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Nathan Soederblom

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times and must be preached to all true believers: 'All things are yours; and ye are Christ's.' Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage! Amen." (*Loc. cit.*) Let us follow the example of Luther, who would not permit any man to rule over his conscience, but did make Christ its absolute ruler. "In his very last sermon the great champion of private judgment and liberty of conscience declared once more (XII:1260 ff.): 'I grant that the emperor, king, pope, cardinal, princes, and lords are prudent and wise; but I will believe on my Lord Christ alone: He is my Master and Lord, whom God has bidden me to hear and to learn of Him what is true, divine wisdom. . . . Therefore, dear Pope, your claim to sit in Christendom as lord and to have authority to decide what I should believe and do, that I cannot accept. For here is the Lord whom alone we should hear in these matters. . . . This, and much more, might be said on this Gospel, but I am too feeble; let this suffice. God give us grace that we receive His precious Word with thanksgiving and increase and grow in the knowledge and faith of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and continue steadfast in the confession of His holy Word unto the end, Amen!'" (*Theological Quarterly*, 1911, p. 254.)

(To be continued)

TH. ENGELDER

Nathan Soederblom

I

Lars Olof Jonathan (Nathan) Soederblom was born in the parish of Troenoe, Sweden, January 15, 1866, the son of Rector Joseph Soederblom and his wife. He received the degree of Candidate of Philosophy at the University of Uppsala in 1886 and the degree of Candidate of Theology in 1892. He was appointed pastor of the Swedish church in Paris in 1894 and also seamen's pastor at Dunkerque, Calais, and Boulogne. While in Paris, he pursued his studies and graduated from the *École des hautes études*, in the section of the science of religion, in 1898, receiving the degree of Doctor of Theology from the University of Paris in 1901. The same year he was called to the chair of comparative religion in the University of Uppsala. In 1914 he was made Archbishop of Sweden.

The honorary degree of Doctor of Theology was conferred upon him by Geneva, Oslo, St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Greifswald, the honorary Doctor of Philosophy by the universities of Uppsala, Greifswald, Bonn. Other honorary degrees he received from Berlin and Oxford.

In the work *When the Hours Course and Change*, 1909, there

is in one essay a most remarkable passage which must be autobiographical and where Soederblom apparently is giving an insight into what might be called his conversion. First the work of the Gospel came, breaking in on his purely intellectual state of total skepticism and darkening of the light when the old doctrines he had learned were lost to his convictions. Then he continues to set forth how one day the dazzling and amazing demolition from the knowledge that God is holy and righteous fell, lightninglike, upon him.

One is apt to agree with one of the keenest critics of Soederblom's religious position, the late Professor Adolph Hult of Rock Island Seminary, that this biographical self-analysis, where the Gospel precedes the Law in its work on the soul—saved first by the Gospel and then by the Law, discovering the threatening and dire demand of the Law—accounts for the unspeakable confusion of spiritual judgment that makes the writings of Soederblom as a Liberal “so disheartening in their jumbled brilliancy and their maze of winsome and repellent elements.”

One might find a symbol of the soul of the Swedish archbishop in two recollections which we have of his visit to the United States in 1923. For one thing, he delivered 130 lectures at eleven universities, which received him as the most distinguished Protestant representative of modern thought. But with him he carried in a leather plush-lined case a bishop's crozier seven hundred years old, which he bore as he walked in procession at the church meetings which welcomed him as the Augustana Synod's visitor from the “Mother Church.” Probably there has not been among the church leaders of the last fifty years a figure which united such discordant elements of deep sentimental regard for the inheritance which has come down to us from the Apostolic Church and the sponsorship of destructive Biblical criticism of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, of which Soederblom, Ernst Troeltsch, and Bousset were the banner bearers. Accordingly, as one side and the other of his spirit impressed those who came into contact with him, he was regarded on the one hand as a champion of ancient truth and, on the other, as a leader in the naturalistic criticism of religion.

He was born of devout Christian parents. His father was a pastor of distinguished ability, who regarded his highest calling to be the preaching of the Gospel. Soederblom tells us that as he grew up through childhood and adolescence to manhood, he learned to love the church in which he had been baptized and confirmed because the constant answer to his inquiries into the source of the many peculiar blessings which he enjoyed in this church was always: Martin Luther and the Reformation. The

hymns were his delight. He asked his mother, "Who gave us these hymns?" and the answer was, "Martin Luther and the Reformation." He was interested in the Bible and read it with growing love and devotion, and when he asked, "Whence this Bible?" the answer was: "In our language through Martin Luther and the Reformation." When upon the high festivals the liturgical service of the church uplifted his soul and he inquired from whom they had received these forms of worship, he was told, "From Martin Luther." He tells us that his mother was his first teacher, and he adds this compliment, that she was the best teacher he ever had. He relates that he memorized Martin Luther's Small Catechism and never lost the thrill which he felt when he repeated Martin Luther's wonderful explanation of the Second Article.

Years later, when he was primate of Sweden, the leading figure of the Second Lutheran World Convention, held at Copenhagen, Denmark, 1929, he closed the meeting at which he had presented the greetings of His Majesty, King Gustavus of Sweden, by reading a scholarly paper on the subject: "Luther as a Christian Personality and His Significance for Northern Europe." Here are a few excerpts:

"Luther takes up the classical documents of elementary instruction. His Little Catechism continues what the Ancient Church and the Middle Ages had taught and done. Luther was come not to break up but to fulfill—obedient to the Master. His piety as well as his psychological grip are shown by the fact that Luther bases his teaching on the main items of the faith which had of yore been taught by the Church, viz., the Ten Commandments, from Moses' time, the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus gave to His disciples, and the summary of the Ancient Church of its faith in Father, Son, and Spirit. He kept to the classical tradition of the Church. An inevitable objectivity determined him. Was Christianity to be stated in terms, the starting point must be sought in its most widespread and time-honored documents. The same rule must be observed this very day."

In conclusion Soederblom said:

"May the Word live and work among us; God's Word and promises shall stand fast. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. . . . Shall we not, in our different languages, confess our faith in our Lord together, using Luther's words?"

All arising, led by the Archbishop, then confessed:

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; etc."

A Fundamentalist magazine, *Christian Faith and Life* (Oc-

tober, 1931, p.543), continuation of the *Bible Champion*, broke a lance for the orthodoxy of Dr. Soederblom in such terms as these: "There have arisen voices who claim him as a Liberal, who awaken the impression that he had broken with the historic Christianity of Holy Scriptures, that he was an outstanding leader of the Modernists, true, not radical, but one of them. That is false—it is a glaring misrepresentation. It manifests either a deliberate attempt to distort the facts, or it is, as is so often the case, a superficial understanding of a great and devout faith." In support of this judgment *Christian Faith and Life* quotes extracts from the remarks addressed by Soederblom to the first Lutheran World Convention (1923):

"With profound gratitude in our hearts we lift our voices in praise to God for His grace in sending the prophet Martin Luther to reveal to us again the atoning work of His Son. . . . Luther is the greatest evangelist the Church of Christ has known since New Testament times. . . . Luther's doctrine of faith is often interpreted as a strong psychological effect which a man produces in himself. This is utterly false. Luther himself wrote in his first exposition of the Lord's Prayer: 'Proud-spirited saints do more harm than any other people on earth, etc.' We are nothing. We are poor, weak vessels with impure content or at best with no content at all. But the empty hand of trust is filled by God's mercy in Christ Jesus. . . . Luther's special mission lay in the fact that he revealed again, as no other since the days of St. Paul had done, the boundless depths of the love of God in the Crucified One. And this evangelical doctrine of the salvation alone through the grace of God it is our mission to keep forever pure and whole. Nothing else can assure us of eternal life. . . .

"So therefore we gather *under* the name of Luther but by no means *in* the name of Luther. Rather do we gather in the Name of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is our only strength. No worldly means nor human calculations will suffice. The Word that Luther brought to light again, the Word of Revelation, above all, the Word become flesh, the incarnated Logos,—this is our sufficiency. By the grace of God we should also incarnate that Word in our hearts and lives, because that Word is the Will of God."

On the same occasion Archbishop Soederblom gave his hearty "yea" to this article of faith: "The Lutheran World Convention acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and the infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and sees in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God."

It is necessary that we quote such expressions as these, uttered

or publicly acknowledged by Nathan Soederblom, in order to account for the acclaim with which he was received in the United States by many Lutherans, particularly by the officials, theologians, and parish clergy of the Augustana Synod on his visit to this country. Dr. Hult¹ records the unequivocal statement of a Lutheran official paper that Soederblom is "the Lutheran theologian who *freely* but *firmly* [italics by the original writer of the editorial] moves within the limits drawn up by the Word and the Confessional writings." I had occasion soon after to interrogate one of the Augustana Synod editors regarding the honors which his Church had shown a man whose theological position I had learned to regard even more radical than that of Adolph Harnack. I pointed out that he had not so long ago contributed an article to an Episcopalian paper, *The Churchman*, in which he denied the propriety of using the Psalms and Old Testament examples of praying for victory in time of war, since the Jehovah of the Old Testament differed in degree but not in kind from the tribal deities of other Semitic nations. The answer I received was: "The trouble is, when Soederblom writes as a philosopher, one must read him as a philosopher and not forget what he writes as a theologian." The view still prevails also outside the Augustana Synod that Soederblom's religious speculations have been misunderstood, that in his rich, poetical mind there welled up a wealth of symbols to express the inexpressible and to dress in modern scientific terms the ancient faith of Christendom, and that at heart he was a simple Lutheran Christian. We also heard the note sounded occasionally, while Soederblom was still living, that the Lutheran Church should be proud of possessing the greatest Protestant leader of the age. It is, therefore, not out of place that in the series now running in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY a chapter be devoted to a brief analysis of Soederblom's religious position.

II

Nathan Soederblom was one of the leading representatives of a group of religionists called the "History (or Science) of Religion School." The representatives of this school of thought hold that religion is a product of natural evolution, which has attained its highest developments, so far, in Christianity. As already noted, he was associated both in thought and literary activity with Ernst Troeltsch of Berlin. So far as scholastic attainments are concerned, Troeltsch was the giant, his scholarship by far richer and more profound than that of his brilliant Swedish friend. You will find little in his writings, however, that will compare with Soederblom's aesthetic evaluation of Christianity and of ancient dogma, none of

1) *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1916, p. 468.

that enthusiastic delight in the Lutheran Church as a Church, none of that eager quest for the spiritual freshening of the Church's life, as he understood it. Yet Dr. Troeltsch, like Professor Harnack, recognized the complete religious solidarity between himself and the Swedish archbishop. He praised Soederblom for eliminating the distinction of "pagan" and "Christian" from the study of religions.

Fundamental to the entire scheme is the conception that the Old Testament religion like all others has developed out of animism (spirit worship). In general, the pan-Babylonian view is held, which makes the religion of the Old Testament a late development out of ancient Babylonian mythology. Basic is also the assumption that the tendency towards the recognition of one Supreme Power in the world is manifested at a comparatively early stage in the development of man. The broad distinctions are made between the religions of savages, the religions of primitive culture, the religions of advanced culture, and finally, to follow the classification of Morris Jastrow,²⁾ "the religions which emphasize as an ideal the co-extensiveness of religion with life and which aim at a consistent accord between religious doctrine and religious practice." This is understood to be not simply a classification but stages of development through which all the higher religions have passed. From Wellhausen and Kuenen down, the Old Testament is interpreted as offering a conception of Jehovah not inconsistent with the supposition that there are other gods, albeit inferior ones and unworthy of notice. These are the fundamentals of the History of Religion School. They cut away the very ground from our faith. All religion certainly disappears if what we have in the Bible is merely a product of evolution.

In his *Origin of the Idea of God* (Preface) we are prepared for Soederblom's evolutionistic study of his theme thus: "No one can give an account of the origin of the God-faith. The super-human, Divine origin of religion is not accessible to research. And its earliest appearance on our earth lies beyond the oldest testimonies. We were not along." Then he traces through 340 of 390 pages, in truly evolutionistic manner, "the primitive beginnings, to which a God-conception in the proper sense with consequent worship has attached itself." The lowest form of animistic and like religions of the wild tribes of the earth are studied, and he says of them: "Even if a God-faith in the proper, customary sense has not been found, it does not follow therefrom that man then lacked religion" (p. 207). There is no mention of true religion in the Bible before the patriarchs.

The fundamental rejection of the Christian concept of revela-

2) *The Study of Religion*, p.117.

tion runs through all the *religionsgeschichtliche* papers and books of Soederblom. "For us the whole cycle of the church year is filled with the life of Jesus and its continuation in the work of the Spirit. . . . But the revelation is not finished. The Father worketh until now."³ In the rather confused and vague, but, as R. Seeberg⁴ says, "ueberaus anregenden Ausfuehrungen von N. Soederblom," *Vater, Sohn und Geist* (1909, pp. 70—72), we have the same presentation of continued revelation: "Jeder, der mehr oder weniger bewusst, aber doch wesentlich von Christus abhaengig, sich zur Gottesgewissheit durcharbeitet, zu innerer Befreiung und Erneuerung des Lebens, erwirbt sich gleichzeitig einen Platz in der Geschichte der Offenbarung." The New Testament came under the judgment of the same destructive criticism. "We know that Jesus Christ Himself—who in His personality is recognized by faith as God's speaking work to men—He, too, was a child of His time, although He rises heavens-high above the ages. He thought like his contemporaries concerning the form of the earth and the course of the sun. Like them, he related certain forms of insanity to evil spirits, that made men demonical."⁵ In the opinion of Troeltsch, Soederblom's writing have contributed largely to the wiping out of the line of distinction between natural and revealed religion.

III

The study of the Comparative Science of Religion tends to relativize Christianity in the minds of all whose spiritual experience has been defective, either by lack of Christian training or by too prominent an intellectual disposition. In the following we shall trace the effect of Soederblom's preoccupation with *vergleichende Religionskunde* upon his career as a churchman and a theologian.

In a letter, of which I have the original before me, addressed by Archbishop Soederblom to certain Hindu Christians in 1922, the practical working out of the confessional indifference of the Swedish primate is plainly revealed. The Church of Sweden had taken over certain missions formerly conducted by German Lutherans. When the natives were informed of the fact that the Swedish Church had entered into altar and pulpit fellowship with the Anglicans (Church of England), they asked, "How can this be?" Replying to a letter of protest from Hindu laymen, Soederblom defended this change of Lutheran policy, made under his administration. In this letter he expressed views regarding the Lord's Supper and other doctrines which later caused these native

3) *The Individual and the Church*, 1909, p. 17.

4) *Der Ursprung des Christusglaubens*, 1914, p. 62.

5) *The Young Augustine*, 1916, p. 21.

Christians to organize a separate body. In 1923 they joined the Missouri Synod group of congregations in India.

Summing up the activities of Dr. Soederblom until 1924, Dr. Reu said, "He has given evidence of an absolutely morbid tendency for uniting the churches."

Soederblom was not really in America as a guest of Augustana, in 1923, but came under the auspices of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship Through the Churches, of which he was first vice-president. This alliance was then (as it is now) federated with a Church Peace Council completely under radical control and was then working with two million dollars of Carnegie money. In the announcement of his addresses it was distinctly stated that their purpose was to bring about union between the churches, and Soederblom's achievement of establishing fraternal relationships of the State Church of England and that of Sweden was particularly stressed in the announcements of the World Alliance. At a number of American universities Soederblom lectured on the subject "Luther, Erasmus, Loyola." A typical passage is the following: "We now see that Luther was quite as authentic a continuation of the deep religious life of the Middle Ages as Erasmus or Loyola. Erasmus best deserves the name of reformer. He wanted reform. He wished to remove a lot of weeds from life, worship, and doctrine. Luther and Loyola were impelled by a deeper pathos, an all-consuming desire for peace of soul. They found it in different ways, and each in his way forms an original religious type. It may be disputed which is the straighter way, that which continues through Luther or that which continues through Ignatius Loyola and Tridentinum."

In spite of his veneration for the Apostolicum and Luther's Catechism, creedal statements were *lightly* esteemed by Soederblom. "We must not attach too much weight to formulas, however important they may be. The work of the Spirit goes on continually in the Church, and that work of the Spirit acknowledges no confessional boundaries." As for the road to Christian union, he expected little from doctrinal discussion. His essays and addresses are singularly free from any attempt to mediate between the doctrinal positions of the historic Christian denominations. He advocated in a most outspoken manner those avenues toward union which would circumvent all doctrinal differences and by ignoring them lead the church into active collaboration on the basis of full Christian fellowship. "This path is called Christian co-operation. This method is fundamentally practical, not theoretical. All sincere disciples can join in it. Even those who cherish the hope of absorbing all fellow Christians in their own flock can center with us upon the path of love without any prejudice to their principles.

... For Christian co-operation it has often been made a rule — either understood or clearly expressed — to ascertain uniformity of creed before the members of Christ's Church can agree to work wholeheartedly together in His name. Leave to each communion entire freedom to regulate its own faith and its own affairs. Is not our sincere yearning to follow the Lord enough? Is it necessary to go into the question of our different creeds, views, and customs when the great thing in common really exists in our hearts, namely, obedience to the voice of our Lord? Our own work in His service as well as the distress of our generation renders systematic co-operation imperative."⁶⁾ In 1930 Archbishop Soederblom was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in promoting international friendship through the churches.

Naturally, sympathies as wide as those documented in these brief extracts, which are typical, would not stop at acknowledging religious fellowship with those who had broken completely with the concept of evangelical orthodoxy and with declared enemies of the Christian system of doctrine. When the ultraradical Modernist Loisy was to be honored on his seventieth birthday, it was Soederblom who represented the Scandinavian Lutherans on the committee. He, as well as Harnack, was willing to honor a man who had been excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church on account of his rejection of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and who was then issuing one book after the other teeming with blasphemous heresies.

Dr. W. H. T. Dau has analyzed⁷⁾ the relationship between Soederblom and Harnack in connection with the visit of the German theologian to the principal ecclesiastical and academic centers of Sweden in 1923. He quotes a conservative editor who voiced in *Nya Vaektaren* his disgust at the manner in which the primate of the Swedish Church conducted himself, at a recent synodical convention, as "bishop of the whole world," who, like the Pope, devotes himself to world politics. This endorsement of religious radicalism, of course, stems directly out of the archbishop's identification with the History of Religion School. He had written in one of his earlier essays: "Ideell gesehen, kann man zu den Zeugen des inneren Lebens, die zusammen gehoeren und sich zu einer objektiven Macht sammeln, auch solche ausserhalb der biblischen Religionslinie stehende Persoenlichkeiten rechnen, die auf hoeherem oder niederem Stadium eine gleichbedeutende Gotteserfahrung erlebt haben, besonders Sokrates."⁸⁾ Dr. Hult expressed

6) *Christian Fellowship or the United Life and Work of Christendom*, 1924, p. 155.

7) *Theological Monthly*, 1923, p. 225 ff.

8) *Vater, Sohn und Geist*, 1909, p. 71.

himself as "appalled by the Socinian breakdown of the atonement doctrine in *The Religious Problem*, 1910, pp. 425 ff. and on. The whole chapter pits the hopeless 'retribution doctrine' of, as he says, Brahmanism and Moses and Paul and later Christian thought against the 'deeper-lying law for God's line of conduct, election and faithfulness, grace and forgiveness, suffering and atonement.'"

There is but a difference of rank and degree, but not of kind, between Socrates and Jesus viewed as channels of divine revelation. "History and revelation show us how Christ, God's supreme Son, the real Revealer, suffers and dies. Dogmatics that are more well-meaning and eager than Biblical and sound have emphasized the divinity of Christ in a metaphysical way which incurs the risk of crucifying God the Father and of transforming Golgotha and Jesus' cry of anguish 'Eli, Eli' to a sort of sham maneuver in divinity. The Christian Church has always rejected the conclusion from the dogma of the divinity of Christ that God Himself, the one, sole Almighty, suffers."⁹ Christ was not essentially God but with Him "a divine ferment entered into our species akin to the image of God that is latent and deformed in mankind."

Two lectures were published 1921 by Hinrichs in Leipzig. The first: *Gehen wir einer religioesen Erneuerung entgegen?* The second: *Der Kirche Christi Weg in dieser Zeit*. These essays very well illustrate on the one hand the moral earnestness, the enthusiasm for good causes which characterized Soederblom, and also his dubious religious position, which never fails to move into the liberal field and finds its explanation there. For instance:

"I know of no evangelical theologian of the better kind, beginning with Martin Luther himself, who would consider the doctrine of the two natures and three persons and everything pertaining to these as perfectly expressing the Savior's personality and His witness concerning Himself and the Father." To which we would add that to reject a mystery and to regard it as too profound for our understanding are certainly two very different things.

In the second of these essays Soederblom maintains that it is God the Father who suffers and that Christ is not essentially the eternal Son of God but only the Revealer of God. He approaches pretty close to the vulgar Rationalism of the eighteenth century when he draws a parallel between the Virgin Birth and the claims for a miraculous conception which have been made for Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Pharaohs of Egypt. "The heart of the idea is that such a person was regarded as a product of deity and furnished with divine powers." Concerning the Incarnation, he has this significant interpretation: "It is a fundamental

9) *Christian Fellowship*, etc., p. 146.

belief of Christianity that the appearance of Jesus is a miracle, that the Word, the Logos, God's Purpose, became flesh in Him." Not God, but the divine purpose, then, became flesh in Christ.

The idea of a vicarious satisfaction for sin as taught by the Church is definitely rejected in this essay as in others. The author terms it an "easy exchange between the sufferer and the human soul." The entire discussion is based on the notion not of some objective result of Christ's suffering and death, but as a revelation of something that had previously existed but not recognized by men in its fullness—the love of God for mankind. Christ is represented as at the height of his office as Revealer in His suffering and dying.

Regarding the resurrection of Christ, the most that Soederblom is ready to concede is the genuineness of the Gospel narratives as a record of convictions held by the Evangelists, namely, that the same body that was laid in the grave came forth again. But as for an actual restoration of the crucified body of Jesus to physical life, Soederblom quotes 1 Cor. 15 as denying any such conception. There is here simply a spiritual "resurrection," hardly more than a continued influence of the personality of Jesus.

Dr. Reu closes an analysis of *Der Kirche Christi Weg in dieser Zeit* as follows: "Also we confess with Paul and Luther that Jesus Christ has become our Lord, in order that we may be His own and live under Him and serve Him in His kingdom. But we accept Christ as true God, born of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and that He has become our Lord only because He has redeemed us through suffering, death, and bodily resurrection from the powers of sin, of death, and of the devil. Of all this, Soederblom knows nothing, however much he speaks of grace, forgiveness, surrender to God, and fellowship with Him."

In the *Theological Monthly* of August, 1923, Professor Dau, under the caption "Soederblom and Harnack in a Swedish Estimate," reported that on the visit of the German radical to Sweden, Soederblom heralded him as "the greatest theologian of our time." In the same article Professor Dau quoted a conservative Swedish paper as saying that when a religious radical becomes archbishop, he is not thereby converted from error, but at best becomes "a little more critical about his speech"; also, that in spite of a storm of protest from good Lutherans in Sweden, Soederblom lent official influence to the appointment of Professor Wetter, a modern Sadducean, to the theological faculty at Uppsala. This Professor Wetter, according to a statement in the *Lutheran Companion*, organ of the Augustana Synod, looks upon the New Testament as a pious fraud, the result of autosuggestion. On the other hand, we note

that when the defender of Lutheran orthodoxy in Norway, Dr. Hallesby, was in Uppsala, he was denied the pulpit in Soederblom's church.¹⁰⁾

A symposium of essays by various Swedish authors was published in 1924, which took the extreme radical position regarding such doctrines as that of the Trinity, of Christ's divinity, His resurrection and ascension, and the belief in the existence of a devil and a hell. It is in his introduction to this book of essays that the archbishop used the words, since often quoted: "We cast off the mask and now see each other face to face."¹¹⁾

IV

In 1922 full religious fellowship was established between the Swedish Lutheran Church and the Established Church of England. It was fresh from this achievement that Soederblom made his visit to the United States, referred to earlier in this essay. He was, upon his arrival, tendered a special reception by Lutherans of many connections. The rest of his visit was something of a triumphal march from Harvard to Rock Island. Receptions, banquets, festival services crowded his program. He took part in the dedication of the new Augustana College and Seminary buildings at Rock Island and was received as an honored guest at many American universities.

When he began to lecture and to speak, American Lutherans first withheld judgment, thinking that their ears were deceiving them. Then, as the truth broke upon them, they indignantly protested against the Liberalism of the Swedish primate. The organ of the Norwegian Lutheran Church quoted "My kingdom is not of this world" against Soederblom's scheme of establishing "a super-church organization for the political salvation of the world," and his teaching was condemned as "leading men into the mush of modern rationalism." He was called "a theological tight-rope walker," an "evasive, indefinite modernist." Ohio Synod papers called him the "greatest errorist among Lutherans," who is "introducing into the American Lutheran Church through the Augustana Synod that radicalism which is destroying Christianity in the sects." "The Swede Gustavus Adolphus once saved Lutheranism; shall American Lutheranism be destroyed by a radical Swede?" *The Kirchliche Zeitschrift* of the Iowa Synod (Vol. 40, No. 10) brought an article which, with all necessary detail, proved that Soederblom's religion is a pantheism; is based on evolution; denies the Atonement; recognizes as Christians men like Monod,

10) *Lutheran Witness*, 1923, p. 340.

11) *Lutheran Witness*, 1924, p. 217.

who denied God's omnipotence; and calls Jesus "a child of his time" because he believed in evil spirits.

Dr. M. Reu's comment was:¹²⁾ "A richly endowed, vital personality, overflowing with love and possessing definite moral convictions. . . . A strongly magnetic personality which made a deep impression. . . . Wherever he was not well known, his thoroughly liberal position was not recognized because of the conservative and positive ring of his speech. But the Church of God has been injured rather than strengthened by his visit. Many a one, at least temporarily, has had his clear sensitiveness for truth and error made unresponsive, and others have been led into modes of thought and types of action foreign to sound Lutheranism." . . . "We know out of our own experience what attraction there resides in linguistic and racial fellowship. But wherever the convictions and the Word of God are concerned, another stronger tendency must meet such influences and gain the victory." On the other hand, his lack of definiteness offended many. The *Lutheran* (U. L. C. A.) said concerning one of Soederblom's addresses: "What we miss throughout the entire discussion is the confessional consciousness that characterized the great leaders and teachers of the Lutheran Church and made them pre-eminently witness-bearers to the Truth which they confessed. They believed with a warmth and with a definiteness and depth of conviction that was as sincere as it was unyielding. They prized their faith above rubies. Whoever did violence to their faith did violence to them. They had the courage to say to an opposing world, 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise!' They cared little what men might think or say, but much what God thought or said. They were wedded by an indissoluble bond to the Word. That, and that alone, was permitted to settle all controversy."

Among Swedish Americans, voices were raised against the religious views of Soederblom when his alignment with the Science of Religion School had first become evident. When he was elected archbishop, the venerable Dr. Norelius wrote: "I am severely opposed to all entangling alliances with the State Church of Sweden, not because I believe that there are no Christians and no orthodox Lutherans in the Church of Sweden, but because the church people are not allowed to govern that Church according to her laws and regulations and because the state powers govern the Church arbitrarily and do so in opposition to the well-known desires and vote of the Church. Do we need a plainer illustration of this fact than the latest appointment of an archbishop? The majority of the church people have expressed their deep sorrow over this arbitrary act of the state powers. How will this majority

12) *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1924, p. 137 ff.

of the honest Lutherans of Sweden feel, and what will they think of the Augustana Synod, a free Lutheran Church of America, which sends a representative to Uppsala with congratulations upon what has taken place? If that is not an entangling alliance with the State Church, I do not know what is."¹³⁾

The late Adolph Hult, in his correspondence with the author of this essay and in contributions to Lutheran magazines outside the Augustana Synod, had long expressed his grief over the influence which emanated from Soederblom upon the Lutheran Church in America. He contributed to the *Bible Banner* (St. Paul) for January, 1924, an article entitled "Soederblom as a Temptation to the Augustana Synod."¹⁴⁾ In this essay Dr. Hult says: "Hallesby, Soederblom's mightiest opponent in the Scandinavian lands, said during his visit that he deemed Soederblom the most dangerous man in the Lutheran Church. I told Dr. Hallesby personally that for years this has been my own conviction. He is most dangerous because he is the most skillful evader of the issue in all Protestantism." Hult contributed to *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* in 1916 an article entitled "Soederblom and Troeltsch," from which we shall quote a few paragraphs in closing. Dr. Hult wrote:

"In his charming, beautiful, and soul-ravishing language and thought-tone he ceaselessly wounds the fundamental articles of our Christian faith and Biblical doctrine. Troeltsch, the out and out liberal, will not play havoc with the Confessional status as will the man who leads his Church with sincerity, yet without possessing her faith and doctrine nor the Biblical and Lutheran simplicity which commends itself to the Lutheran conscience. Troeltsch and Soederblom are in teachings liberal, but the latter is as churchly as Troeltsch is unchurchly, as practical in religious work as Troeltsch is impractical." "Modernism and rationalism, in the case of Soederblom, come together with a most lovely and winning religious personality. This makes what a leading English Lutheran editor once called 'the blandishments of Soederblom's personality' all the more captious, unless the eye be single to the truth of the Word alone, not to ecclesiastical fellowship considerations and personal impressions and relations of personal friendship. All the

13) From the Lutheran Church of Europe the available sources reveal only one protest against the leadership of Soederblom in Lutheran affairs. When the Cathedral of Abo, Finland, was celebrating its seven-hundredth anniversary, a program was arranged, to which it was proposed to invite Nathan Soederblom as the speaker. The Rt. Rev. Gustav Johansson, the eighty-five-year-old archbishop of Finland, however, entered a vigorous protest, pointing out that "Finland's Christian people, when they celebrate the festival of their cathedral, will not wish to see in their midst a person who denies the bodily resurrection of Christ."

14) Reprinted in *Theological Monthly*, 1924, p. 79.

Confessional consciousness of the mighty Lutheran Church of America reacts with solemn earnestness against this unbiblical and un-Lutheran theology. It is the better part of wisdom to become conscious of the eminent and imminent danger to the integral Lutheran consciousness of America which any dallying with this type of theological thought would expose us to. It is too late for the Lutheran Church of America, which by the grace of God has been permitted to weather the storm of Reformed rationalism raging about our Church in this country for a whole generation, now to import a belated form of rationalism, an anachronism church-historically. We want God's pure word. We will have nothing else. And there is no personality so loftily placed that, God granting His grace, shall be able to woo us away from 'Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr.' In the awful world-collapse and world-crash, we have no time for anything but to seek the whole saving truth of the inviolate Holy Scriptures." —

The death of Nathan Soederblom was reported from Sweden, July 12, 1931. Addressing the Lutheran Academy at Dubuque in 1940, Dr. O. Evjen quoted these as the last words of the dying archbishop: "Nu har vi evighed" — "And now, eternity." We shall think of him, in that hour, as turning to "the boundless depths of the love of God in the Crucified One," confessed by him at Eisenach (as quoted earlier in our essay), and, realizing that "we are poor, we are nothing," experiencing "the empty hand of trust filled by God's mercy in Christ Jesus."

THEODORE GRAEBNER

Outlines on the Standard Gospels

Rogate

John 16:23-30

Rogate! Pray! World-wide trouble gives added significance and emphasis to this Sunday's call to prayer. Is. 26:16. Many have been brought to their knees who had perhaps never prayed before or had long neglected prayer.

But only prayer in Jesus' name is acceptable to God and will avail. What Jesus says in the Gospel for this Sunday concerning prayer in His name is of vital interest.

Prayer in Jesus' Name

1. *Such a prayer can be made only with a true knowledge of Jesus*
2. *Such a prayer is acceptable to God and heard*