Augustana and Lutherans in Society

The dialogue that follows is from the movie, *Gran Torino*.

Walt: "Trying to get yourself killed? Why don't you Asian girls just stick together?" The conversation continues with Sue, the Hmong girl he is giving a ride. Walt: "Where is Ha-mong, anyway?" Sue: "Hmong isn't a place; it's a people….We fought on your side."……Walt: "How is it you ended up in the Midwest, anyway—snow on the ground six months of the year?" Sue: "The Lutherans brought us here." Walt: "Everyone blames the Lutherans. You'd think the cold would keep the idiots out." Conversation continues about the life of resettled Hmong refugees. Sue: "…the girls go to college and the boys go to jail…"

Sue: "The Lutherans brought us here." Walt: "You'd think the cold would keep the idiots out."

The cold didn't. Nor hail, sleet, or dark of night. I am grateful for your invitation. I've long been intrigued by the "'stans" so I'm pleased to visit the Republic of Augustan and to speak of "Augustana and Lutherans in Society".

God has a quite side; and it's Lutheran. Not *so* quiet that Walt Kowalski, aka Clint Eastwood, didn't find out. Or the Hmong woman we only know as Sue. And not *so* quiet that millions more did not find God's quiet side via LWR (Lutheran World Relief), LIRS (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services) and LSA (Lutheran Services in America), the latter the largest private social service network in the U. S. , serving 1 in 50 Americans.[1]

Augustana has a godly side; and it's quiet. Mostly. Lutherans typically do mercy better than justice and mercy is usually quieter. Not a surprise, then, that most of Augustana's ministries of social presence are services of mercy "for the relief of the needy in their distress".[2] Such is chiefly the outcome of Augustanan revivalist pietism, brought on the boat in the second wave of Swedish immigration from the 1830s to the 1920s by immigrants whose hearts were warmed in Scandinavia's own version of the Great Awakening. Augustana, however, gets noisy now and again in a justice way. Ministries of mercy are complemented with advocacy (a name for lobbying without the bribes). In some cases, Augustana did notably better than other Lutherans and influenced them—on race, on labor and

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[1] *Who Are The Lutherans? Any Why Did We Start So Many Social Ministry Organizations?*, a publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries and The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, together with Jon Pahl (Philadelphia: 2009), 21.

[2] The phrase is taken from Samuel Torvind's chapter title in Forster R. McCurley, ed., *Social Ministry in the Lutheran Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

other economic issues, on the witness for peace and against conscription, on an end to capital punishment. When the merger happens in 1962 and Augustana is swallowed by "LCA," Augustana's strong sense of social responsibility still carries on, strengthened by the upheavals of the 1960s. That means involvement with the American Indian Movement (AIM), the second wave of feminism, women's ordination, world hunger, war and the aforementioned issues of race and the economy.

Yet the loudest example of Augustana advocacy is now largely forgotten—the temperance campaigns present from the Synod's founding on through more than fifty resolutions running as late as 1961, almost thirty years after the repeal of Prohibition (1933). Temperance has this staying power because it is a core concern in Augustana's deeply pietist morality that, at the same time, intersected national efforts to legislate morality, thus becoming a law-and-order justice matter. Pietist ethics are usually hesitant about legislating morality and putting it in the hands of the cops, preferring instead a transformation of hearts as the way to effect social reform. But on temperance Augustana worked both sides of the street. It approved imposed behavioral changes via imposed law, whether hearts, minds and souls were ready or not, at the same time that the Synod kept alcohol abstention high atop the list of personal virtues.

But temperance has this staying power for another, more basic reason: the embarrassing levels of Swedish inebriation that docked at Ellis Island and sloshed westward. Erling and Granquist say alcohol abuse was "nearly epidemic" in nineteenth-century Sweden.[3] Klein and von Dehsen say that, even in the poor farming country of the Swedes' new world, "produce was more conveniently and profitably marketed in its distilled form."[4] Drunken Swedes may even have been a match for drunken Irish, although in a Lutheran way; thus quieter and more godly, without the barroom brawls and without jigs; or, for that matter, any dancing whatsoever. They may have thrown darts and played cards but, if so, out back in the barns, not in noisy pubs in noisy ghettoes. Erling and Granquist register the complaint of one Augustana pastor who says he "was almost afraid to light the altar candles for the Christmas Eve service because the fumes of alcohol from the congregants were so strong that he feared an explosion!"[5]

While there are other justice matters, none of them reach the rhetorical pitch or tenure that exorcising "the Swedish disease" does. A 1938 Synod resolution, already five years after Prohibition is repealed, calls the liquor traffic "a destroyer of souls" and "an enemy of the church….[T]he liquor

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[3] Maria Erling and Mark Granquist, *The Augustana Story* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 127).

[4] Christa R. Klein with Christian D. von Dehsen, *Politics and Policy: The Genesis and Theology of Social Statements in the Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 7.

[5] Maria Erling and Mark Granquist, *The Augustana Story* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 126.

traffic challenges the church with grave social problems in its heartless waste of human resources and human life."[6] Other justice issues—say, racial segregation or the forced removal of Native Americans and a 19th c. policy of cultural genocide—are never labeled "an enemy of the church" or a "destroyer of souls."

But engaging our topic by discussing of ministries of mercy and justice can overlook the framework for these. So let's start again. I began with *Gran Torino* because the contours of the Republic of Augustan track the contours of immigration and assimilation. While Augustana cannot be said to represent Swedish Americans at large—it gathered in only 20% of them—most all who *did* forge Augustana *were* Swedish immigrants bent on becoming what they were not. Namely, Swedish Americans and then, after a few generations, simply Americans. Augustana's social ethics story is thus *not* one of immigration *per se*, main street in Lindsborg, Kansastan, notwithstanding. It is one of immigration *and* assimilation, the story of a church and an identity whose roots in one country are transplanted to take hold in another, and take hold so quickly and well that one mother tongue is soon be traded in for another, just as one prayer book and order of service soon morphs into another, then another in the course of rather rapid Americanization. It's not quite what Sue says about the Hmong immigrants

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[6] Cited from Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 127.

—now “the girls go to college and the boys go to jail”—though there is some of that, too.

Before I wade farther into immigration-moving-into-assimilation with, so to say, no Swedish Amish or Swedish Shakers or Swedish Hassidim anywhere, let me post the brackets. I have been inundated with reports of what I’ve learned are called SMOs, Lutheran Social Ministry Organizations. (The deluge is my fault, since I asked over-eager friends for help.) That SMO services are what really count as “Lutherans in Society” is its own commentary on Lutheran social ethics as mercy ministry. Be that as it may, many of these SMOs have their roots in Augustana’s sense of social responsibility, just as they have their roots initially in responding to the needy when those needy were Swedish immigrants and their children. SMO ministry emerged out of pietism and the inner mission movement at a time when government had not yet taken on a large-scale role for public welfare beyond public schools and the cavalry. That small faith and family-focused circle has long since expanded markedly, however, chiefly because public monies and government have become SMO partners in social ministry since the Great Depression. This partnership of para-church and state is the chief reason LSA now serves those one in fifty Americans in some form or another. It also exhibits a certain Lutheran trait; namely, Lutherans are not troubled by partnering with government for the common good.

Yet this public expansiveness would never have happened apart from the Augustanan theology of neighbor love, whoever the neighbor is. In this way the Synod's pietism and inner mission movement served it—and millions of others—well. People, their needs, and acts of unconditional hospitality trump other moral qualifications as well as creedal ones. And they do it quietly, without worrying over much about the law. This is a proper parsing of the two-kingdoms ethic. The kingdom on the left—the gospel expressed as faith active in deeds of love—welcomes the stranger and tends the widow and the orphan, no questions asked; not about race, class, gender, religion, or nationality, Hmong, Polish or Swede. This happens while the kingdom on the right—the realm of civil law and society's systems—works out the hard details and necessary compromises of, say, immigration policy, the occupation of new lands, affordable housing or job creation. Still, the point is that, in this parsing, Augustana was a better citizen of the kingdom on the left than the right, despite shifts we will soon mention. In any event, there was never confusion about the bottom line: salvation is the free gift of God's grace apprehended through faith; good works never earn salvation, or even frequent flyer miles; good works do, however, follow from faith, now turned in love toward the neighbor's well-being. Moreover, the strong Lutheran theme of a freedom that follows from God granting salvation through grace, with no pre-existing conditions, issues in a

remarkable sense of trust in God. This trust allows rather poor immigrants to risk that God will indeed provide, despite periodic evidence to the contrary. It is astonishing that, in one after another SMO beginning, the only seed available was mustard. Not a single one of our ELCA college's economics departments today would have approved of the business plan of those pioneers. Too risky, not enough forethought or capital, and the wrong skill set.

I don't want to claim overly much for Lutheran freedom, at least not in the abstract. Faith is always concrete and contextual and I suspect those laudable Lutheran initiatives would have withered like the last stalks of corn in a Kansas drought had it not been for the important turn that pietism took in this country. In Sweden, as elsewhere in Scandinavia, pietism was not only the heart's reaction to the austere rationalism of confessional orthodoxy. Pietism was also a protest against an enculturated state church that showered everyone with cheap grace and spiritual repression. The church's chief functions seemed little more than "hatch, match, and dispatch." Add church tax and compulsory school instruction and you had lowest-common-denominator discipleship and a dour spirit. But what happened when the immigrants were without state church culture and, at the same time, were marginal in the new land, like Sue's Hmong hill people transported from Laos to St. Paul? What happened when they heard a different tongue, faced

different and sometimes hostile neighbors, and needed help? Like all immigrants, they turned to one another and took another look at their own cultural treasures for bonding, including their religion. So new world pietism fosters a strong sense of church and congregation, whereas in Sweden the *ecclesiolae* distanced themselves from the *ecclesia.* And those rather staid confessional writings—remember the Synod chose the name "Augustana"—become part of the teaching treasure that immigrants turned to in order that the children might have faith and the faith might have children. To remember Dorothy: "Toto, I don't think we're in Sweden, anymore. We're in Kansas."

This means that Lutheran freedom to serve the neighbor as faith active in love has a robust sense of *congregational community* in the new land that it didn't have in the old. And since no freedom, including individual freedom, lives either long or well without community, a faith ecology took hold in Augustana, an ecology that gathered community worship, pietist personal devotion, and clear social responsibility. These nurtured one another and prepared the Synod for what became *ministries of mercy toward any and all, a confident ecumenism, and a global outlook*.[7]

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[7] These are nicely sketched in Herbert Chilstrom's address, "Themes of Augustana," printed in *Augustana Heritage Newsletter: A publication of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*, Vol. 4, No. 2, January, 1999: 2-10.

Do you want a snapshot of where that has landed in 2010? Over two days of celebration last October, one of yours, Barbara Lundblad, was inaugurated as the Joe R. Engle Professor of Preaching at an ecumenical seminary, Union Theological, New York, where not a few Augustanans received their Ph.D.s, some of them in Christian Ethics. Three different choirs sang in a concert titled "Just Singing", in keeping with Dr. Lundblad's inaugural address on "Just Preaching." It took place, in accord with Augustana genes, in the context of a worship service, and following the service, in traditional Lutheran style, attendees found their way to the Swedish meatballs and Jell-O molds awaiting them in the Social Hall. But before the night was over, salsa dancing and hula-hoops turned the hall into a dance floor, with Associate Dean of Academic Administration Alain Silverio as DJ. There you have it, Augustana past and present. To remember Dorothy: "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore. We're in New York, or maybe Oz."

But I lost my brackets. For reasons of what the teen-agers call "TMI"—too much information, I was to limit my timeframe to the lifetime of the Synod. Having transgressed that, let me try a bracket of a different sort altogether.

What I cannot give its due is the most important presence of Lutherans in society. I regret this but agnosticism renders a faithful account

impossible. We simply do not, and cannot, know all the ways in which the stuff of ethics, namely, personal and collective character and conduct, is formed and embodied in and as society. Growing people up and internalizing and externalizing moral qualities in a whole way of life cannot be tracked in the detail required to paint the full mural of Lutherans in society. No historian of social ethics or sociologist of religion can get her arms around all that the Hebrew Bible understands as righteous living in sound institutions. Furthermore, most of the Christian's good life is so ordinary, so daily and so quiet we hardly notice it is happening as hymns and songs are sung, family and potluck meals are prepared and served and the chores are done, stories are told, prayers are said, rites of passage celebrated, the sick tended, the workplace honored, and the dead buried, complete with funeral lunches in church basements. And what about national youth gatherings, camp and child care? Add to this the Lutheran theological understandings of vocation and calling and being priests and Christs to one another and the upshot is that *all* relationships and *all* responsibilities belong to "Lutherans in society". Easily the most important presence of Lutherans in society, most of this goes unreported and unnoticed, though it is the very heart of morality, ethics and social ministry presence. So please take note of this limit. To focus, as I do, on the work of an office of church in society, or the content of denominational resolutions and policy statements, or the

considerable institutional presence of church and para-church social agencies, is in fact to overlook the vital center; namely, all that goes into crafting a people and a way of life that is what it is *as* society *and the life of faith.* What we *do* give our attention under the rubric of Augustana and Lutherans in society—those institutions of mercy and advocacy, those denominational resolutions, studies and stands, and the sturdy leaders in all these—pales in significance compared with down-home vocation alive in deeds as ordinary as pulling weeds, selling Girl Scout cookies, sharing a grief or joy, preparing a sermon, tucking in a little one, and showing up for work.

I simply want you to know that the real presence of Lutherans in society cannot be offered here. You can glimpse or taste it by gathering the people, breaking the bread, and telling the stories. But none of us can wrestle down the whole. It's as big as life itself.

I should add that my assigned topic was impossible to begin with. Where else do you find Lutherans, anyway, except "in society"? *In utero* and in the cemetery are the only other spots. Granted, that is still a large number, all told. But we don't hear much from them or know much of what they are up to.

Mostly I will stop at the merger of 1962 except to end with a section on *the* present-day challenge. The reason is that Augustana's life as well as

our current reality is bracketed by the same phenomenon and shaped by the same power. There is a frame even more determinative than immigration running to assimilation. In fact, what sent Swedes to boats bound for "the sweet land"[8] was the "dramatic social transformation" taking place across Scandinavia and most of Europe, a transformation still with us. It "broke apart settled communities and triggered mass migration"[9] then and it continues to do so. Called "the Great Transformation" that left feudalism in ruins and created modernity, it was industrialization and the enormous power of a new economy dubbed capitalism. The rationalization, mobility, and transformation of all things into commodities for market exchange destroyed the kind of intact, long-haul communities that created identity and memory on the basis of generational solidarity. Communities glued together by tradition could not withstand the mobility of labor and capital required by this dynamic new economy, nor the fascination with the new worlds this economy opened to those who would climb aboard. If members of these settled communities were to get in on the program, they had to move, both literally and figuratively. In a word, traditional communities were pre-capitalist communities, and the capitalist economy undercut their stability together with their values, their dreams, and their long-standing

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[8] The name of a feature-length movie (and love story) of immigrants, most of the Lutheran, to the Upper Midwest.

[9] Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 7.

organization; in short, their way of life.[10] Add to this both deep dissatisfaction with military conscription at home in Sweden and "the religious Awakening"[11] across Scandinavia and its impatience with a state church's indiscriminate embrace of all, whether they loved Jesus or not, and you have the strong forces accompanying the journeys that gave rise to Augustana.

Nor would these forces wane in the sweet land of the New World. Swedish immigrants came as farmers mostly, but before long found themselves migrants on yet another trek, this time to cities—Chicago, Minneapolis, the Quad Cities. This was, after all, the Industrial Revolution, including the industrialization of agriculture. Henry W. Bellows' description of what was happening to rural and small town life already in the America of 1872, the middle of the wave of Swedish immigration, captures the experience Augustanans of those years came to know well.

> Thousands of American towns, with an independent life of their own, isolated, trusting to themselves, in need of knowing and honoring native ability and skill in local affairs…have been pierced to the heart by the railroad which they helped to build to aggrandize their importance. It has gone through them in a double sense – stringing

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[10] Taken from my *Moral Fragments and Moral Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 35.

[11] Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 7.

them like beads on a thread, to hang around the neck of some proud city. It has annihilated their old importance; broken up the dependence of their farmers upon the home traders; … destroyed local business and taken out of town the enterprising young men, beside exciting the ambition of those once content with a local importance, to seek larger spheres of life.[12]

But that transformation was the beginning and the middle, not the end. The end is the 21st c.—ours—in view of the industrial paradigm's power to re-shape the planet itself. So I will finish with the challenges Lutherans in society face, and ask what Augustana offers.

We cannot jump directly to the challenges, however, since some of the Augustana resources emerge from the era in which the immigrant Synod becomes a U. S. church addressing American issues. As it happens that era coincides with the Progressive Era, roughly the first couple decades of the 1900s, only then to be followed with the Great Depression in the 1930s. This is also the time when two major social changes in Augustana's life coincide. The aforementioned migration from farm to city happens concurrently with the *generational transitions* most all immigrant groups experience. Remember Hansen's axiom from sociology that says the first

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[12] Henry W. Bellows, "The Townward Tendency," *The City*, 1872, 38, as cited by Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change* (Baltimore & London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 110. Further publication data not supplied by Bender.

generation born in the new world wants to forget what the immigrant generation wants to remember, and the second generation wants to remember what the first generation sought to forget. In the early 1900s, the Progressive Era, there were many first generation Augustanans. They were *not* Swedes. They were *Swedish-Americans,* a hybrid identity of no-longer-immigrants who were caught up, like Sue, in an American populism they embraced, together with their own high interest in the social and political problems of the new land, rather than the community in the old country. They defined the responsibilities of citizenship in a more sweeping arc than their parents, they rejected many of the constraints of pietist code morality on such popular amusements as movie-going and dancing, and many of them left the farm for the city's bright lights, even though they had never seen Pa-ree. Urban life and—no small matter—the exploitation that robber baron industrialization exercised among workers coming to town looking for jobs—made even more compelling the issues that turned on "large and impersonal economic forces,"[13] issues such as minimum wage laws, child labor and labor organizing, the right of women to vote, and the kind of boom-and-bust social disorder that arises when large corporations move into a community, create infrastructure and jobs to extract resources and profits, only to leave when more profitable prospects lure them elsewhere, often

[13] Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 133.

with government and business collusion; or the social disorder that happens in both city and countryside when industrial mechanization replaces labor-intensive work. But remember this is also the period of Teddy Roosevelt populism, a core element of which was to *go after* trusts and monopolies while yet *praising* competitive capitalism and individual liberties. So while Swedish-Americans down on the farm in Augustana congregations initially seemed somewhat removed from the growing social problems and enticements, the generation new to the cities brought Augustana into the Progressive Era and poised it for the firm sense of social responsibility that would be in place when Wall Street crashed in 1929. To be sure, economic exploitation and the Great Depression didn't convert Augustana to socialism, as it did some Swedes. Both the strong church consciousness and the pietism of Augustana distanced it from, for example, the burgeoning labor movement, which had little time for traditional organized religion and breathed more than a whiff of atheism and socialism. Protestants generally failed to hold workers' allegiance. Yet Augustana affirmed the rights of both labor and management to collective bargaining and pushed for fair working conditions and wages for blue-collar workers. This sense for the common good belongs to Augustana's ethic rather consistently. It could even *sound* socialist. But common-good motivation here rests in the religious and cultural ethos of the Midwest and Upper Midwest that made these regions

the first home of some of the most progressive legislation in U. S. history. One writer of the time, after making it clear that Augustanans were *not* card-carrying socialists, went on to say he rejected both "unchristian Socialists and unsocial Christians."[14] DeAne Lagerquist, in "The Lutheran Difference: What More Than Nice?", notes that Robert Putnam's later and famous work on "social capital" (i.e., "a combination of social networks, civic virtue, and quality of life") "identifies eight Midwestern states, including those with the largest proportion of Lutherans, as having high to very high levels of social capital." Putnam is describing the 1990s and he doesn't explicitly say social capital is thickest where Lutherans are densest. But since social capital is formed at about the same pace as topsoil, Putnam is in reality talking about the ongoing yield of a century earlier as immigrants and their American children created their own dense networks of social exchange and their own civic catechism in rather trying circumstances.[15]

What happens next that changes Augustana and Lutherans in society? The decades following the Great Depression find Augustana doing what most immigration-to-assimilation church bodies did: become a rationalized denomination that puts tasks in the hands of professional staff that carve out discrete areas of work within what sometimes are even called

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[14] Cited from Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 133.

[15] DeAne Lagerquist, "Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: *America's Common Denominator?* , in *Religion by Region*, edited by Philip Barlow and Mark Silk (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004), 88-89.

"divisions" (the Division for Church in Society (ELCA) or the Division for Mission or Evangelism, e.g.). Following this division pattern, itself mirroring the industrial paradigm of organization, Augustana in 1937 created the Commission on Morals and Social Problems, later to become the Commission on Social Action. Concern for "moral and social problems" was certainly not new to a body imbued with pietist ethics. Pietist ethics is never short a morals czar or an ethics sheriff, most of them close relatives or neighbors. But giving a commission the responsibility to develop social policies in a more centralized fashion that intended to lend a more official status to these policies as Synod policies was a significant bureaucratic development.[16] Significant enough that it endures to the present.

To this point I have neglected the role of individual leaders in Augustana's public presence. In a way that is quite appropriate. The Synod does not strike the outside world as peopled by charismatic leaders who drew a crowd among the curious in the public square. If there are any Augustana "giants in the earth", they are rather humble and internally-oriented as churchmen and churchwomen. Remember, while Augustana does have its godly side, it's quiet, mostly.

But I would be remiss to leave out one of the noisier ones, the dean of Augustanan social ethics, A. D. Mattson. He had deep and ranging influence,

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[16] Erling and Granquist, *The Augustana Story*, 141-42.

both because he taught something like 1,000 students in the Synod's only seminary and because, from 1937 onward, he crafted so many of the social policies of the now rationalized denomination.

Fascinating, however, is that he was almost an outlier to Augustana, and precisely in his domain, social ethics. He doesn't fit the mold at all.

The ferment in mainline Protestant social ethics of this time was all about the Social Gospel, a ferment with little appeal, however, among the Lutherans. Walter Rauschenbusch lost few opportunities to upbraid Lutherans for their quietism and, like Reinhold Niebuhr a generation later, for the fault lines of two-kingdom ethics. There was only one kingdom, the Kingdom of God, and it was pretty clear that its crier and exemplar, Jesus, could not be rendered pro-capitalist, pro-rich, and pro-war. He was pro-worker in the face of the excesses of capitalism just as he was non-violent in the face of Caesar's rule by arms and intimidation.

So why did Lutherans largely ignore the Social Gospel? In part because their marginal status as recent immigrants had not yet truly worked out an American theology, despite gradual assimilation. This put them at the edge of even Protestant streams of national reform. Too, their churchly pietism, while socially conscientious, had never burned with the zeal of the Calvinists for *institutional* reform in the public domain. It was also too sin-conscious to entertain the strong strains of perfectionism and utopianism

brought by some immigrant groups. Unlike the Puritans, the Swedes never said, "we're a city set upon a hill." And it wasn't only because they couldn't find a hill. Or, unlike the Quakers, they never expected silence, pacifism and righteous living to yield The Peaceable Kingdom, even in their own colonies. Bishop's Hill notwithstanding, they were not utopian.

So isn't it odd that the dean of Augustana social ethics and mentor to generations of Augustana clergy is a Social Gospeler with a Kingdom of God theology, and never a Lutheran two-kingdoms ethic, as well as an activist out to correct what he regards as "a major vacuum in Lutheran" social thought? Someone needs to explain this anachronism. My uneducated guess is that for this generation of Augustanans, now largely city folk facing harsh industrial realities and no little unemployment, Mattson was focused with all due diligence right where the compelling needs were. In any event, when Conrad Bergendorff gave the new church board its name in the LCA, the Board of Social Ministry, it was Augustana's firm sense of social responsibility as nurtured by A. D. Mattson that was carried forward.[17]

I finish with the challenges that confront all Lutherans in society today, as well as those *in utero*. Recall I am claiming that industrialization is *the* force that led Swedes to emigrate to America in the first place, that then saw them migrate to the cities as rural and small towns were transformed by

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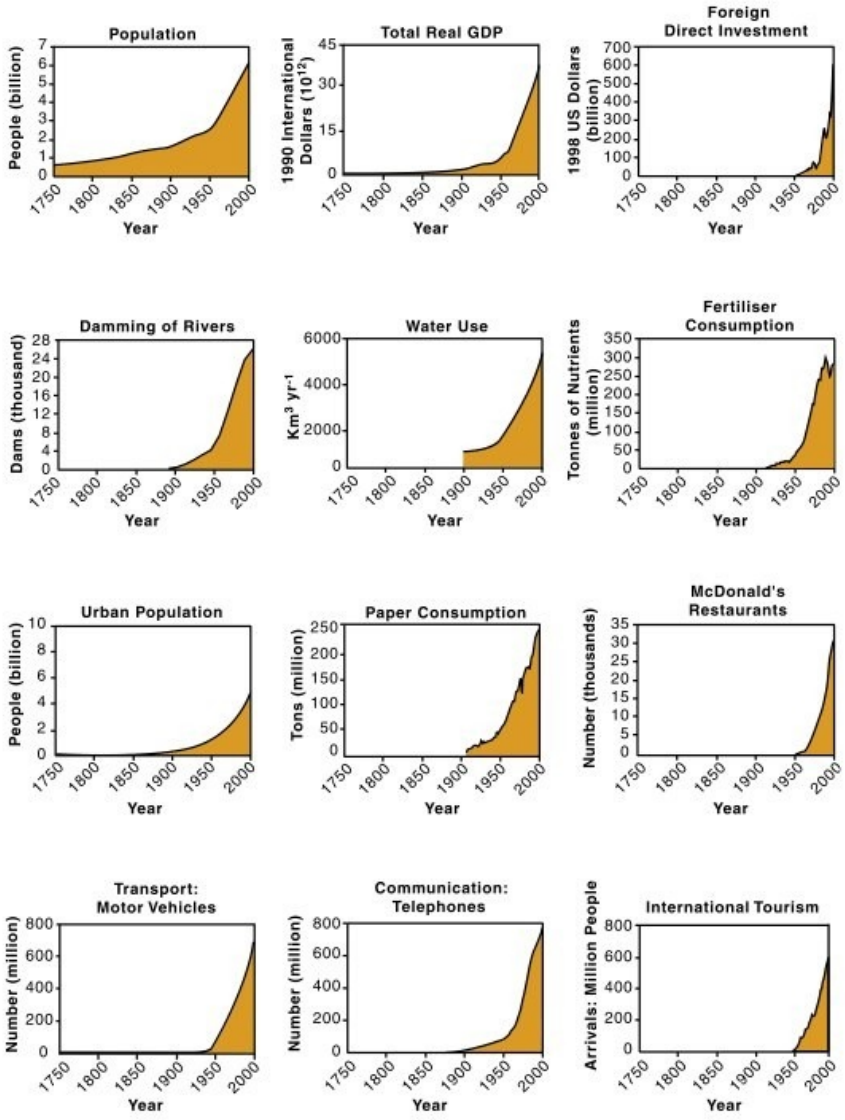
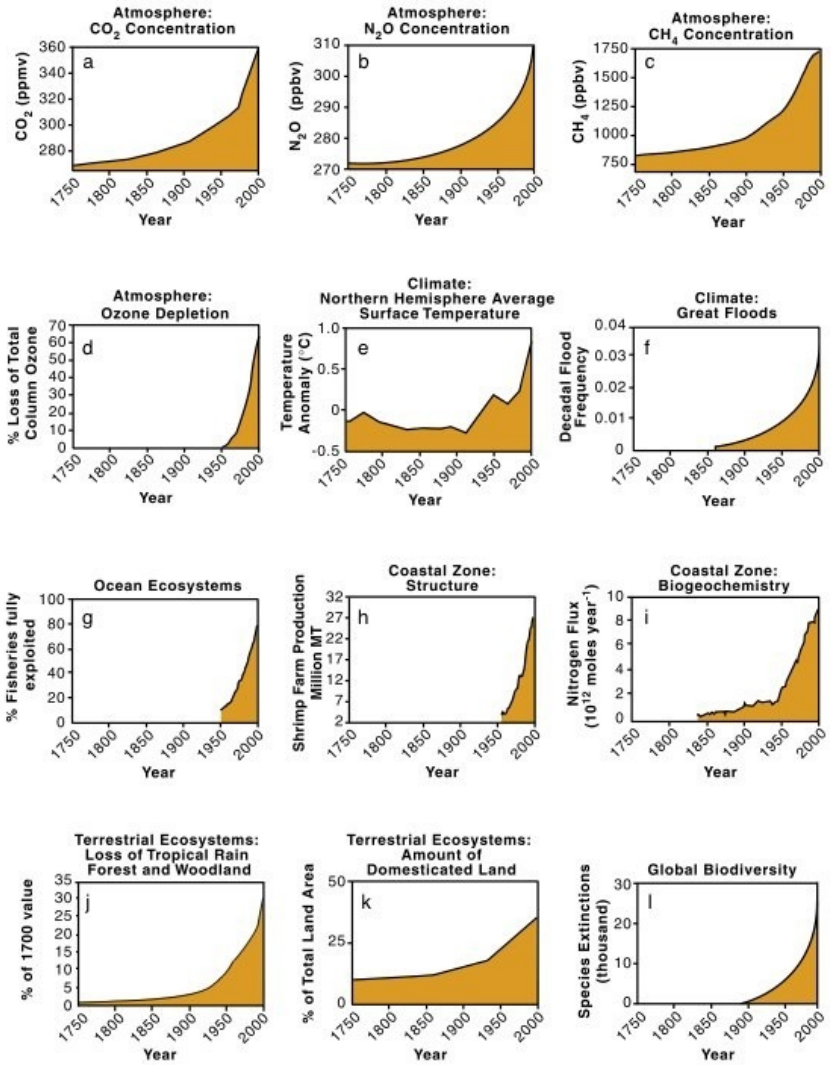
[17] Material from Klein and van Dehsen, *Politics and Policy,* pp. 28-31, 38-39.

dynamic and rough capitalism, and that served up the preoccupying issues they faced in the wake of the Great Depression and on into World War II.

Where are we now? Allow a narrative that interprets these graphs. [graphs from PowerPoint]





Graphed here is a deeply altered relationship of humans to the rest of the planet by which the planet itself has been changed. These graphs mirror

"the Great Transformation"[18] effected by the triumph of the industrial paradigm from sea to shining sea and on into the oceans themselves, as well as the atmosphere. The graphs all begin with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, 1750. They reflect modernity as industrialized nature on a human-dominated planet.

Two features surprise. First, the "screeching acceleration"[19] on all graphs is the same, despite measuring disparate subjects. What can foreign investment, the damming of rivers, fertilizer and paper consumption, ozone depletion, population growth, collapsed fisheries, McDonald's Restaurants, and species extinction possibly have in common? Yet you get the same abrupt curves. Second, the change is dramatic from 1950 onward, when humans truly leave behind the moorings of the past.[20] 1950 marks the shift from a militarized economy into the global consumer economy. Global consumer classes produced and consumed as many goods and services in the half century from 1950-2000 as throughout *the entire period of history prior to that date.*[21]

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[18] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

[19] J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000), 4.

[20] McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, 16.

[21] Alan T. Durning, *How Much is Enough?* (London: Earthscan, 1992), 38.

The drivers for these graphs are in the upper left of the first set—unprecedented human population matched to unprecedented global economic activity. It took all of *Homo sapiens* history to arrive at 1.6 billion precious souls by 1900. But in only 100 years, that number flipped—to 6.1 billion. Now we're at 6.8 and heading for 9-10 billion within the lifetime of some of you.

Total real economic activity follows the same line, doubling the world economy since 1960 with a projected quadrupling again by 2050. Contrast that with earlier increases. John Maynard Keynes says that from a couple thousand years before Christ until the 18th c., there was little change in the standard of living for most peoples, at most a 100 percent increase over those four millennia.[22]

These graphs document "the Great Collision", the collision of the global human economy with nature's economy. The human economy has rolled along with "pathological indifference to the ecological costs."[23] Generating enormous human benefits, it also wedded economic brutality to ecological brutality by never even asking what nature's economy requires for its own regeneration and renewal on its own non-negotiable terms and time lines. "The great transformation" was possible only *because of*

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[22] John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.), 358.

[23] Heather Eaton, "Reflections on Water," unpublished paper, n.p., made available to me by the author.

compact, stored energy in the form of fossil fuels, yet you see none of nature's *needs* anywhere on these graphs. The requirements of the elements essential to Earth's existence and yours are missing from this account of human activity. Instead, you see the degradation and destabilizing of nature's economy as the collateral damage of industrial capitalism together with industrial socialism. But since every human economy that ever was depends utterly upon *nature's* economy, and is an integral part of that economy, *not* to align the human economy with the planet's in a tightly coupled world without an exit ramp prescribes disaster. At least from Earth's point of view, we have assaulted the planet so as to engage in "a gigantic uncontrolled experiment"[24] that has left every living system in decline at an accelerating rate.

Here's a note for your fridge door: "Today I will remember what the Industrial Revolution paid little heed: *that planetary health is primary, human well-being derivative*."[25]

Can Lutherans do anything about this new and dangerous relationship of humans to the rest of the planet? As mentioned, the Augustana experience is framed from beginning to end by forces unleashed by the industrial paradigm. Augustanan ethics confronted the downside of that as it

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[24] McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, 4.

[25] Thomas Berry, in many of his writings, one of which is *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 19.

was manifest in human need and economic injustice. But like other Lutherans, Joe Sittler excluded, Augustanans were blind to the incompatibility of industrial capitalist and socialist economies with nature's economy. The necessity of "ecologizing" hard-driving capitalism didn't enter Lutheran minds. Life's primal elements—earth, air, fire, water, light—never achieved standing in Lutheran theology. So now we have an unsustainable way of life gone global at the same time that we have to effect another great transformation, this time away from fossil fuels and high consumerism.

So what might the Lutherans offer? For one thing, Luther's stinging critique of capitalism. Even Augustanan social ethics conveniently overlooked those many passages in Luther's corpus. Thanks to Carter Lindberg we have them back.[26] Luther on the bankers needs to rejoin the Lutheran canon.

I list other resources, explicitly theological ones, with a paragraph from Lutherans for Restoring Creation. "Lutherans are uniquely positioned to offer leadership in the movement to restore creation, based on: a strong theology of creation, a sacramental theology that discerns the active presence of God in all of life, a theology of the cross that leads us to identify with the most vulnerable, a situational ethic that enables us to respond

[26] See Carter Lindberg, "No Greater Service to God than Christian Love: Insights from Martin Luther," om Foster R. McCurley, *Social Ministry in the Lutheran Tradition*, 50-68.

creatively to new challenges, an ecclesiology which says that the church exists for the sake of the world, a tradition of commitment to social ministry and public advocacy for justice, an understanding of justification that empowers us to act out of gratitude and grace, and our affirmation of a future that is in God's hands." [27]

That's the curriculum for the rest of your life and Augustanans are on home turf here. But you would also do well to connect directly with Swedish colleagues, since Swedish Lutherans have a richer doctrine of creation than American Lutherans and since Sweden's is a more humane capitalism that tries to address human need at the same time that it honors nature's own requirements for its own necessary renewal.

I opened with *Gran Torino's* tribute to Lutherans. I close with my own tribute to Augustana. Other than a few good friends, Augustana was unknown to me until I received your good invitation to see how you've been spending your time and your allowance. I'm moved. It has been "a small church with a big heart" (Arland Hultgren). So I've selected a text from Ecclesiasticus as a tribute to Augustana. It reads as follows. You should in effect hear Augustana referenced in the final line where the words are "the assembly" and "the congregation."

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[27] From the first page of the rationale for "Lutherans Restoring Creation," available on the LSTC hosted website: www.webofcreation.

Let us now sing the praises of famous men and women, and our ancestors in their generations. The Lord apportioned to them great glory.
There were those who made a name for themselves by their valor;
those who gave counsel by their understanding and
those who spoke prophetic truth;
those who led the people in their deliberations, and in their knowledge of the people were wise in their instruction;
those who composed musical tunes, and set verses to song;
and rich men and women who endowed with resources.
All these were honored in their generations, and were the pride of their times.
Some of them have left behind a name, so that all declare their praise.

But of others there is no memory; they have perished as though they had never been born. So have their children after them.
Yet they also were people of mercy whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten; their prosperity will remain with their descendents, … and their glory will not be blotted out.
Their bodies returned to earth, but their name lives.
The assembly declares their wisdom, the congregation proclaims their praise.

Ecclesiasticus 44:1-15, excerpted

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