenical Action in World Politics* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2012) Google Scholar. I discuss further examples later in the article.

[3] It is telling that for several decades, the most important historical works were written by the movement's members and leaders. See for example Hogg, William Richey, *Ecumenical Foundations* (New York: Harper, 1952) Google Scholar and Visser, Willem A. 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1982) Google Scholar.

[4] The most important work to chart the history of the ecumenical movement is Justin Reynolds, *Against the World: International Protestantism and the Ecumenical Movement between Secularization and Politics*, Ph.D dissertation, Columbia University, 2016. See also the articles by Elisabeth Engel, James Kennedy, Justin Reynolds, Albert Wu, Christopher Stroop, Bastiaan Bouwman and Annegreth Schilling gathered in the special issue of *Journal of Global History* 13, 2 (2018) Google Scholar. I discuss some of these in more detail below.

[5] For the scholarship on US role in the ecumenical movement, see for example Hollinger, David, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) CrossRef | Google Scholar; Dorrien, Garry J., *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) Google Scholar, Zubovich, Gene, *The Global Gospel: Christian Human Rights and the Fracturing of Twentieth Century United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming) Google Scholar. On the role of generation change, see for example the works assembled in Hermle, Siegfried, Lepp, Claudia and Oelke, Harry, eds., *Umbrüche: Der deutsche Protestantismus und die sozialen Bewegungen in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007) Google Scholar.

[6] See Schilling, Annegreth, *Revolution, Exil, und Befreiung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) CrossRef | Google Scholar, as well as the essays collected in Kunter, Katharina and Schilling, Annegreth, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014) CrossRef| Google Scholar.

[7] The full list of participants appears in Thomas and Abrecht, *World Conference*, 212–27.

[8] For an interesting study that explores some of those debates among European socialists, as well as their interactions with non-European socialists, see Imlay, Talbot, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) Google Scholar.

[9] The scholarship on missionaries' relationship with imperialism is vast. Excellent works that explore the debates about Christianity's relationship to the 'civilising mission' include Carey, Hilary M., *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) CrossRef | Google Scholar; Porter, Andrew N., *Religion versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) Google Scholar; Foster, Elizabeth A., *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal 1880–1940* (Stanford: Stanford, 2013) Google Scholar; Daughton, J.P., *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) CrossRef | Google Scholar; Hamilton, Majida, Mission im

Kolonialen Umfeld (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2010) CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[10] On race and ethnicity, see for example Sheppard, Todd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) Google Scholar. On welfare, see Bailkin, Jordana, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) Google Scholar. Broadly, see Buettner, Elizabeth, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[11] Fontaine, Darcie, *Decolonizing Christianity: Religion and the End of Empire in France and Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016) CrossRef | Google Scholar; Wu, Albert, *From Christ to Confucius: German Missionaries, Chinese Christians, and the Globalization of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) CrossRef | Google Scholar; Foster, Elizabeth, *African Catholic: Decolonization and the Transformation of the Church* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2019) CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[12] See, for example, the reports of the movement's first major conference in Europe, in which most of the papers and information relates to missionary methods and governance, but none discuss economics: Johnston, James, ed., *Report of the Centenary Conference on the Protestant Missions of the World, Held in Exeter Hall* (London: Fleming, 1888) Google Scholar; Gairdner, W. H. T., *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910) Google Scholar.

[13] On Germany, see Nowak, Kurt, *Evangelische Kirche und Weimarer Republik: zum politischen Weg des deutschen Protestantismus zwischen 1918 und 1932* (Göttingen: Böhlaus, 1981) Google Scholar. On the Soviet Union, see Smolkin, Victoria, *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) Google Scholar.

[14] Söderblom, Nathan, *Christian Fellowship: The United Life and Work of Christendom* (New York: Revell, 1923), 8 Google Scholar. On Söderblom's significance in the ecumenical movement, see Lange, Dietz, *Nathan Söderblom und seine Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011) Google Scholar.

[15] Brunner, Emil, *The Theology of Crisis* (London: Scribner, 1929), 14, xvi Google Scholar; Knak, Siegfried, *Säkularismus und Mission* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929), 16 Google Scholar.

[16] Keller, Adolf, *Religion and Revolution* (London: Fleming, 1933), 167 Google Scholar. The ecumenical movement's response to the rise of these two regimes, which it viewed as 'totalitarian' twins, is best reflected in the papers delivered in its 1937 conference in Oxford, which were gathered in *The University Church and the World of Nations* (New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937) Google Scholar.

[17] Oldham, Joseph, *Christianity and the Race Problem* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1925), especially 36–45 Google Scholar; Brunner, Emil, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932) Google Scholar, which appeared in English as *The Divine Imperative* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1937) Google Scholar.

[18] Brunner, *Das Gebot*, 432.

[19] Cited in Bell, George, ed., *The Stockholm Conference, 1925: The Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 105

Google Scholar. On the founding of Life and Work and its key agenda, see Shillito, Edward, *Life and Work* (New York: Longmans, 1926) Google Scholar. On Söderblom's role in this movement and its many activities, see Lange, *Nathan Söderblom und seine Zeit*, 330–425.

[20] Tillich, Paul, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (Potsdam: Alfred Protte, 1933) Google Scholar, which appeared in English as *The Socialist Decision* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) Google Scholar. The quote is from 161.

[21] 'Report of Section III: The Church and the Disorder of Society', Hooft, Visser t', ed., *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper, 1948), vol. 3, 197–205, here 202 Google Scholar.

[22] On legal activism, see for example Bouwman, Bastiaan, 'From Religious Freedom to Social Justice: The Human Rights Engagement of the Ecumenical Movement from the 1940s to the 1970s', *Journal of Global History*, 13 (2018), 252–73 CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[23] The proliferation of the Five Year Plans in the post-colonial world has not been systematically explored. For interesting reflections, see Huber, Valeska, 'Global Histories of Social Panning', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, 1 (2017), 3–15 CrossRef | Google Scholar. For a good exploration of India's plan, which served as model for many other countries, see for example Engerman, David C., *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018) CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[24] The following description of Thomas's work is heavily indebted to Justin Reynold's excellent 'From Christian Anti-Imperialism to Post-Colonial Christianity: M. M. Thomas and the ecumenical theology of Communism in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of Global History*, 13 (2019) 230–51 Google Scholar. I am grateful to Reynolds for directing my attention to Thomas and for sharing his on-going work with me.

[25] Both texts are cited in Ibid., 238, 239.

[26] Thomas, M. M. and McCaughey, J. D., *The Christian in the World Struggle* (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1951), 16–7 Google Scholar. As Philip Potter and Thomas Wieser note, the WCC dedicated multiple discussion groups and conferences to discuss the book. See their *Seeking and Serving the Truth* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 171 Google Scholar.

[27] Thomas, M.M., ed., *A Socialist Pattern of Society: Report on the Ecumenical Christian Conference in Bombay, January 1956* (Bombay: The National Christian Council of India and the Christian Institute for the Study of Society, 1956), 13 Google Scholar.

[28] Espiritu, Cesar Augusto, *The Principles of Economics in Philippine Setting* (Manila: R.M. Garcia, 1962) Google Scholar.

[29] Castro, Emilio, 'Conversion and Social Transformation', *The Church Amid Revolution* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 90–108, here 94 Google Scholar.

[30] Karefa-Smart, John, *The Halting Kingdom: Christianity and the African Revolution* (New York: Friendship Press, 1959) Google Scholar.

[31] Nkrumah, Kwame, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas & Nelson, 1965), 20 Google Scholar. More broadly on the marriage of anti-colonialism and Marxism,

see for example Louro, Michele L., '"Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communist Begins": The League Against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 33, 3 (2013), 331–44 CrossRef | Google Scholar, as well as the illuminating reflections of Moyn's, Samuel *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 89–118 CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[32] Reynolds, 'From Christian Anti-Imperialism', 244–5.

[33] Neill, Stephen, *Cross Over Asia* (London: Canterbury Press, 1948), 16 Google Scholar.

[34] See the papers assembled in Hooft, *Man's Disorder and God's Design*.

[35] Davis, J. Merle, *New Buildings on Old Foundations: A Handbook on Stabilizing the Younger Churches in Their Environment* (New York and London: International Missionary Council, 1945), 272–3 Google Scholar.

[36] The quote is from Taylor, John V., *The Growth of the Church in Buganda: An Attempt at Understanding* (London, 1958), 259 Google Scholar. Emphases in the original. The information on demographic shifts is taken from Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) Google Scholar.

[37] *Chinese Communist Criminal Acts in Persecution of Christianity* (London: Christian Association in Free China, 1953) Google Scholar. More broadly about China's expulsion of missionaries, see, for example, Wu, *From Christ to Confucius*, 220 onward.

[38] On Guinea and the campaign against missionaries, see Schmidt, Elizabeth, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea*, 1946–1958 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 171–2 CrossRef | Google Scholar.

[39] Brown, Leslie W., *Relevant Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 7 Google Scholar. Brown expressed similar ideas in his earlier *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) Google Scholar. For similar sentiments, see for example the papers collected in *Christian Education in Africa: Report of a Conference Held at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia* (London: Oxford University Press and the All Africa Churches Conference, 1963) Google Scholar.

[40] Thomas's interactions with European ecumenists is detailed in Reynolds, 'From Christian Anti-Imperialism'. On the seminars on his and McCaughy's manuscript, see Potter, Philip and Wieser, Thomas, *Seeking and Serving the Truth* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 171 Google Scholar.

[41] Cited in Reynolds, 'From Christian Anti-Imperialism', 250.

[42] World Council of Churches, *Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Press, 1955), 105 Google Scholar.

[43] Egbert de *Vries, Man in Rapid Social Change* (London: SCM Press, 1961) Google Scholar. On the programme, see, for example, Dejung, Karl-Heinz, *Die ökumenische Bewegung im Entwicklungskonflikt 1910–1968* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1973), 216–89 Google Scholar. The information on Hooft is taken from Thomas, ed., *A Socialist Pattern of Society* and Thomas, ed., *Christian Participation in Nation Building* (Bangalore: The National Christian Council of India, 1960)

Google Scholar.

[44] Tinbergen, Jan, *The Design of Development* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958) Google Scholar.

[45] Tinbergen, Jan, 'Development Cooperation as a Learning Process', in Meier, Gerald and Seers, Dudley, eds., *Pioneers in Development* (New York: 1984), 313–31, here 320 Google Scholar.

[46] On Tinbergen's thinking and influence, see for example Moyn, *Not Enough*, 144–5.

[47] The quotes are from 'Records of General Discussion', and Hermann Witschi, 'A Continental Missionary Society Looks at "missions and colonialism": Some Experiences of the Basle Mission' (Aug. 1958), both in Folder Consultation, Box 422.009, WCC.

[48] Shaull, Richard, *Encounter with Revolution* (New York: Association Press, 1955), esp. 3–17 and 98–114 Google Scholar.

[49] The quotes are from Richard Shaull, 'The Revolutionary Challenge to Church and Theology [lecture notes]' (July 1966), Folder 3, Box 243.12, WCC. A somewhat edited version of this talk appeared as Richard Shaull, 'Revolutionary Change in Theological Perspective', *The Church Amid Revolution*, 27–47.

[50] Schrey, Heinz-Horst, 'Restoration and Revolution and the Unity of the Church', *The Ecumenical Review*, 13, 2 (1961), 172–80, here 176 CrossRef | Google Scholar; Hooft, Visser t', 'The Significance of the Asian Churches to the Ecumenical Movement', *The Ecumenical Review*, 11, 4 (1959), 365–76 CrossRef | Google Scholar; Wendland, H.D., 'Die Weltweit Gesellschaft und die Oekumene der Kirche', in Marxen, Willi, ed., *Einheit der Kirche?* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1964), 110–23, here 120 Google Scholar. The same ideas appeared later in English in Wendland, Heinz Dietrich, 'The Gospels and the Church as a Revolutionary Force', IDO-C, ed., *When All Else Fails* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969), 9–37 Google Scholar.

[51] There is no existing study of Sodepax. The following description is based on History of the ISS-FRES Project (Oct. 1964); Report, Meeting of the ISS – FERES Project (3 and 4 Jan., 1964), all in Folder Inventory 1964; Box 421.450, WCCA.

[52] Report, Meeting of the Working Party between the RCC and the WCC, Folder 9, Box 4201.4.1; Report on the Informal Meeting of WCC/RCC Mission Staff (29 Apr. – 1 May 1968), Folder 2, Box 4201.4.4; Memorandum (May 1969), The Joint Working Group between the RCC and the WCC 1965_1969, Folder 3, Box 4201.4.0; all in WCCA.

[53] *World Development: Challenge to the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1968) Google Scholar; *The Development Challenge* (Geneva: WCC, 1969) Google Scholar; *In Search of a Theology of Development* (Geneva: WCC, 1970) Google Scholar.

[54] Report of the Working Party on Emergency Aid and Development Aid (Jan. 1966), Folder 2, Box 4201.5.1; Committee on Society, Development and Peace, 'Summary of SODEPAX Activities', (May 1970), Folder 4, Box 4201.4.7; both in WCAA. The quote is from Report, Tinka Olunide to SODEPAX (undated, probably 1965), Folder Africa AACC, Box 4202.012, WCCA.

[55] Gustavo Gutierrez, 'The Meaning of Development: Notes on a Theology of Liberation', and

Ruben Alves, 'Theology and the Liberation of Man', both in *In Search of a Theology of Development*, 116–79 and 80–110, respectively. On Gutierrez and Alvino's participation in Sodepax event, see Schilling, 'Beetween Context and Conflict', 288–9.

[56] For a nuanced analysis of ecumenical leaders' complex approach to the Cold War, see Zubovich, Gene, *The Global Gospel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming) Google Scholar.

[57] Thomas and McCaughey, *The Christian in the World Struggle*, 83; Shaull, *Encounter with Revolution*, 18. Similar statements can be found also in *The Specific European Responsibilities in Relation to Africa and Asia*, 52.

[58] Bola Ige, 'The Political Dynamics of Newly Awakened People', Talk in Geneva (July 1966) and Raul Prebisch, 'Political and Economic Dynamics of Newly Awakened Peoples', Talk in Geneva (July 1966), both in Folder 3, Box 243.12, WCC. Prebish articulated his ideas earlier in his *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic Affairs, 1950) Google Scholar.

[59] For a brief overview of these programmes, and the controversy they provoked, see for example Stanley, Brian, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 210–2 Google Scholar.

[60] On the long tradition of Catholic efforts to engage socialism and the working classes, see for example Horn, Gerd-Rainer, *Western European Liberation Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) CrossRef | Google Scholar. With a focus on the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, see Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christiniaty*.

[61] Moltmann, Jürgen, *Theologie der Hoffnung* (München: Kaiser, 1964) Google Scholar, which appeared in English as *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row) Google Scholar. The quotes are from 332.

[62] These events, among others, are discussed in van der Bent, Ans J., *Christians and Communists: An Ecumenical Perspective* (Geneva: World council of Churches, 1980) Google Scholar, which despite its title, explores ecumenical dialogue with a wide variety of Marxists.

[63] The history and essays of this conference are gathered in Kellner, Erich, ed., *Christentum und Marxismus heute* (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1966) Google Scholar. The quotes are from 251 and 257.

[64] Selected papers from this conference appeared in Cox, Harvey, ed., *The Church Amid Revolution: A Selection of the Essays Prepared for the World Council of Churches Geneva Conference on Church and Society* (New York: Association Press, 1967) Google Scholar.

[65] 'Statement on World Economic and Social Development', *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the fourth Assembly of the WCC* (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1968), 45–56, here 47–8 Google Scholar.

[66] Kenneth D. Kaunda, 'Rich and Poor Nations' (Nov. 1968), Lecture at Uppsala Convention, Folder 1, Box 34.1, WCC.

[67] See for example Moyn, *Not Enough*, esp. 119–45; Slobodian, Quinn, *Globalists: The End of*

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