

Nathan Söderblom and the Quest for Catholicity

Paper presented by Clemens Cavallin, at the 2018 Roman Forum, in Gardone, Italy.

Introduction

The last words of the famous Swedish Archbishop and professor of history of religions, Nathan Söderblom as he lay dying in 1931 was, “There is a living God, I can prove it through the History of Religions.”¹ As a historian of religions myself, I find this utterance of a dying colleague inspiring, and at the same time jarring as there is something of an unfounded optimism in it, perhaps typical of its time.

This Roman Forum, Anno Domini 2018, focuses on the interwar period and how the times we live in are influenced by what took place one hundred years ago; and the interesting parallels between then and now. In 1918, the First World War ended and on the mind of many was, unsurprisingly, that such a meaningless slaughter should not take place again, neither in Europe nor in the world. For some peace was the goal, while for others justice was more central.² For those in favor of peace, nations now had to solve their conflicts in other ways; negotiate rather than fight things out, especially as the weapons had become so efficient and powerful. This spirit of pacifism and disarmament, of brotherhood and understanding, animated The League of Nations founded in 1920, but The League proved tragically unprepared for both understanding and handling the evil totalitarian ideologies mobilizing in the 1930s: fascism and communism.³

Nathan Söderblom was ordained a priest in the Church of Sweden in 1893, and the following year he went to Paris to study the Old Iranian religion, Zoroastrism, defending his doctoral thesis at Sorbonne University in 1901. Returning to Sweden, he became professor in the strangely sounding subject Theological propaedeutics and theological encyclopedia: a forerunner of history of religions and religious studies, but as part of theology, and with a clear apologetic mission. And in 1912, he became professor at the University in Leipzig, now in History of Religions.

During this time, he also worked as a priest; married and had twelve children; and as this was not enough, in 1914, he became the archbishop of the Lutheran Swedish state church, and continued to publish at a frenetic pace: academic pieces, psalms and essays. He was filled with abundant energy, using every minute of his time to the fullest.⁴

At the end of the First World War, fifty-two years old, Söderblom had reached the high point of his career both academically and in the Church; and then let us not to forget his twelve children. He kept

up a voluminous correspondence with scholars and church dignitaries in many countries. The scene was thus set for a major international role.

In the spirit of the times, and with his usual zeal and work ethic, he threw himself into the projects of ecumenism and peace. The crowning achievement was the great ecumenical meeting in Stockholm in 1925, where a broad spectrum of Christian churches met, with the notable exceptions of the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal movement. And in 1930, the year before his death, as a recognition of his work for international arbitration instead of war, he received the Nobel prize of peace.⁵

A remarkable man, larger than life, and Sweden by all means, but he also incarnated many of the problematic ideas of that time that still haunt our lives.

Who is the Living God?

In this paper, I will link Söderblom's work within history of religions with his ecumenical efforts in order to understand his final words, "There is a living God; I can prove it through the History of Religions."

I will argue that history of religions and ecumenism address the same problem: the combination of pluralism and globalization. One in relation to all religions; the other in relation to Christian churches. The main practical question was and is: how are we to live together in a shrinking world where we cannot escape being aware of diversity and plurality? The academic discipline of comparative religion, interreligious dialogue, the ecumenical movement and the League of Nations were all envisaged as spaces where movements, nations and religions could meet, gain mutual understanding, and negotiate their different interests.

However, it was not enough to bring people and religions together, it was also necessary to formulate the theoretical positions that make dialogue and peaceful coexistence possible. With other words, Söderblom was part of the attempt to formulate the structures and principles of a liberal world order.

Unsurprisingly, the direction was toward establishing a common core: to lay aside all "non-essential" cultural traits that make diversity so unsettling and problematic, and in this way uncover a set of shared principles on which (almost) all can agree. A list of human rights; a new Decalogue of moral precepts; a common suitably fuzzy understanding of the divine, and so forth. Or, as we will see, personal interior experience, understood as autonomous from outer form.

In both ecumenism and comparative religion, the end goal was, therefore, often an undogmatic faith, a spirituality that transcended narrow boundaries. The favorite realm for such quests was mysticism, presumably founded on experiences common to at least all the great religions, in this way bypassing dogmas and priesthoods.

With other words, the problem for a Lutheran such as Söderblom was how to be catholic, that is, universal, without becoming a Catholic. As we will see, his main strategy was to denigrate the Catholic Church as a narrow-minded sect, an exclusive society in comparison to the true inclusive catholicism of the ecumenical movement: that is, Evangelical Catholicism.

In fact, this was part of a more general development towards what I, last year here in Gardone, named spiritualized modernity. It provides modern life and ideas with a spiritual nimbus, but in no way opposes its “inevitable” progress.

So, who is the Living God that Söderblom believed comparative studies of religion could prove? And what relevance does this idea have for our times?

Crisis of Faith and Religious Experience

As a student, Söderblom experienced a crisis of faith when coming into contact with historical critical bible studies. If the Bible was not without fault, dictated word by word by the Holy Spirit, his childhood Lutheran faith, based as it was on the idea of inerrant scripture, was in a precarious situation.⁶

After some time, on January 18, 1890, Söderblom, twenty-four years old, experienced an overwhelming insight; it was the revelation of God in history reaching its culmination in Jesus Christ that was primary; the Bible was only a witness of this revelation; it was not the revelation itself.⁷

Beginning with this mystical experience which was confirmed by another one four years later of God’s Holiness, including Jesus on the cross and as judge, he read and come into contact with varieties of liberal Protestantism and modernist Catholicism. For example, Alfred Ritschl, Auguste Sabatier, and Marc Sanginer.⁸ While studying in Paris, he also expressed sympathy for socialism and the leader of the socialist party Jaurés, but Söderblom never became a revolutionary.⁹ In 1908, he visited Alfred Loisy in France and began to read more into Catholic modernism.¹⁰ And in 1910, he wrote a response in Swedish to the 1907 encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of Pius X, in this way defending Catholic modernism attacked by this, “violent reaction against contemporary science and consciousness.”¹¹

Thus, Söderblom had a sincere belief in God, anchored in interior mystical experience. At the same time, he considered outer forms of religious life relative and historical, but *nota bene* at the same time significant. During a trip to Rome, he made careful notes of the liturgies he saw and introduced some elements of these in Sweden.¹² He also put great emphasis on aesthetical form, for example, music and liturgical vestments, as he was by nature a performer: an accomplished rhetorician and actor.¹³ He knew how to make an impression.

How is such interiorizing of Christianity compatible with the idea of a living God, which by definition is also a God acting, a God who reveals himself to humans. Söderblom did not believe in miracles in the traditional sense; and he loathed what he called popular superstition, for example, the Marian apparitions in Lourdes, or pictures of the sacred heart of Jesus.¹⁴ He preferred the “higher” ideal of reformation prophets such as Luther. And, according to Söderblom, miracles were in reality the awe experienced by believers when interpreting nature and history as the creation of God. In this way, there is no possibility of conflict between science and religion, as the latter merely provides a kind of gaze of faith, which acknowledges the divine power behind natural phenomena.

Söderblom’s student and later successor as professor in Uppsala, Tor Andrae, emphatically states in his 1932 biography of Söderblom, that the reformation achieved by Söderblom in Swedish theology rested on two principles.

First a consistent, purely historical understanding of the genesis of Christianity, of its founder and holy scriptures, excluding everything supernatural.” “Secondly: religion and religious authority must not put any obstacle in the way of free thought and research [my translation].¹⁵

If as Bengt Sundkler writes, Söderblom thought that, “dogma was ‘symbolic’, and theological statements were therefore, in the nature of things, approximate and provisional,”¹⁶ our possibility to know the nature of God becomes very limited. In reality, the only criterion of religious truth becomes interior piety, sincerity and trust.¹⁷ Even if he does not want to fall into subjectivism and relativism Söderblom’s thinking leads in that direction inexorably, as all Protestantism does that has given up on the inerrancy of Scripture, and which cannot take refuge in the Church or tradition. Individual interiority only remains.

Holy Power

Söderblom’s modernist Lutheranism is radical. At times, one can be fooled by his use of traditional Christian terminology and ways of speaking, but he wanted to remake the whole structure of Christian teaching, both protestant and Catholic, in light of basic principles of modernity. To him traditional Christian doctrines, rituals, and offices were obsolete, even if he did not have the revolutionary inclination to pull them down, but deemed it convenient to use them.

In his 1910 defense of Catholic modernism, he makes the following programmatic statement:

If you take Christianity as a historical given complex of ideas about God and the world, then there is no doubt that its time as a controlling power in culture is over /.../ A god, who creates and rules this earth – and the other planets and stars as its accessories; a humanity created perfect, fallen through Adam and then saved through a series of nature miracles certified by the inerrancy of the biblical texts; human thought that with the help of revelation knits together the whole of reality into something rational, in which God can be logically proven; rational conclusions and nature miracles testifying to the truth of Christianity [my translation].

This is doomed.¹⁸

Instead, he considers true Christianity to be foremost a form of power.

If you understand Christianity instead primarily as a revelation of divine life in history, foremost in the person of Jesus, as a spirit and influence of force, which today is as powerful, palpable and aggressive as ever, and which is seen increasingly in its purity, then our eyes gain completely new vistas [my translation].¹⁹

Söderblom insists that the forceful spirit of Christianity should now shed its old scholastic (Hellenic) form, which was alien to the essence of Christianity anyway and held it captive for so long.²⁰

According to him, the major agents of this purgation of Christian faith were modern science, the rationalism of Kant, evolutionary theories, and historical criticism.²¹ Human reason is now both autonomous; it does not listen to outside authorities in its work, and it can only treat the world of the senses; science cannot thus say anything about God, the world of spirit or the question of eternal life.²²

Moreover, Söderblom pits the impassable, unchanging God of Aristotle against the acting biblical God who uses his will in action. Therefore, the Aristotelian ideas of logic and eternal perfection – locking our understanding of God, history and dogmas in a static system – must be removed to lay bare the idea of a living God acting in history.²³ However, the actions of the living God never transcends the boundaries of the laws of nature.

If we take the principle of spiritual energy and change, that is, life, as superior to that of logic (Logos) to its (pun intended) logical conclusion, then contradictions become truer than coherent formulations, as the former more accurately make us aware of the impossibility of capturing in human language the supernatural. The contradiction is, according to such thinking, more true, in the sense of capturing the unpredictable changing nature of life itself, the living God instead of a rigid system.

To Söderblom the foundation of religion was thus holiness, which “is even more essential than the notion of God,”²⁴ and more or less synonymous with power.²⁵ This unfathomable and supernatural energy transcends the limits of reason.²⁶ It incites awe and anxiety but also opens up for blessings and trust. This is parallel to the view of the German theologian and historian of religions (and Söderblom’s friend) Rudolf Otto, which he formulated in his famous book *Das Heilige* (1917). According to Otto, the human reaction to the totally other (*das Ganz andere*) the irrational power of the Holy, pivots between fear and fascination, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.²⁷

God becomes then irrational, unpredictable, fearsome energy, which can be benign, but cannot be said to have love as its essence, even though Söderblom’s insistence on Jesus on the cross as the supreme example of religion is a witness that he retains central elements of Christianity, but how many and which should be spared the relentless force of modern change is left unresolved. It is as if he has taken to heart revolutionary principles but chose the way of reform instead of revolution. Slowly, according

to him, a new picture of God as personal power will emerge and all old human attempts to capture this energy with concepts will fall away leaving room for the authentic direct experience of the living God.

In his defense of Catholic modernism in 1910, Söderblom connects his thinking to the ideas of Life Mysticism in play in the first decade of the 20th century, quoting among others Henri Bergson.²⁸ Thus, Söderblom sees life as the primary force of reality, manifested as holiness in religion; it is irrepressible leading both to the destruction of old forms and the creation of new ones. Goodness is this forward directed impetus and, on the other hand, evil is what tries to resist life's progress. It is a dualism in favor of change, demonizing continuity and stability.

Life means everywhere struggle. Instead of the security of belonging to a fixed necessity, unfailling laws, there appears the consciousness of belonging to a universal life process, which after the way of life grows through battle and pain. Life advances through opposites. It meets obstacles, burst through them or is stopped. It must due to resistance take detours. It leaves death and destruction in its wake. ... In each moment, there is a battle between life and that which impedes, drags down, appears, dissolves – and then perhaps in other forms is taken into the service of life. The consciousness of belonging to a universal life process becomes therefore at the same time the consciousness of standing in a never resting opposition between good and evil, what is fit for life and what is lethal. The one who says life, says at the same time dualism. [my translation].²⁹

The living God of whom Söderblom believed he saw proofs of in the varieties of religion was “the foundational power of life” which shows its divine will in the natural world.³⁰ This is thus a universal revelation taking place both within and outside of ecclesial institutions. Söderblom rejected the idea of natural religion, which was based on man reasoning from the plurality and order of creation to the one creator. Instead, history of religions would now, he believed, take the place of natural theology and search for responses to common revelation, for the inscrutable piety directed towards the holy.

For such an attitude, of course, the inevitable progress of modern society is primary a form of vitality, it is like an organism fulfilling its destiny; to stop it is to make violence to what is holy, to energy seeking to manifest itself. Modernity, thereby, becomes sacred; an irresistible power, a juggernaut, giving rise to fear and fascination.

This is especially so as Söderblom promotes the idea of a continued revelation after Christ, foremost in geniuses, unusually gifted human persons. This includes not only Christian saints, but also secular history, relativizing the Catholic view of the Church as the sacrament of the world, which Söderblom considers as confining the continuous revelation of God to an institution, leaving “the area of life and enter[ing] a theological system,” that is, Thomism, which is “a mere “venerable memorial from the past.” Instead, “God, reveals himself in history, outside the Church as well as in it.”³¹ “...as much in the vicissitudes of nations as in the institutions of religion.”³²

He even adds,

It may be that political changes and social movements mean a mightier revelation of God than the undertakings of the Church. The voice of God can speak to mankind even by lips that deny his existence. These statements are in no wise paradoxes, but are meant quite literally.³³

As a response to the criticism that this new form of Christianity does not deserve the name of Christian at all, as it is so different from traditional Christian faith, he answers that “life means change.”³⁴ The meaning of the words used to express religious beliefs thus change as language and culture change.

It is not hard to see that such an attitude is vulnerable to fail to discern between spirits. First, because it is basically a form of irrationalism in the realm of religion; that is, it misses the point that vitality and strength can impress, even when it is wedded to an evil ideology. Secondly, ideology cannot then be judged with reason, as values are outside the reach of empirical science, but must be judged by the experiences it gives rise to. Naturally, one is then ill equipped to withstand the allure of Nuremberg rallies or First May Parades on the Red Square or the primitive rage of a revolutionary crowd surging over the barricades.

To have a conception of holiness, which is modelled on energy, and which does not make clear that human and angelic powers can become twisted, that is, evil; is in great danger of seeking understanding and arbitration with pure evil, which without any scruples lets its power flow; albeit with destruction as a result; but destruction, it says, is necessary for the revolution – for the life force of the masses to manifest itself in a new and more evolved form.³⁵

However, we should not misinterpret Söderblom’s position as pure relativism, he had an evolutionary view of religious history with Christ as the last and perfect stage of revelation. The broad study of all religions would then prove, he believed, that Christianity was the superior form of religion. The distinction was between a general revelation and a special; in this sense, all religions are based on revelation, but Christianity was the highest form, and, of course, this reached its apex in undogmatic Protestantism with a social conscience.³⁶

Ecumenism

As a Swedish Lutheran, and then a modernist, Söderblom saw the Catholic Church as the main obstacle for the different Christian communities to come together in an openness to modernity. According to him, the Catholic Church had created a narrow structure, turning the Church into a sect, intolerant of other Christian denominations and churches.

If one means with a sect a religious organization, according to whose program one should keep a distance to other forms of Christianity, then there is no part of the Church to which this definition fits better than Rome [my translation].³⁷

However, Söderblom, by nature an internationalist, could not be content merely being the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, but he wanted to bring into reality a *true* catholicity, not the narrow Roman one.

After the proud, but for the purity of religion dangerous thought of a single world dominating church organization has perished forever, the universalism of Christianity is realized by that the different churches see themselves as coworkers in consensus and competition [my translation].³⁸

Söderblom saw Christianity as a large tree with three branches: Evangelical, Orthodox and Roman Catholic; all equally catholic. Therefore, to convert to another church was based on a misunderstanding. As I said earlier, to him church organization was secondary to personal experience and conviction, which were indispensable for true community.³⁹ On the one hand was the institutional religion of the law and, on the other, the religion of the spirit and personal communion with God. The first was the solution proposed by the Church of Rome, while the second was the evangelical solution. Differences in teaching, liturgy and organization were, he believed, compatible with true Christian unity.⁴⁰

Only the pure evangelical teaching can make possible also in outer form a unified Church, which has the unity of the Spirit and a common exterior organization and leadership, built on the free choice of the Christian people, but which at the same time provides space for different forms and opinions in that which is not substantial for salvation and unity [my translation].⁴¹

The logical first step of his line of thinking was, therefore, a federation of churches, which did not interfere with the interior affairs of its members. But how do you decide what is substantial for salvation without entering divisive territory?

Actually, for Söderblom, when he wrote “Evangelical Catholicism” in 1919, the pressing need was for global political unity and cooperation after the First World War. This required from the Christian churches increased “catholicity and unified universalism.”⁴² Therefore, somewhat contradictorily, instead of focusing on personal interior life, he threw himself into the task of working for peace and social justice. He did not pursue spiritual awakening, but created and developed international ecumenical organizations with a focus on peace between nations.⁴³

His idea was that Christian faith should now be in charge also in the realm of politics; The League of Nations formed a year later should according to him *be* religion.⁴⁴ He saw the ecumenical organization *Life and Work* founded also a year later in Geneva, and which arranged the Stockholm conference in 1925, as the soul of the League of Nations.⁴⁵ The ideal of a world Christian organization speaking for all Christians based on a democratic principle, was thus united to the idea of a global legal order. One of his biographers writes that Söderblom believed that “The Stockholm meeting would be the contribution of the churches to a new world order.”⁴⁶ Söderblom was in this sense truly a globalist. But, I think it is more important to emphasize with what urgency he felt the need of catholicity.

Globalization, also in the form of world wars, shows that local solutions are not enough; both in a practical and in a theoretical sense. The problem is just how such catholicity is to be achieved. Söderblom's solution was based on a division between interior personal religious experience and outer forms such as dogmas and rituals.

As a response to the Ecumenical movement and the work of Söderblom with its crowning achievement the 1925 Stockholm meeting, Pope Pius XI released in 1928 *Mortalium Animos*, with the longer name: *De Vera Religionis Unitate Fovenda* "About the promotion of the true unity of religion." It was a direct attack on Söderblom's work.

Mortalium Animos begins with acknowledging the present desire for unity among nations and peace and then turns its attention toward ecumenical meetings of the so-called pan-Christians and the societies they had founded. Then it distinguishes the Catholic understanding of the Church from the pan-Christian. The Catholic Church is identical with the apostolic Church; it is a perfect society, external by nature and thus perceptible to the senses; it has one head with teaching authority.

Then the encyclical labels as an error that unity can be accomplished by human effort and that the Church consists of separate sections uniting into a universal federation, as it is impossible to unite without uniting in truth. It is a duty to obey the true religion, as preserved by the one Church founded by Christ.

These two commands of Christ, which must be fulfilled, the one, namely, to teach, and the other to believe, cannot even be understood, unless the Church proposes a complete and easily understood teaching, and is immune when it thus teaches from all danger of erring.⁴⁷

Truth is therefore primary; and, according to the encyclical, the problem of the pan-Christians is the indifferentism and relativism central to their modernist mindset.

Those, who are unhappily infected with these errors, hold that dogmatic truth is not absolute but relative, that is, it agrees with the varying necessities of time and place and with the varying tendencies of the mind, since it is not contained in immutable revelation, but is capable of being accommodated to human life.⁴⁸

This critique hits at the heart of Söderblom's program, not only his understanding of the gospel of Christ and the different Christian denominations, but also his view of religion in general and revelation. He had made personal experience primary and ruled out dogmatic immutability and continuity, as this, according to Söderblom, is to fall into the religion of institution and law. He rejects what he calls "intellectualism" and instead when faith is,

... trust and certainty of salvation, not obedient acceptance by human reason of propositions that the authority of the Church decrees, then the life of thought is not bound by an obligation to stay within certain exterior limits decided by the teachings of the Church; but, instead, an interior principle, the experience of God, gains freedom and obligation by the testing and

investigation of human reasoning to penetrate and elucidate the questions posed by history, Scripture and human life in its totality [my translation].⁴⁹

Mortalium Animus, instead, insists on the necessity of returning to the Catholic Church and the recognition of the “authority and supremacy of Peter and his legitimate successors” in order to achieve unity. With this comes an exalted view of the Church as incorruptible, which can be hard to visualize in our times of dogmatic confusion.

During the lapse of centuries, the mystical Spouse of Christ has never been contaminated, nor can she ever in the future be contaminated, as Cyprian bears witness: "The Bride of Christ cannot be made false to her Spouse: she is incorrupt and modest. She knows but one dwelling, she guards the sanctity of the nuptial chamber chastely and modestly."⁵⁰

Final Words: The Living God

To sum up: how are we, then, to understand the last words of the Archbishop and historian of religions, Nathan Söderblom: “There is a living God, I can prove it through the History of Religions.”⁵¹

Söderblom’s basic assumption was that God acts in all religions, in this way revealing himself, especially in certain religious geniuses, that is, prophets, of which Jesus was the greatest. This belief in the living and acting God was based on Söderblom’s personal mystical experiences which provided him with a certainty of faith that modern science could not shake. Indeed, science, especially history, was, according to him, helpful in presenting Jesus in increasingly realist details, as Söderblom accepted miracles only as religious interpretations of natural phenomena.

However, this personal interior Christian faith could not easily be rendered in dogmatic formulations, which for Söderblom always were only partially successful and in need of regular reformulations. Christianity was, according to him, “a living organism, which grows and acquire new expressions. It belongs to the species of the living to change.”⁵²

Actually, instead of making God primary for his understanding of religion, he chose the concept of holiness, a power which impresses itself on the human soul. The emphasis is on dynamism, change and interiority.

Against this, the Catholic Church insisted both on the Church as a perfect society that guards the unchanging deposit of faith and maintained the possibility of natural theology, that is, we actually can know some things about the spiritual world and thus God. We can use our reason for a few halting steps in the direction which faith takes us. God is then not only living in the sense of all-powerful, but also intelligible and eternal in the sense of unchanging perfection.

Still, the influence of a neo-modernist attitude in the Catholic Church Anno Domini 2018 that considers rigid dogmas and inflexible moral laws as restricting the living God; a stance that emphasizes the will to change in all areas, the importance of interior emotional experience and social action, and the understanding of the Church as a federation of local churches, each with its own set of dogmas, rituals and customs, but converging in a United Religions of the World, the spiritual counterpart of the United Nations, I think, would have warmed the heart of the old Archbishop.

¹ Jonas Jonson, "Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst": *En biografi* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2014), 438.

² Jörg Mathias, "Unity in Christ or Pan-Europeanism? Nathan Söderblom and the Ecumenical Peace Movement in the Interwar Period," *Religion, State & Society* 41, no. 1 (2014): 5–22.

³ Andrea Orzoff, "Interwar Democracy and the League of Nations," in *The Oxford Handbook of European History, 1914–1945*, ed. Nicholas Doumanis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199695669.013.1.

⁴ He said to his priests, "You should work yourselves to death. But slowly and wisely." Dietz Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*, trans. Erik Aurelius and Ludvig Berggren (Skellefteå: Artos, 2014), 308.

⁵ For the full story of Söderblom's life see Jonson, "Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst": *En biografi*; Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*; Bengt Sundkler, *Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work* (Lund: Gleerups, 1968); Tor Andrae, *Nathan Söderblom* (Uppsala: Lindblads Förlag, 1932).

⁶ Hans Åkerberg, *Omvändelse och kamp: En empirisk religionspsykologisk undersökning av den unge Nathan Söderbloms religiösa utveckling 1866–1894* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1975), 113.

⁷ Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 46.

⁸ Andrae, *Nathan Söderblom*, 197f.; Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 94–96.

⁹ Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 97.

¹⁰ Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 145.

¹¹ Nathan Söderblom, *Religionsproblemet inom katolicism och protestantism* (Stockholm: Hugo Grebers förlag, 1910), 3.

¹² Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 175.

¹³ Dietz Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*, 424. He saw these things, he claimed, as *adiaphora*.

¹⁴ Nathan Söderblom, "Evangelisk katolicitet," in *Enig Kristendom* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1919), 90; Söderblom, *Religionsproblemet*, 99.

¹⁵ Tor Andrae, *Nathan Söderblom* (Uppsala, Lindblads förlag, 1932), 105.

¹⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work* (Uppsala: Gleerups, 1968), 254.

¹⁷ Erland Ehnmark, *Religionsproblemet hos Nathan Söderblom* (Lund: Gleerups, 1949), 254.

¹⁸ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 373.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 376.

²¹ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 403.

²² Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 374.

²³ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 407 and 411.

²⁴ Quoted in Michael Stausberg, "The Sacred, The Holy, The Numinous – and Religion: on the Emergence and Early History of a Terminological Constellation," *Religion* 47, no. 4 (2017): 557–590.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*, 266.

²⁷ Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige - Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt und Granier, 1917).

²⁸ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 411.

²⁹ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 413 and 414.

³⁰ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 471.

³¹ Söderblom, *The Living God*, 379.

³² Ibid.

³³ Söderblom, *The Living God*, 380.

³⁴ Söderblom, *Religionsbegreppet*, 375.

³⁵ Söderblom in his intervention in the famous campaign of the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in 1909, to make the Church of Sweden abolish the devil, wrote, “Heaven, hell and purgatory are trust, despair and half despair [my translation],” indeed, Söderblom was uncomfortable with the discussion and wanted instead to speak about something else. Quoted in Sven Thidewall, *Kampen om samhällsreligions: Dagens Nyheterers djävulskampaj 1909* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2016), 95. The campaign ended with that the newspaper published an “obituary” of the devil; as the Church of Sweden chose not to discipline a priest who denied the existence of a personal devil.

³⁶ Still, logically he could not believe in Jesus’s bodily resurrection as a “nature miracle,” but its religious significance was in the religious experience of the first Christians. This was, however, a point in which he expressed himself ambiguously. He even wrote that Christ mistakenly believed in the immediate arrival of God’s Kingdom and that soon he “himself was to appear in the clouds of heaven with great glory.” Söderblom, *The Living God*, 369.

³⁷ Nathan Söderblom, *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 93.

³⁸ Quoted in Dietz Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*, 329.

³⁹ Söderblom, *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 101.

⁴⁰ Söderblom, *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 103.

⁴¹ Quoted in Lange, *Nathan Söderblom och hans tid*, 335.

⁴² Söderblom, *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 105.

⁴³ Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom*, 385.

⁴⁴ Söderblom *Evangelisk katolicitet*, 113.

⁴⁵ See also Rudolf Otto’s organization the Interreligious League, founded in 1920. Harry Oldmeadow, “Rudolf Otto, the East and Religious Inclusivism,” in *Religion and Retributive Logic: Essays in Honour of Professor Garry W. Trompf*, ed. Carole M. Cusack and Christopher Hartney (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁴⁶ Jonson, *Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*, 385.

⁴⁷ *Mortalium Animos, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Religious Unity* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1928): § 8, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

⁴⁸ *Mortalium Animos*, § 9.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Ehnmark, *Religionsproblemet*, 250.

⁵⁰ *Mortalium Animos*, §10.

⁵¹ Jonson, Jonas, “*Jag är bara Nathan Söderblom satt till tjänst*”: *En biografi* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2014), 438.

⁵² Quoted in Ehnmark, *Religionsproblemet*, 276.