

Histories from the Inside Out: Shared Origins and Denominational Historiography in the Writings of G. Everett Arden and Karl A. Olsson

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Living into his 103rd year, Conrad Bergendoff's life was long, distinguished, and intellectually vital to the end. President of Augustana College in Rock Island from 1935 to 1962, ecumenical church leader, key architect of the merger in 1962 that brought an end to his beloved Augustana Church, and one of the founders of the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society in 1948, Bergendoff nurtured through the years many close ties with friends, leaders, and scholars in the Mission Covenant tradition and its institutions.¹ His sister Ruth was for many years on the housekeeping staff at North Park College, and before the late 1950s many students went on from the junior college to complete their baccalaureate degrees at Augustana. Through the years I had had several conversations with Dr. Bergendoff, who passed away in 1997, and in virtually every one he made the same somewhat wistful comment: "If only there had been a greater understanding of Waldenström's views of the atonement, the history of our two denominations could have been very different. Augustana never should have let the Covenant go." This essay shares agreement with the sentiment of the first part of the statement while challenging the second in its judgment of the historical record.

Among the denominations begun by Swedish immigrants in North America during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Augustana Synod and the Covenant Church most comprehensively and intentionally have preserved and studied historical sources with substantive reflection. Each passing generation of scholars has been more deeply rooted in the disciplines of the historian's craft. For the most part, these have been narratives written from the inside for readers who are within the experiences of the tradition, but increasingly

outside, as well. They have both private and public dimensions. The late William Hutchison of Harvard believed that the denominational narrative is an internal history much like autobiography, and that the broader investigation of church history is external history, more like biography. “Good denominational history,” he wrote, “occurs when held to the standards of good biography.”² Public disciplines set the bar high for private interpretation. This is not all that simple, of course, but is more a matter of historical integrity within a dialectical relationship of sources and diverse audiences.

Robert Mullin has seen denominations as “bilingual communities,” where members “are fluent in both the language of their particular community *and* that of the wider society, either religiously or socio-politically conceived.”³ During the early 1990s, the Lilly Foundation funded a major conference on denominational historiography at Duke University, which resulted in the volume *Reimagining Denominations: Interpretive Essays*. Russell Richey, one of its organizers and a Methodist who has written extensively on this topic, noted that while rooted in seventeenth-century British Protestantism, it was in America that denominations became the primary form, “the foundational element in the country’s religious life.” He added that they constitute “a distinctively American contribution to religious taxonomy, a religious form that successfully accommodated traditional religious claims and affirmations to the voluntarism and free association of a free society.”⁴ This is a distinct ecology in which a denomination functions through the generations.

In his monumental *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, H. Richard Niebuhr highlighted in the late 1920s the sociological and secular importance of ethnicity in American religious life when he wrote that “religion is as often responsible for ethnic character as the latter is responsible for faith.” Yet, writing from a second-generation German Reformed perspective, Niebuhr also sadly noted that “the fatal divisions” of denominations represent “the moral failure of Christianity.”⁵ This sort of pluralism was not necessarily a good thing. Other scholars have disagreed. Almost a half-century ago, for example, Sydney Mead noted that the denomination “is not primarily confessional, and it is certainly not territorial. It is purposive.”⁶ Timothy Smith developed case studies of denominations as ethnic com-

munities.⁷ Andrew Greeley recognized a “denominational society” where one may discern the social factors of race, nationality, class, caste, and region—all “ethnic” qualities. For him, this has been “the secret of survival” for immigrant groups.⁸ Rudolph Vecoli’s seminal essay in 1970 on the neglect of the ethnic dimension in American historiography, calling it “something of a family scandal, to be kept a dark secret or explained away,” influenced the future course of immigration studies and its religious dimensions.⁹ For example, two years later Martin Marty presented his presidential address to the American Society of Church History. Entitled, “Ethnicity: the Skeleton of Religion in America,” he argued that it represents “the supporting framework, the bare outlines or main features of American religion.”¹⁰

The world of Swedish America, which largely came to a kind of closure by the 1920s and in which the formative narratives of Augustana and the Mission Covenant are imbedded, has had its own historiography. Arnold Barton, a leading historian of Swedish immigration and former editor of the *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, noted that Swedish immigrants left a rich and varied documentary legacy in that they possessed a high degree of literacy, were historically minded about the past and present, and had a writer’s itch—with ethnic publishing houses and hundreds of periodical outlets to scratch it.¹¹ Swedish immigrants and their generations have arguably been as thoroughly studied as any group in North America, and Ulf Beijbom has referred to the Swedish-American Historical Society as “Clio’s abode in Swedish America” in its programs and publications.¹² Within a decade of Augustana’s formation in 1860 a Committee for Historical Documents was established with Eric Norelius as its chair. He was also given the formal title “Historiographer of the Synod.” Collecting documents and active to his death in 1916, Norelius published a major history in 1890, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnas Historia i America*, to be followed by a second volume in 1916.¹³

In both the Augustana and Covenant traditions one can delineate predictable generational developments. In the first generation (roughly from 1850 to 1890 in Augustana and 1875 to 1910 in the Mission Covenant), histories were distinctively private and written by amateurs, primarily those making and living the history as pastors

and denominational leaders, who also intentionally gathered documents.¹⁴ There were numerous outlets within the respective publishing houses for books, newspapers, and other periodicals. The second generation began to produce academically trained professional historians, keenly interested in archival standards, organizing historical societies and libraries, as well as publications, concerned to get the story “right” and serve denominational interests. This stage lasted until about 1930 for Augustana and 1950 for the Mission Covenant. The third generation sustained the private narrative for purposes of identity, but now tended to engage public issues and cultural, contextual realities, while diminishing earlier filiopietistic tendencies. If one detects something of “Hansen’s Law” in this, it was recognized by scholars like Sydney Ahlstrom in a 1960 centennial essay, and perhaps adds credence to Hansen’s claim in a 1937 lecture to the Augustana Historical Society that the “problem of the third generation immigrant is to undertake the job that has been assigned [researching and writing a people’s history] and to perform it well,” indicating that all good ethnic history is ultimately third generation in spirit.¹⁵

Arnold Barton, Ulf Beijbom, and many others have considered George Stephenson, who began writing and editing in the 1920s, to be the first professional historian of Swedish America.¹⁶ Third-generation and American-born, he along with Marcus Lee Hanson (a son of Norwegian and Danish immigrants) were the pioneer American historians of immigration, and both had done their doctoral work at Harvard with Frederick Jackson Turner. Stephenson’s *Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration* remains the standard work on the subject eight decades later. It was then that the more filiopietistic orientation to the narrative began critically to be challenged, especially Augustana’s, and not without personal price.¹⁷ Toward the end of his long tenure at the University of Minnesota, he addressed the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society following a year’s sabbatical in Sweden in 1956. In his presentation, entitled “Rip Van Winkle in Sweden,” he said, “I look forward to the day when cheating at history will be as disreputable as cheating at cards.”¹⁸

Karl A. Olsson and G. Everett Arden had written widely in the areas of Swedish immigrant religion and denominational history be-

fore their major anniversary-related volumes appeared in 1962 and 1963, respectively. Olsson's *By One Spirit* was the seventy-fifth anniversary history of the Covenant Church, and Arden's *Augustana Heritage* followed the centennial in 1960 with a history that coincided with the 1962 merger and was published a year later.¹⁹ These dates are significant in themselves in that historians have suggested that the highpoint of denominational history writing was arguably in the post-WWII period out of perceived necessity, reflecting significant issues in American religion and cultural life, the seriousness of ecumenical relationships, the surge of merger discussions among denominations, the development of departments of religion in higher education (not just seminaries), and—in the matter at hand—the generational maturation of historical reflection among nineteenth-century immigrant churches.

This raises a glaring irony. If a relative peak in denominational historiography occurred about the time of the two works before us, and perhaps into the decade that followed, transatlantic studies of Swedish immigration were taking off in earnest with books, conferences, journals, doctoral students, career opportunities for immigration historians, and the development of archives and research institutions in Sweden and the United States. Also of considerable significance for Augustana and the Covenant were the publication of Vilhem Moberg's four novels (*The Emigrants*, *Unto a Good Land*, *The Settlers*, and *The Last Letter Home*), launching what Beijbom called "the renaissance of emigration scholarship."²⁰ The extended Uppsala Migration Project under the direction of Professor Sten Carlsson, whom Beijbom called "the divining rod" of Swedish-American studies, provides evidence of this. Though some had an interest in the role of religion, most often it was not a central concern in research topics and methodologies.

Gothard Everett Arden was a third-generation Swedish American, born in Wausa, Nebraska, in 1905. His father was the superintendent of the Swedish National Sanatorium in Denver, an institution of the Augustana Synod. After studies at Augustana and Gustavus Adolphus, he earned his baccalaureate degree at Denver University, followed by a B.D. at Augustana Seminary in 1933. While serving churches in rural Illinois and Chicago, he earned his Ph.D. at the

University of Chicago in 1944 with a dissertation entitled “The Interrelationships between Culture and Theology in the History of the Lutheran Church in America.” Called to the faculty of Augustana Seminary the following year, Arden was installed as professor of church history and liturgics in 1949. After the merger in 1962, he followed the school to the newly constituted Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where he remained until his retirement in 1974. Just four years later, he died prematurely and tragically in a bus accident in England.²¹

Karl Arthur Olsson was a second-generation Swedish American, born in Renton, Washington, in 1913, the youngest of four, of whom the oldest was Nils William Olsson.²² His mother died soon thereafter, and his father, a Swedish-born engineer for the Pacific Car and Foundry Company, deposited the children with grandparents and family in the southern Swedish province of Skåne, while he worked in Russia. The family returned to America in 1922, settling in western Pennsylvania, with Karl and his siblings, all American-born, not able to speak English. Karl was educated at North Park, Macalester College, and the University of Minnesota, followed by North Park Seminary and serving Covenant churches. While enrolled at the University of Chicago he joined the English faculty at North Park in 1938, only to leave and serve as a chaplain during WWII, in which he was awarded the Bronze Star and Silver Star for gallantry in action. There is in the North Park University archives an interesting series of correspondence between 1940 and 1945 with Reinhold Niebuhr (a theologian and ethicist at Union Seminary, New York), where Olsson addressed in unvarnished terms (even Niebuhr was a bit taken aback) the systemic racism and troubling attitudes about war that he observed in the military, while stationed in Louisiana at the beginning of the war.²³ After the war, he became an administrator at the University of Chicago and completed his doctorate in English Literature in 1948 with a dissertation entitled “Theology and Rhetoric in the Writings of Thomas Shepard.” He joined the faculty at North Park Seminary in the same year as a professor of church history. When asked why he left such a promising career at Chicago, he simply responded: “If North Park was good enough for David Nyvall, it is good enough for me.” His primary vocational identity

was as a pastor, and he wished to serve his own denomination intellectually and in the preparation of persons called to ministry. He was elected president of North Park College and Theological Seminary in 1959, from which he resigned in 1970. He passed away in 1996 shortly before his eighty-third birthday.

Arden had a focused interest in Augustana history, shared by colleagues like O. Fritiof Ander and Conrad Bergendoff. He was a disciplined writer who met ambitious deadlines. He was commissioned in 1957 to write the centennial history of the seminary, *The School of the Prophets* (1960), and when the merger was imminent this was followed in 1961 by another assignment to write a definitive and celebratory history of the Augustana Synod.²⁴ Given a year's leave of absence, he finished the task in just two years. A book of just over four hundred pages, it is straightforward, chronological institutional history. For the most part, its tone is measured and objective and his selected sources do not carry him deeply into controversy or tension. It succeeds in being accurate and fair; the demise of the synod was not ultimately a reason, he believed, for grief or despair, but one of victory and not defeat. The merger, in light of twentieth-century American realities, was a natural outcome and a fulfillment of Augustana's confession and witness within American Lutheranism, according to Arden. It is a stand-alone history that looks back in remembrance, celebration, and benediction for what was and would become. This is inside history, written primarily for those inside and many undoubtedly bewildered by merger and feeling the loss of sacred things distinctively Augustana. Its approach is quite different from Sydney Ahlstrom's 1960 centennial piece, "Facing the New World: Augustana and the American Challenge," which looks forward by grounding the story in the broad and complex history of American religion and a vast array of key secondary sources.²⁵ Arden's history largely ignored these interrelated categories of American religious history, which was not his specialization.

A fine and competent historian, thoroughly at home in Covenant primary sources that few had mined, much less translated for a contemporary church, Karl Olsson was a very different writer from Arden. A prolific author (the bibliography of his writings in a 1988 *festschrift* ran seventy-eight pages), he wrote weekly columns in Lutheran

and Covenant periodicals for years; he published poetry and fiction (including a controversial novel for some while president of North Park, *The God Game* [1968], no doubt inspired by his translation into English of Olav Hartman's *Holy Masquerade* [1963]).²⁶ Much of his writing sought to instruct and edify the denomination and wider church, and he published extensively in areas of Covenant history and theology. Commissioned by the Covenant Church in 1955, he spent seven years writing *By One Spirit*, which appeared two years following the diamond jubilee in 1960, delayed by his new duties as president. The book ran more than eight hundred pages with a more or less chronological approach, primarily structured thematically. It is a "literary" text, with its major sections introduced by creative and descriptive italicized prose; the major figures are contextualized in time and place by personal story and conviction informing their actions, for better or worse. Whereas Arden's documentation is lean and straightforward footnoting, Olsson's endnotes are often long discursive forays and translations, which many readers have found just as informative as the text. It has had a remarkable shelf-life after fifty years, still read after multiple printings. Olsson also wrote a shorter lay-oriented history that brought the story up to 1975, *A Family of Faith*, to be followed by a fresh two-volume centennial history in 1985-86, entitled *Into One Body . . . by the Cross*, from the perspective of conflict in light of constructive and even redemptive processes, providing a guiding thesis as well as an updating of the previous two decades.²⁷ When Conrad Bergendoff reviewed *By One Spirit* in 1962, noting all the cycles of controversy, which Olsson waded into with critical detail and perspective, he wrote that perhaps the book should have been titled *By Which Spirit?*

It may be said of both commissioned anniversary volumes that they are thoroughly researched and professional histories meeting the needs of each occasion in the life of Augustana and the Covenant. Whereas Arden primarily looked back, analyzing issues of *Americanization* within confessional Lutheranism, Olsson looked forward in effort to allow an informed history to assist in the ongoing shaping of *identity* in the midst of episodic and then intensifying conflicts within the denomination and involving North Park that would endure from the early years through the 1960s. Arden's immediate context was

confessionalism, ecumenism, and Lutheran merger; Olsson's was the Lutheran mission pietist core, which had become formally non-confessional (i.e., human confessions were valued but not seen as normative in relation to Scripture), in the context of American Moody-style revivalism, fundamentalism, and the emergence of neo-evangelicalism in the 1940s and 50s, which had a demonstrable influence in many aspects of the denomination's life. On the American spectrum, it has been a church that is "neither fish nor fowl," a *via media* initially between the free churches on one side and Augustana on the other, and later representing the tension between conservative evangelicals and the mainline denominations. Both are generational stories rooted in the immigrant experience, each one of ethnic and cultural change, missional development, and upwardly mobile social and economic success. Olsson explores the relationship with Augustana up to 1885 when the Mission Covenant was formed, with some passing references after that; Arden assessed the "so called" Mission Friends, and Paul Peter Waldenström in particular, also up to 1885, with no following references to the Covenant Church. Each has, therefore, a formational narrative only of shared origins, which also include the elements named in this symposium—contact, conflict, and confluence. Sadly, neither contains a bibliography nor adequate indices, and suffered in degrees from what Hugo Söderström called "comprehensiveness."²⁸

We return now to Dr. Bergendoff's lament. Did the Covenant leave Augustana? Did Augustana let the Covenant go? What might be argued from the historical record itself? There are four areas of shared origins that may be delineated: first, the Church of Sweden, which includes the long history of Pietistic renewal extending back to the early eighteenth century in both classical (Halle) and Moravian forms; second, the influence of Carl Olof Rosenius, the Evangelical National Foundation, and its emerging left-wing of Mission Friends with more free-church (i.e., believers' church) principles; third, the quests for Lutheran identity evident in the numerous synodical experiments, which include three synods begun by Mission Friend Lutherans between 1872 and 1874, of an older American Lutheranism expanding rapidly with new immigrants from Scandinavia as well as Germany; and fourth, the role of Waldenström in the atonement

controversy and ecclesiology, with the corresponding emergence of radically “free” Mission Friends (J. G. Princell, Fredrik Franson, and John Martenson) who were severe critics of the Covenant, decisively influenced by the Anglo-American dispensationalism of John Nelson Darby and late nineteenth-century popular mass revivalism. Though Arden gives little attention to the contexts of the Swedish Church and Pietism in his *Augustana Heritage*, his earlier volume on the history of the seminary explores this in fine detail. Perhaps he believed there was no need to repeat that material. Olsson explores this first category in considerable ways for his readers in *By One Spirit*, perhaps because they remain central anchors of ethos and content in Covenant identity.

Different nuances and divergences then begin to deepen. Both Arden and Olsson acknowledge a crucial dependence on the lay leader of the renewal movement in Sweden from 1840 to his death in 1868, namely Rosenius. One simply cannot explain the piety and ecclesial ethos of both denominations at the beginning apart from these networks of conventicles and mission initiatives led by Rosenius and many others.²⁹ The first Augustana congregation was formed in 1848 (New Sweden, Iowa); the first Covenant congregations were four organized in 1868 (Swede Bend, Iowa; Galesburg, Princeton, and Chicago, Illinois), all of which involved a separation from Augustana congregations. This is a pattern that would continue for the next half-dozen years or so, but the majority of congregations that became Mission Covenant before 1885 had been formed within the Mission and Ansgar Lutheran synods, or were independent as they waited to see what would happen in the formation of a new denomination. The reasons for this were rooted in the fact that Mission Friends arrived in America beginning in the years following the Civil War. Their pre-migration experience with the grass-roots Rosenian renewal movement in mission societies was somewhat different than Augustana’s leaders, who were representative of an earlier migration beginning in the 1840s. This process of discerning Lutheran identity, what H. Richard Niebuhr called the immediacy of differentiation that preceded phases of accommodation and eventual identification, meant that the majority of Mission Friend congregations that would become Covenant did not leave Augustana.

What did Bergendoff mean by his concern for understanding Waldenström and the history perhaps having a far greater element of confluence? It is precisely here that the hermeneutical approaches of Arden and Olsson differ greatly. Olsson's predecessors, C. V. Bowman and David Nyvall, wrote their histories in 1908 (1925 English version) and 1930 without much attention to Augustana.³⁰ Olsson probed its origins, nature, and piety substantively, describing what he called a "polyglot church" in the early years that combined the folk-church mentality of the Swedish state church with the Pietistic concerns for regenerate membership, lifestyle, and discipline.³¹ He noted the challenges of its early clergy in a new world, their preparation and fitness, and traced key changes in leaders like Hasselquist to a more conservative, reactive posture to those perceived as outside the bounds of confessional orthodoxy—Methodists and Baptists in the early years, and then Mission Friends—without distinguishing the radical free who came to believe by the late 1870s through dispensational hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and eschatology that all denominations were sinful and the devil's playground.

The historiography in Augustana about Mission Friends and the Mission Covenant that began with Hasselquist and Norelius was perpetuated uncritically through Ander and Arden.³² In Arden, it even intensified the terminology that had become commonplace earlier. Thus his chapter on Waldenström and atonement, "The Theological Crisis," stands as a surprising anomaly to his high standards of historical scholarship. A few examples need suffice here. He called Mission Friends "hyper-evangelicals," "dissidents," "dissenters," "separatists," and "enemies of the church" who "ridicule and divide." Carl August Björk, the leader of the Mission Synod and first president of the Mission Covenant, was sadly predictable because he exhibited "the proverbial eccentricities which were said to be characteristics of these energetic, superstitious country folk" from the province of Småland. He labels them as "hyperspiritual folk" with an "Anabaptist" and "perfectionist" conception of the church. Mission Friends are always "so-called Mission Friends," and with very little attention to their Lutheran synods also says simply that "most left Augustana." The discipline of careful categorization for a church historian simply was set aside for an entrenched and prevailing interpretive narrative,

calling Hasselquist, for example, the “venerable father.”³³

Arden’s treatment of Waldenström on the atonement follows a purely forensic and Anselmic confessional line; history becomes apologetics; and he casually dismisses one who had a Ph.D. in classical languages and literature from Uppsala, and later published a two-volume translation and devotional commentary of the New Testament, as having an “overly simple exegetical principle.” The “Waldenström propaganda” that spread through Swedish America was “the greatest crisis ever faced by the Augustana Church.” It also, however, had a victorious and virtuous outcome in the “clarified theology” and “purged the Synod of dissident elements, thus making for greater ultimate unity and conformity.” Leaving, or letting go, has now become purging.³⁴

Arden’s caricatured treatment of all of this is oddly removed from the American setting of immigration, because the categories and vocabulary seem more European in tone relative to established state churches (the spirit of which Augustana sought to be for all Swedish immigrants) and Luther’s own painting of the *Schwärmer* (sixteenth-century Anabaptists) with a broad brush. The varieties of Swedish-American denominational life (Augustana, Methodist, Baptist, Covenant, Free, Episcopal—even Congregational, Presbyterian, and Seventh-Day Adventist) reflected in many ways immersion in the broad and diverse American experience since colonial times, affecting all immigrant groups. In his seminal essay in 1954, Sydney Mead enumerated six critical categories of influence that went into the making of American denominations: (1) a sectarian tendency and propensity in many cases to an anti-historical bias; (2) a voluntary principle; (3) the mission enterprise; (4) revivalism; (5) a reaction to Enlightenment rationalism and rigid Protestant confessionalism, with the corresponding triumph of Pietism; and (6) competition.³⁵ Perhaps if Arden had been more cognizant of this larger, more “public,” literature and discussion, his “private” polemic regarding the Mission Covenant may have been softened by a more nuanced and balanced historical interpretation. His landscape of American immigrant religion was all too narrowly confined and provincial, given that he was a third-generation writer.

When Carl Johan Nyvall visited the United States in 1875-76,

the guest of the Mission Synod, the atonement controversy was intense, much more so than in Sweden. The Galesburg Rule (Lutheran pulpits only for credentialed Lutheran pastors and the Lord's Table only for Lutheran communicants) had just been adopted by Augustana, and as a Mission Friend pastor in Värmland, Nyvall was determined not to speak of "the doctrine" while traveling in America. He was invited upon his arrival to preach in Galesburg at the annual conference of the Augustana Synod and was warmly welcomed, but when he arrived in Lindsborg, Kansas, where his best friend Olof Olsson was pastor of the Bethany congregation, Olsson barred him from the pulpit, honoring the Galesburg Rule. After a very painful experience and period of reconciliation with his friend, Nyvall wrote in his published travel diary that the controversy for Mission Friends was not ultimately about a correct doctrine of the atonement but rather served to clarify the two new centers of reference making them bold to form the Mission Covenant in Sweden in 1878 and the United States in 1885, namely the authority of the Bible as the only confession and the model of the believers' church constituting its membership.³⁶ Of course, from Augustana's perspective Covenanters defined themselves out of historic Lutheranism, which indeed was true. They were still Lutheran Pietistic Rosenian/Waldenströmian Mission Friends, however, seeking after 1885 to articulate what that ecclesial identity would be. Perhaps this was the nature of the conversation that Conrad Bergendoff wished to revisit and continue, having said on many occasions that the Covenant was "the vine that grew over the Lutheran wall."³⁷

The comprehensive and admirable denominational histories of Olsson and Arden—both linked to major commemorative anniversaries to be celebrated as well as interpreted—also arguably represent a highpoint of institutional history writing. Christa Klein has asserted that by the 1970s it became clear historiographically that "an era of denominational history ended without beginning another."³⁸ This was partly the result of acculturation and Americanization, which is understandable, but perhaps also the lessening importance and suspicion of denominations for many American Christians (changes in notions of believing and belonging), as well as the ever present ahistorical tendencies of American culture.³⁹ New generations of

leaders may be more inclined to dwell briefly on a past that appears primarily to be “useable” or “purposeful,” finding the ethnic origins of the church constraining or problematic in the momentum of a multicultural present. Rather than the collective memory of a people, ethnicity of origin may act as a shibboleth (e.g., if one does not like something, simply label it Swedish—choose an ethnicity—or traditional) and merely be judged to be representative of someone else’s story. Denominational histories may be presumed to be only “private” narratives for insiders, thus neglecting the “public” engagement engendered by historians. History is to be overcome rather than understood.

In conclusion, it might be a fair judgment that neither the academic nor ecclesial climate over the past four decades has been particularly interested in institutional histories, though fine examples continue to appear. Perhaps these interpretative narratives rooted in sources may be all the more necessary since, according to Klein, “communal realities always precede social change.”⁴⁰ For this reason, the work of scholars like Karl Olsson and Everett Arden should be valued all the more, building upon the lenses with which they viewed the past and present from the inside out, with ongoing historical research and writing that continue their legacy into future generations.

ENDNOTES

1. For Conrad Bergendoff, see J. Iverne Dowie and Renest M. Espelie, eds., *The Swedish Immigrant Community in Transition: Essays in Honor of Dr. Conrad Bergendoff* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Historical Society, 1963); Thomas Tredway, *Coming of Age: A History of Augustana College, 1935-1975* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana College, 2010); and Tredway’s forthcoming biography of Bergendoff.

2. William R. Hutchingson, “Denominational Studies in the Reshaping of American Religious History,” in *Reimagining Denominationalism: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Robert Bruce Mullin and Russell E. Richie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6, 38ff.

3. Russell E. Mullin, “Denominations as Bilingual Communities,” in Mullin and Richie, eds., *Reimagining Denominationalism*, 168.

4. Mullin and Richey, eds., *Reimagining Denominationalism*, 3.

5. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York:

Henry Holt and Company, 1929), 25.

6. Sydney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," *Church History* 23 (1954): 291.

7. Cf., for example, Timothy L. Smith, "Religious Denominations as Ethnic Communities: A Religious Case Study," *Church History* 35 (1966): 207-26.

8. Andrew Greeley, *The Denominational Society* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972), 1ff., 108.

9. Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension in American History," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970), 70ff.

10. Martin E. Marty, "Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in America," *Church History* 41 (1972): 5-21.

11. H. Arnold Barton, "Clio and Swedish America," in *Perspectives on Swedish Immigration*, ed. Nils Hasselmo (Chicago: Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1978), 3-24.

12. Ulf Beijbom, "The Historiography of Swedish-America," *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* 31 (1980): 281.

13. *Ibid.*, 259.

14. *Ibid.*, *passim*, where Beijbom develops more fully these historiographical stages for historians of Swedish America, of which denominational histories are crucial subsets, representing the largest institutions begun by immigrants.

15. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Historical Society, 1938), 19. "Hansen's Law" may be rendered: "What the son or daughter wishes to forget, the grandson or granddaughter wishes to remember." See Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck, eds., *American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis after Fifty Years* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

16. Beijbom wrote, "In the hands of professional historians such as George Stephenson, the second-generation 'complex' was transmuted into critical distance, a broader perspective, and objectivity" ("Historiography of Swedish-America," 282).

17. George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration: A Study of Immigrant Churches* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932). Stephenson published the first scholarly book on immigration, *A History of American Immigration, 1820-1924* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1926). Cf. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1940) and *The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1940).

18. George M. Stephenson, "Rip Van Winkle in Sweden," *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* 7 (1956): 60.

19. Karl A. Olsson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1962) and G.

Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage: A History of the Augustana Lutheran Church* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1963).

20. Beijbom, "Historiography of Swedish-America," 283.

21. G. Everett Arden Papers, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, unprocessed, 3 boxes and 1 file.

22. See Carl Philip Anderson, "Karl A. Olsson: A Sketch of His Life," and Nils William Olsson, "Karl Olsson's *Abnetafel*," in *Amicus Dei: Essays on Faith and Friendship Presented to Karl A Olsson on His 75th Birthday*, ed. Philip J. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1988), 4-11, 12-22.

23. David J. Scroggins, "The Realist and the Chaplain: An Examination of Correspondences between Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl A. Olsson," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 62 (2009): 57-77.

24. G. Everett Arden, *The School of the Prophets: The Background and History of Augustana Theological Seminary 1860-1960* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Theological Seminary, 1960).

25. Sydney Ekman Ahlstrom, "Facing the New World: Augustana and the American Challenge," in *Centennial Essays: Augustana Lutheran Church 1860-1960*, ed. Emmer Engberg, Conral Bergendoff, and Edgar M. Carlson (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1960), 1-27.

26. See Timothy J. Johnson, "Bibliography: The Published and Unpublished Writings of Karl A. Olsson," in Anderson, ed., *Amicus Dei*, 215-93; Olov Hartman, *Holy Masquerade*, trans. Karl A. Olsson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963); and Karl A. Olsson, *The God Game* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1968).

27. Karl A. Olsson, *A Family of Faith: 90 Years of Covenant History* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1975), and Olsson, *Into One Body . . . by the Cross*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1985, 1986).

28. Hugo Söderström, *Confession and Cooperation: The Policy of the Augustana Synod in Confessional Matters and the Synod's Relations with Other Churches up to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Lund: CWK Gleerup bokförlag, 1973), 13.

29. In addition to *School of the Prophets*, especially 47ff., Arden addressed the significance of Rosenius in *Four Northern Lights: Men Who Shaped Scandinavian Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 115-50. These formative themes received little attention, however, in the most recent history of Augustana by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist, which cast its focus primarily on the North American context, *The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008). Rosenius's name appears just once, imbedded in a quotation by Carl Swensson (45).

30. C. V. Bowman, *The Mission Covenant of America* (Chicago: Covenant Book Concern, 1925) and David Nyvall, *The Swedish Covenanters: A History*

(Chicago: Covenant Book Concern, 1930).

31. Olsson, *By One Spirit*, 179-96.

32. For example, Emory Johnson in the 1950s described Waldenström's views as excessively emotional and captive to Socinian heresy and, with a touch of sarcasm, said that his "interpretation of the Bible was set forth in a literalistic way which combined clever use of proof texts with an authoritarian air of superiority over critics and ridicule of those who dared oppose him." (*Eric Norelius: Pioneer Midwest Pastor and Churchman* [Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1954], 171.) O. Fritiof Ander called the spread of Waldenström's biblical and theological views an "invasion," praising T. N. Hasselquist as a "daring warrior," while deriding Waldenström as a "learned man of power" who influenced the unlearned immigrant through fourth-century Donatist and sixteenth-century Socinian ideas. (*T. N. Hasselquist: The Career and Influence of a Swedish-American Clergyman, Journalist and Educator* [Rock Island, IL: Augustana Historical Society, 1931], 166f.)

33. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 160ff., 188, 201.

34. *Ibid.*, 174-88. In this section there are historical inaccuracies about the chronology and differences between the Mission Covenant, the Free, and the Swedish Congregationalists.

35. Mead, "Denominationalism," 291.

36. Cf. Carl Johan Nyvall, *Travel Memories from America*, trans. E. Gustav Johnson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1959), 3. This was originally published as *Reseminnen från Amerika* (Kristinehamn, 1876).

37. Gustaf Aulén, Luther scholar and Bishop of Strängnäs from 1933 to 1952, wrote in his own ninety-ninth year concerning the impending centennial observance of the Swedish Covenant Church in 1978, that his own atonement theology and understanding of Luther and the classical position was very congenial to Waldenström's. ("Nästen årsbarn med Svenska Missionsförbundet," *Tro och liv* 6 [1977], 6.)

38. Christa R. Klein, "Denominational History as Public History: The Lutheran Case," in Mullin and Richey, eds., *Reimagining Denominationalism*, 309.

39. With an expanding literature on this topic, see especially Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

40. *Ibid.*, 312.