

Augustana and the Global Church

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It has fallen to me to reflect with you this morning concerning “Augustana and the Global Church.” Even though I was involved in making up the title for this talk, I am not at all sure what I should be doing. “Global Church” was surely not the way people in Augustana talked. “Foreign missions” or “international aid and cooperation” were terms far more common to our self-understanding. Similarly, as seems clear to me, our mid-20th century understanding in Augustana of “ecumenism” lacked the ecclesiological dimensions that are increasingly common today. In a certain way, then, our topic is quite simply anachronistic. Augustana as such ceased to be in 1962 and history has moved on. Indeed, a case might well be made that history has now surely passed us by...

Yet I recall that some years ago I had an exchange of letters with Reuben Swanson, the late president of this Augustana Heritage Association, in which I suggested that this Association served no helpful purpose if it existed merely as a forum for our nostalgia. We are, rather, formed to review, clarify, and understand our history and our tradition both appreciatively and critically. We exist for the life of the church today, a church that increasingly is expressed globally and surely can be enriched by a critical appraisal of the Augustana heritage.

Let me start by telling a story, a true one.

In 1986 it happened that I was part of an official delegation from the Lutheran World Federation to Ethiopia. Four of us, including the LWF General Secretary, were guests of both the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea, both LWF member churches, and we were also guests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It was for me and for Ingalill, my wife who was accompanying our group, an extraordinary experience.

On the Sunday during our visit three of us were guest preachers in churches around Addis Ababa, congregations of the Mekane Yesus Church. But first that day we were guests of honor at Divine Liturgy in the Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Orthodox Cathedral where

Emperor Haile Selassie had worshiped prior to the Communist takeover of Ethiopia in 1974. The Liturgy started at 4:00 A.M. It was conducted in Geez, an ancient Semitic language whose use is now confined to the Ethiopian Orthodox Liturgy. (I thought I knew something about liturgical matters and identified the Words of Institution at least four times – and was wrong every time.) The Liturgy was still going at about 9:30 when our group had to leave for the Lutheran churches where some of us were to preach. I vividly remember our departure from the packed Cathedral. We had stood for the entire Liturgy, as is the Coptic custom, and of course we had taken our shoes off as a sign of worshipful respect. I found my shoes and was about to leave the Cathedral with my wife when I saw that Gunnar Stålsett, LWF General Secretary and later Bishop of Oslo, was down on all-fours searching for his shoes. He saw me about to leave, but called out, “Hjelm! Find my shoes!” That’s how General Secretaries make it through exotic liturgies carried on in ancient tongues that no one can any longer understand. I found the shoes...

When my wife and I arrived at the Ariel Church in Addis where I was to preach, we first met in a separate building with the deacons of the church for prayer prior to the Service. The church itself had, I would guess, over a thousand worshipers that Sunday morning, including the most beautiful children I had ever seen, most of them seated in windowsills. Ingalill and I were ushered to seats of honor in the chancel, next to the altar facing the large congregation. After the opening hymn, the senior pastor, an older man, came to the altar. He was wearing a long white robe, the kind of robe my father wore during humid summers in Washington, D.C. where he was pastor of the Augustana Church – we called it his “Amy Semple Macpherson robe.” The pastor turned to the congregation and began to sing – and Ingalill and I nearly fell off our chairs. He sang, albeit in Amharic, and my wife heard “*Helig, helig, helig är Herren Sebaot! Hela jorden är full av hans härlighet,*” and I heard “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory.” We knew the melody; it was Epiphany season. There in Addis Ababa, Ingalill heard the

same liturgy in which she had been raised in the Church of Sweden. And I heard the same liturgy in which I had been raised in the Augustana Lutheran Church.

It was an unforgettably beautiful experience.

But it was also an unforgettably sad experience.

In 1988 I was again in Addis Ababa for a meeting of the Lutheran World Federation Council. That time I was part of the worshiping congregation at the Entoto parish of the Mekane Yesus Church, but the liturgy there, for which the music had been composed by an extremely talented pastor, was Ethiopian, not Swedish or American; Indeed, the music was reminiscent of what I had heard two years earlier in the Orthodox Cathedral. A striking and, I think, instructive contrast between the liturgies in those two Ethiopian Lutheran churches. One was a translation of the liturgy of the Swedish missionaries. The other was an artful expression of the indigenous culture of the people...

Now it is important, to be sure, that if our understanding of Augustana is to be helpfully critical we must not simplistically judge Augustana's history by standards that have been arrived at over the past fifty or so years. In a way that would be an easy task. But helpful criticism comes with greater effort. For example: To build on that experience in Addis Ababa and evaluate the international Protestant missionary movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, of which Augustana's missionary efforts were surely a part – to evaluate those efforts from the vantage of what is now called “post-colonialism” is a necessary but complicated endeavor. It is far too easy simply to assert that “[t]he end of the colonial era was also the end of the missionary era.”¹

Just last week at the opening session of the international mission conference that took place in Edinburgh, Scotland as a commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the 1910 World Mission Conference which took place in the same city and is widely considered by many as the symbolic starting point of the modern ecumenical movement – at the opening of that conference, Olav Fykse Tveit of the Church of Norway, the new

¹ Lamin Sanneh. *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003) 37.

General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, spoke of “the many difficult lessons” we are having to learn about mission: “Our struggles with mission have included valid criticism towards different actors, a wide variety of reflections, as well as critical commentaries [on the work of global mission]. We have all learned about the links between mission and colonialism, about shameful power struggles, and about the need for renewing the response to the Gospel in what used to be called Christian cultures. We are continuing to learn hard lessons about being sensitive to one another in mission. We cannot but reflect and wrestle with the problematic tensions mission can lead to, even with so many good intentions. We cannot ignore that mission is a challenging theme in our relation to people of other faiths.”² These kinds of searching questions typify an authentic historical inquiry that is enlisted in the service of the church today. The task of viewing the heritage of Augustana – with both its accomplishments and its failures – requires nuance, a refusal to give into passing fads of criticism, and an openness both to the gifts and ambiguities of our history.

Yet it *is* clear to me that in the history of the Augustana Church are buried, sometimes deeply but at other times close to the surface – in the history of the Augustana Church are buried the seeds of plants that have since borne great fruit. These seeds are not without ambiguities but that is the way history – surely church history – always is. I shall, therefore, try to reflect without great detail on this idea of “global church,” concentrating on Augustana’s understanding and practice of its relation to its mother church in Sweden, on its concerted actions in times of war, and on its ecumenical vision for the unity of the church. There are many other things connecting Augustana to what we call “the global church” – for example, its missionary vocation and its structural affiliations – but for reasons both of time and competence they shall be unattended to in this presentation.

Augustana and the Church of Sweden

² Geneva: World Council of Churches Press Release, June 3, 2010.

As an introductory point, it seems to me – especially here on the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Augustana Lutheran Church as an ecclesial body – it seems to me worth emphasizing that there was an international, if not global, dimension to Augustana’s life from its very beginning. We were, of course, children of Sweden and in time we were acknowledged to be a “daughter church” of the Church of Sweden itself. (And last evening we heard from the Archbishop of Uppsala that now the more appropriate term would be “sister church.” In 2000 at the Augustana Heritage Gathering held here in Rock Island – my first visit to Rock Island since ordination here in 1960; this is only my second such visit – I was asked to speak on “Augustana and the Church of Sweden: Ties of History and Faith.” In that address I recounted in three “acts” something of a history that had not always been smooth: I called those acts “Uncertain Ties,” “Encounter,” and a more profoundly deep relation under the rubric of “Communion.”

The story of Augustana and the Church of Sweden is increasingly familiar.

-- A group of Lutheran immigrants who at times considered themselves, save for the committed boldness of a very few pastors from Sweden led by Lars Paul Esbjörn (1808-70), orphans from their spiritual home in the old country.

-- The first period marked by “uncertain ties” was perhaps epitomized by the tension between the declaration in 1911 by Eric Norelius (1833-1916), then president of the Synod, that “[w]e shall always welcome [our] Christian brethren in Sweden as guests to our meetings but with the State Church as such, we cannot have any relations.” Yet in 1910 the Archbishop of Uppsala and Primate of Sweden, J.A. Ekman (1845-1913), in discussion with two bishops of the Church of England, had said “It [is] a self-evident and commonly recognized fact within the Church of Sweden that the Church in America which [has] its confession in full conformity with the Church of Sweden and which [is] its daughter, is the Augustana Synod.”³

³ Quoted in Hugo Söderstrom, *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: C.W.K. Gleerups Bokfölag, 1973), 177-78.

-- The second period, which I called “Encounters,” was highlighted by the visits to America of two prominent bishops of the Church of Sweden: Knut Henning Gezelius von Schéele (1838-1920) of Visby in 1893, 1901, and 1910; and Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931) for several months in 1923. Even though there were issues within Augustana about episcopal orders and the intentions of these (and other) bishops and also about the theological orthodoxy of Söderblom, although I hold him to have surely been one of the great ecumenical church leaders of the 20th century. These and subsequent visits by leaders of the Church of Sweden were signs of a growing solidarity between the two churches.

-- The third period, “Communion,” began a time of genuine fellowship between the churches. Conrad Bergendoff (1895-1997) worked and studied with Archbishop Söderblom in 1926 and ’27. The systematic work of persons brought into English largely after 1962 by Fortress Press, persons such as Gustaf Aulén, Anders Nygren, Ragnar Bring, Gustaf Wingren and others, and later works in biblical studies by such persons as Krister Stendahl and Birger Gerhardsson, was determinative for the post-World War II theological milieu of the Augustana Church.

(Indeed, let me tell you a personal story. In 1974, three years before Aulén’s death at the age of 98, I attended *Promotionen* at Lund University, a remarkable event when doctorates in all faculties were conferred in the magnificent Lund Cathedral. Gustaf Aulén was there as the first Jubilee Promoter in the history of Swedish universities – fifty years earlier he had “promoted,” he had conferred doctorates on behalf of Lund’s Faculty of Theology. I was stunned to see him at this Promotion wearing a hood from my alma mater, Augustana Seminary. Later when I was with him privately I asked him “Farbror Gustaf, why did you wear that hood from Augustana Seminary?” He laughed (cackled would be a better word) and said that he could have worn academic regalia from Edinburgh, Oxford, Tübingen or other universities. “But I like that little school in the American mid-west. Besides, the Augustana hood has the Swedish colors, blue

and yellow.” He had received an honorary doctorate from Augustana Seminary in 1947. And he really liked the colors!)

In my judgment, one of the enduring contributions which persons like us who share the Augustana heritage can make, is to keep ties between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Church of Sweden alive. There is a rich liturgical and theological tradition in Sweden and an increasingly distinctive ecclesial tradition represented by the descendents of Augustana in American Lutheranism. We share astonishingly common challenges of mission in our increasingly pluralistic and secular societies. As the children and grandchildren of Swedish immigrants, we can affirm that old sociological maxim (formulated, I think, here at Augustana College by Marcus L. Hansen) about immigrants, “What the second generation wants to forget, the third generation wants to remember.”⁴ We no longer need to forget Sweden; we must remember our heritage. Our communion with the Church of Sweden – and, indeed, with other Lutheran churches from which our ancestors came – is a rich part of our life in the global church.⁵

Global Tensions and World Lutheranism

E. Clifford Nelson in his extremely illuminating work of 1982, *The Rise of World Lutheranism: An American Perspective* has about as good a description as can be found of the attitude of both American and European Lutherans toward global connections at the beginning of the 20th century:

The idea of a world fellowship of Lutherans was hardly a burning issue among the denomination’s leaders in America. A similar attitude prevailed among German and Scandinavian churchmen. The pressure of immediate problems left most Lutherans with little energy and less time to give thoughtful consideration to establishing a Lutheran world organization. In America, for example, parochial and sectional demands seemed to exhaust all available resources. The task of missions to the immigrants, the erection of church buildings, the founding of schools and institutions of mercy, the

⁴ Marcus L. Hansen, “The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant” in *Augustana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. 8, Pt. 1 (Rock Island, Ill., 1938)

⁵ cf. Norman A. Hjelm, “Augustana and the Church of Sweden: Ties of History and Faith” in Hartland H. Gifford and Arland J. Hultgren, *The Heritage of Augustana: Essays on the Life and Legacy of the Augustana Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2004) 19-36.

establishing of a Lutheran presence in a predominantly Anglo-American Protestant milieu – all these matters seemed to require immediate attention and large sums of money, of which there was never enough. Had it not been for the high degree of dedication and Christian commitment of both laity and clergy, the planting of Lutheranism in North America would no doubt have been an unimpressive and less-than-fruitful enterprise. [And a]lthough the European church circumstances differed from the American, the lassitude toward global Lutheranism was identical.

But then, Nelson became cautionary:

To assume, however, that Lutherans did virtually nothing to foster their international relationships prior to the distressing postwar circumstances that produced them to engage in united action would be an injustice to history.⁶

It is not possible in this presentation thoroughly or even cursorily to elaborate on those international relations which marked American Lutheranism as early as the 18th century. We know that “the father of American Lutheranism,” Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg (1711-87) – whose personal motto, *Ecclesia Plantanda*, “The Church must be Planted,” has provided us with the theme of this Gathering – was sent to the New World at the behest of the famous pietistic foundation at Halle, Germany and he remained in close touch with that foundation throughout his remarkable ministry here. We know that Wilhelm Loehe (1808-72) was instrumental in enlisting young men for German-language pastoral service in America. We know that two “practical” seminaries in Schleswig-Holstein, Kropp and Brecklum, provided the Lutheran General Council and General Synod with approximately 350 pastors over a span of four or five decades in the 19th century. (The Swedes should have done as well!) And there have been other fruitful contacts between American and European Lutherans – for example, in the areas of theological reflection, missionary work, and deaconess work

But we want to lay emphasis on the effects of *international tension* – two devastating World Wars – on Lutheran cooperation both within North America and between North America and the rest of the world. These two wars broke transatlantic inter-Lutheran

⁶ E. Clifford Nelson, *The Rise of World Lutheranism: An American Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 79.

relationships. At the conclusion of each war those relationships desperately needed rehabilitation.

In 1917 the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was formed to minister to American servicemen both in the United States and in Europe; Augustana participated fully in this work. Funds in the vicinity of \$1,500,000 were contributed by American Lutherans acting together in this effort. Interestingly, G. Everett Arden (1905-78) has commented: "What theological debate and doctrinal discussion failed to accomplish, catastrophe achieved, namely, galvanizing Lutherans in America into common action, and creating out of their divided ranks a common front."⁷ Taking Arden's words, some have spoken about the effects of both World War I and II on American Lutherans as "catastrophe producing cooperation."

The second event of importance bringing many Lutherans closer to one another and, again, to their sisters and brothers in Europe at the time of World War I was the formation in 1918 of the National Lutheran Council. Three particular issues forced the formation of this Council. The first was the matter of "linguistic injustice," particularly felt in churches of German background. A number of American governors and state legislatures took action to forbid the use of German and other European languages in public worship and a means of pleading the case for the use of such languages was needed. The second was the matter of developing a home mission strategy that would bring Lutheran church life to communities where defense industries were mushrooming. This was a particularly difficult problem since the Missouri Synod, which was affiliated with the Synodical Conference and not a part of the new Council, was prone to charge other Lutherans with "sinful unionism" since their ministry in these communities was open to all Lutherans, even those with whom there was no pulpit and altar fellowship. And the final issue

⁷ G. Everett Arden, "Enroute to Unity" in Herbert T. Neve and Benjamin A. Johnson, eds., *The Maturing of American Lutheranism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968) 229. Quoted in Maria Erling and Mark Granquist, *The Augustana Story* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008) 318.

giving birth to the National Lutheran Council was the need to provide aid to Europe's war-stricken persons and churches.

In this latter connection, the Council in 1919 established a "European Commission" of six persons, including Professor Sven Youngert (1861-1939) from the Augustana Church. This group was instructed to travel to Europe "to investigate and report the situation of each Lutheran group in the war-involved countries; they were to offer American assistance in solving the ecclesiastical problems of their brethren; and they were empowered to spend up to \$50,000."⁸ Again, Augustana was brought into strikingly new global situations and contexts, largely on the basis of human and church need. Yet it is difficult for us to assess the effects of this European Commission and its work. Once again, Clifford Nelson has shown us where American Lutherans stood at a particular point in history, the end of World War I: "As a matter of fact, nobody could foresee the nature of the problems to be confronted; the implications of American Lutheran involvement in postwar Europe were almost totally unpredictable. One member of the [National Lutheran Council] executive committee, Victor G.A. Tressler, recognized the ambiguities of this venture of faith. Said he, 'The question really is, whether or not American [Lutherans are] ready and able to [assume a role in] world leadership.' In the light of subsequent developments, this opinion proved to be valid. With the benefit of hindsight, about the only safe and unquestioned conclusion we can draw is that, by the NLC's appointment of a European Commission, Americans were taking the initial steps in reestablishing contacts with their overseas brethren, and that is all."⁹ Perhaps Dr. Arden's words about "catastrophe" and the work of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare apply here too. Human need forces human action, and global need brings about global action. Others have described this as "the calamity theory" – common calamities require common action.

⁸ Nelson, *op cit*, 71.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 88-9.

Now the vastness of our topic, “Augustana and the Global Church,” requires some decisions as to what we should here cover. At the end of World War I, Augustana and American Lutheranism – indeed American Lutheranism and global Lutheranism – was embarking on an institutional journey that would take them far. And while the story of that journey hardly provides the story line for a Broadway musical, it is fascinating, at least to old guys like me. And it is an important story: The founding of the Lutheran World Convention, Eisenach 1923, where Augustana’s president G.A. Brandelle (1861-1936) played an important role, an event within the context of a shattered German economy which caused massive hunger among the people. The second such convention in Copenhagen in 1929 which was almost shattered by the insistence of German Lutherans that a resolution be passed protesting the inhumanity of the Treaty of Versailles that had been signed ten years earlier. The third meeting of the Lutheran World Convention in Paris in 1935 when the shadow of the church struggle in Germany fell over global Lutheranism. And, of course, the fourth meeting of the world group of Lutherans scheduled for 1940 in Philadelphia never took place because of World War II. War, it seemed, was destined to keep Lutherans forever apart from one another.

But during the war, the leadership of American Lutheranism – through the American Section of the barely breathing Lutheran World Convention and the National Lutheran Council – neither slept nor despaired. In 1940 Lutheran World Action was begun, a program of aid to refugees and to orphaned missions, under the leadership of two of the ablest persons in American Lutheran history, Ralph H. Long (1882-1948) and Paul C. Empie (1909-79). Lutheran World Action was perhaps the most important and successful program of inter-church aid ever undertaken in American Lutheranism; by 1965 Lutheran World Action had gathered more than \$80,000,000 for its work.

And in 1944 the National Lutheran Council adopted a carefully worded statement that brought the Missouri Synod and the Council together to plan for postwar relief. In this effort, the relation of the Augustana Church to world Lutheranism was solidified forever.

In early 1945, while war was still raging in Europe, three American Lutheran leaders were commissioned to take a six-week fact-finding journey to Europe: Ralph H. Long, then executive director of the National Lutheran Council, Lawrence B. Meyer, then executive of the Missouri Synod's Emergency Planning Council, and P.O. Bersell (1882-1967), then president of both the National Lutheran Council and the Augustana Lutheran Church. It was Dr. Bersell who gave us the most complete account of this journey. They left Washington, D.C. on February 28, 1945 in a U.S. army transport command airplane, stopping in Labrador and Iceland on the way to London. Bersell described the flight as "hazardous" – German V-1 and V-2 bombs were still falling on London and their later flight to Sweden, aboard a converted Boeing Flying Fortress, was in the dead of a moonless night over the North Sea and German-occupied Norway.

Bersell described the purpose of their trip in the following way:

First, [we were] to observe and evaluate conditions, to learn as much as possible of the state of the Lutheran churches and their present and postwar needs. The magnitude of this prime objective of our mission is quite evident when we remember that eighty-five percent of all Protestants on the continent of Europe are Lutherans, and that no church has suffered as much as ours.

Second, to contact as many Lutheran church leaders as possible in order to set in motion and implement a worldwide program of Lutheran action looking to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Lutheran church and its work in all lands.

Third, to contact other Christian leaders, especially the World Council of Churches' Reconstruction Committee in Geneva, for the purpose of coordinating and integrating this work of the Lutheran Church with the work of other churches that are also ready to launch out on great reconstructive and eleemosynary programs, involving the expenditure of millions of dollars. It is obvious that by the very ecumenical character of this worldwide church relief work the Lutheran Church will be the greatest beneficiary. Proportionately the free Lutheran churches should also be the greatest contributors.

Fourth, to contact the United States Army and Navy chaplains, their chiefs and staffs, for the purpose of extending as widely as possible our American Lutheran spiritual ministry to our servicemen abroad...

Fifth, to contact those in charge of the prisoners of war work on the continent and in England, namely, the civilian organizations Y.M.C.A. and World Council of Churches, and the military command, for the purpose of learning how our American Lutheran

Commission for Prisoners of War can best cooperate in this service wherein we have already given such a large contribution. ¹⁰

After nine days of meetings in Great Britain, the three Americans flew, as already mentioned, over Norway to Sweden. In Stockholm they had intense discussions regarding these same issues with King Gustav V, Count Folke Bernadotte and leaders of the Nordic churches.

Subsequent meetings were held in Sigtuna, Sweden, March 17, 1945, and Geneva, April 2, 1945. The Sigtuna meeting laid the groundwork for the future of world Lutheranism as it would take shape in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Bersell maintained that the LWF was “conceived” in Sigtuna in 1945 and “born” in Lund in 1947. During these discussions extremely difficult issues were faced. In addition to the matter of leadership and coordination of the post-war relief work that was to be carried on by the Lutherans from America and Sweden, two countries untouched by the ravages of the war; the role of Bishop August Marahrens (1875-1950) of Hannover, Germany in the future of world Lutheranism was faced. Marahrens was president of the Lutheran World Convention, but the Americans wanted his resignation since, as Bersell put it, he had “blessed” Hitler’s armies in their “push to the east.” (A forthcoming major study of the role of the Lutheran World Federation during the cold war by Dr. Risto Lehtonen of Finland will shed new light on this judgment. Lehtonen is of the view that the Americans somewhat overstated the case against the German bishop.)¹¹ Only with reluctance did the Swedes, led by Archbishop Erling Eidem (1880-1972), agree to the American insistence.¹²

Now the story of the establishment of the Lutheran World Federation at Lund in 1947 cannot be fully told here. Jens Holger Schjørring of Aarhus University in Denmark has

¹⁰ P.O. Bersell in *The Lutheran Standard*, May 19, 1945, 14. Quoted in Nelson, *op. cit.*, 353-4.

¹¹ To be published by the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. of Grand Rapids, MI.

¹² This whole story is told in considerable detail in E. Clifford Nelson, *op. cit.* pp. 350-404, “The Rebirth and Reconstruction of World Lutheranism, 1944-47.” cf. also Jens Holger Schjørring, “The Lutheran Church in the World Today: The Founding of the LWF” in Jens Holger Schjørring, Prasanna Kumari, and Norman A. Hjelm, eds., *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997) 3-40.

described the LWF as being founded on “four pillars”: rescue for the needy, common initiatives in mission, joint efforts in theology, and a common response to the ecumenical challenge.¹³ The Augustana Church lived through the first fifteen years of the LWF, crucial post-World War II years.

And perhaps Augustana’s contribution in those early years of the Federation was greatest in the person of Carl Lund-Quist (1908-65), a graduate of Bethany College and Augustana Theological Seminary who was ordained into the ministerium of the Augustana Church in 1936. Lund-Quist served as general secretary of the LWF from 1951 to 1960. Those were years when the East – West divide, the cold war, was at its sharpest. It was under Lund-Quist’s leadership that the third Assembly of the LWF was held in Minneapolis in 1957. While Lund-Quist’s attempts to bring delegates to Minneapolis from East Germany and Hungary did not bear great fruit, he did secure permission for Bishop Lajos Ordass (1901-78) of the Lutheran Church in Hungary to come to Minneapolis where he preached at the opening service of the Assembly. Ordass had been imprisoned by the Communists for his outspoken leadership of the church and was to be placed under house arrest again. We know that Carl Lund-Quist on at least one occasion traveled into Communist Hungary wearing two suits, one of which he was able to give to Bishop Ordass. Lund-Quist’s health failed largely because he bore within himself the sufferings of the church in a time of world division and tension.¹⁴ Augustana made no greater contribution to the global church than Carl Elof Lund-Quist.

*Augustana and Its Vision of Unity*¹⁵

¹³ Schjørring, op. cit.

¹⁴ On Lund-Quist, cf. Schjørring, Kumari, Hjelm, *op. cit., passim* and also Emmet E. Eklund and Marion Lorimer Eklund, *He Touched the Whole World: The Story of Carl E. Lund-Quist* (Lindsborg, KS: Bethany College Press, 1990 and 1992). On Ordass, cf. László Terray, *He Could Not Do Otherwise: Bishop Lajos Ordass, 1901-1978*. trans. Eric W. Gritsch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

¹⁵ For much of the material in this section cf. Norman A. Hjelm, “A Journey toward Unity: Augustana, the Lutheran Communion, and Ecumenism” in Arland J. Hultgren and Vance L. Eckstrom, eds., *The Augustana Heritage: Recollections, Perspectives, and Prospects* (Chicago: The Augustana Heritage Association, 1999) 165-82.

Let me bring this consideration of Augustana and the Global Church to a close by saying something about Augustana's vision of the unity of the Church. This cannot be done at length; indeed, I will not touch on the important role that the Augustana Church played in the movement toward Lutheran unity in North America. A few points concerning Augustana and *ecumenism* will have to suffice. For Augustana's commitment to ecumenism, the "whole inhabited earth," is clearly its commitment to "the global church."

There was considerable theological diversity in the early leadership of the Augustana Church. I have in another place described this diversity: Lars Paul Esbjörn was basically a revival preacher, who after his conversion felt keenly, in the words of the British Methodist George Scott to whom he attributed his conversion, that "a pietist does not belong to any particular denomination but is one of the members of the holy catholic Church which is found in all Christian Churches;"¹⁶ Eric Norelius was a strictly orthodox Lutheran grounded in the *Book of Concord*; T.N. Hasselquist was a practical low-church pietist; Erland Carlsson was one who stood quite loose in relation to the Lutheran confessions, although his appreciation of those documents grew especially during his service as President of the Synod from 1881 to 1888; Olof Olsson's development, as American religious pluralism forced him increasingly to move from a stress on Christian life to a stress on Christian doctrine, was in many ways typical of the whole church. As Hugo Söderstrom described matters of doctrine and church cooperation during the Synod's early years, "Having earlier stressed Christian life, they [the leaders of Augustana] began to emphasize Christian doctrines. Pure Christian doctrines became more important than a true Christian life. From having been willing to cooperate with all Christians who *sincerely* believed in Christ, they only wanted to cooperate with those who *correctly* believed in Christ. And they were firmly convinced that the *Book of Concord* gave the correct interpretation of *the Holy Scriptures*." ¹⁷

¹⁶ Cited in Hugo Söderstrom, *op. cit.*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

It is a complicated story. Augustana in 1875 joined other Lutherans in adopting the Galesburg Rule which declared “Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only – Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only.” Augustana, like other Lutherans, did not join the Federal Council of Churches when it was formed in 1908. Augustana sent no one to the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. Augustana – quite rudely through Eric Norelius – declined an invitation in 1911 to join in a global movement regarding Christian doctrine and structures that was in time to become the Faith and Order movement. The break in this kind of “exclusive confessionalism,” to use the expression of Everett Arden, came perhaps in 1925 when President Brandelle journeyed to Stockholm to participate in the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work; where, indeed, he made an important intervention.¹⁸ That global event was famously bound up with the life and leadership of Nathan Söderblom and Augustana’s participation may well have been as a result of the impact of the Swedish Archbishop’s visit to America in 1923, although it must also be acknowledged that some within Augustana and other American Lutheran bodies opposed Brandelle’s involvement precisely because of their enduring doubts about Söderblom’s “orthodoxy.”

But this set a new pattern for Augustana. Conrad Bergendoff, who had worked in Sweden as an assistant to Archbishop Söderblom in 1926-27 was the church’s delegate to the Second Conference on Life and Work in Oxford in 1937. (And here mention must be made of the foundational doctoral study of Dr. Bergendoff by Byron Swanson, *Conrad Bergendoff: The Making of an Ecumenist*.¹⁹) We have said something about Augustana’s involvement in the formation of the Lutheran World Federation as successor to the Lutheran World Convention at the end of World War II in Lund, 1947. When the World Council of Churches, bringing together Faith and Order and Life and Work, was formed

¹⁸ Derek R. Nelson, “Unity, Ecumenicity, and Difference in the Augustana Synod.” *Lutheran Quarterly*, XXIV, No. 1, Spring 2010. 82.

¹⁹ Byron Ralph Swanson, *Conrad Bergendoff: The Making of an Ecumenist – A Study in Confessionalism and Ecumenism in Early Twentieth Century American Lutheranism*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1970.

in Amsterdam in 1948, Augustana was there. And Augustana, along with the United Lutheran Church in America, was a founding member of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1950. After the Stockholm Conference of 1925, again to use Dr. Arden's expression, "exclusive confessionalism" was replaced in the Augustana Church by "ecumenical confessionalism."²⁰ This reality, "ecumenical confessionalism," was perhaps no more evident in the mid-20th century than in the invitation to Eric Wahlstrom to contribute a Lutheran perspective to a symposium, *The Nature of the Church*, prepared for the third world conference on Faith and Order to be held in Lund, Sweden in 1952. This was a carefully worked out essay, by the person who was perhaps the New Testament scholar most important in the history of the Augustana Church, that represented a new depth of understanding. Ecumenism was beginning to be understood as more than "church cooperation;" it involves unity and communion around word and sacraments.²¹

Before I mercifully bring this talk to a close, I would like with great sincerity to mention one additional ecumenist who came from the Augustana Lutheran Church; indeed he is more than an ecumenist, he has become one of America's preeminent church theologians. I speak, of course, of George Lindbeck. George was born in China, the son of Augustana missionaries, he was educated at Gustavus Adolphus and at Yale University. Together with Hans Frei at Yale Divinity School he has become a kind of "father" to a generation of theologians from a variety of Christian traditions who are concerned about theology and the life of the church in "a postliberal age."

But here I single out George Lindbeck because of his ecumenical contributions.

Officially they began after Augustana had moved into the Lutheran Church in America.

The Lutheran World Federation appointed him as one of its official observers at the epoch-making Second Vatican Council. And he has never given up either his

²⁰ G. Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage: History of the Augustana Lutheran Church* (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1963) 297.

²¹ Eric H. Wahlstrom, "Lutheran Church" in R. Newton Flew, ed., *The Nature of the Church: Papers Presented to the Theological Commission appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952) 264-73.

commitment to the unity of the church or his involvement in the global ecumenical movement. Let me simply point out three documents from the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, published when Professor Lindbeck was co-chair of that dialogue: *Ways to Community* (1981), *The Ministry in the Church* (1982), and *Facing Unity* (1985). These have become milestones along the global journey that Lutherans and Roman Catholics are taking together; they helped pave the way for the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and by representatives of the Lutheran World Federation in Augsburg in 1999. George Lindbeck, who will be 87 this year, has been central to the continuation of Augustana-style “confessional ecumenism,” and the global church is richer for his work.²²

Conclusion

How, now, to bring these rambling remarks to a close... Many of our forebearers in the Augustana Lutheran Church would be surprised if they heard the countours of this story of Augustana and the “Global Church” – surprised in disappointment, surprised in gratitude. The story is a human story, marked by insight and stubbornness, by impossible dreams and low expectations. But it is also, in the providence of God, a story of the recognition, albeit slow at times and lacking in foresight, of a not-yet-finished search for communion in an ever more globalized yet continuously fragmented world. Church and unity; mission and world. I hope that running through the catalogue of names and events that have been hurled at you this morning there runs a thread of what God has done in the world through the history of the Augustana Church. It is an imperfect history that now lives on in an equally imperfect ecclesial community, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

²² Three of the published works of George Lindbeck should be noted: *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II, Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 194); and *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, James J. Buckley, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). The three mentioned Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue reports were published in English by the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva.

What kind of a globalized world lays in front of us? Our fathers and mothers in Augustana would recognize so little, but we need their history. Mark Noll, the evangelical historian who now teaches at Notre Dame has pressed the issue:

... today – when active Christian adherence has become stronger in Africa than in Europe, when the number of practicing Christians in China may be approaching the number in the United States, when live bodies in church are far more numerous in Kenya than in Canada, when more believers worship together in church Sunday by Sunday in Nagaland than in Norway, when India is now home to the world’s largest chapter of the Jesuit order, and when Catholic mass is being said in more languages each Sunday in the United States than ever before in American history – with such realities defining the present situation, there is pressing need for new historical perspectives that explore the new world situation.²³

Throughout its history the church in all of its manifestations has been in need, desperate need, of *conversion*. In 1991, a group of French Catholics and Protestants called *Le Groupe des Dombes* issued a challenge to the divided churches: to recognize that their identity is grounded in a continual conversion without which their unity can never be realized. Our talk about the “global church” in Augustana history and beyond has led straight to the matter of unity. *Le Groupe des Dombes* has written about identity and conversion. Listen with ears sensitive to the Augustana heritage:

- “ -- By *Christian identity* we mean one’s belonging to Christ which is founded on the gift of baptism and lived out with a faith nourished by the word of God, the word that is proclaimed and the eucharistic word. This belonging equally concerns each individual and the church as the people of God.
- By *ecclesial identity* we mean the belonging or participation of an individual or of a confessional church in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.
- By *confessional identity* we mean belonging to a confessional church that comes from a specific cultural and historical context, containing its own spiritual and doctrinal profile which distinguishes it from other churches.
- By *Christian conversion* we mean the response of faith to the call that comes to

²³ Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) 10.

us from God through Christ. This response takes place in a movement of constant conversion.

- By *ecclesial conversion* we mean the effort required from the whole church and from all the churches for them to be renewed and become more capable of fulfilling their mission in accordance with the motto, *ecclesia semper reformanda* [“the church must always be reformed”].
- By *confessional conversion* we understand the ecumenical effort by which a Christian confession cleanses and enriches its own inheritance with the aim of recovering full communion with other confessions.”²⁴

Augustana has a good story and its telling needs to continue. And with its telling will come conversion and renewal – to God’s mission to the world and to unity in a global church. So may it be.

²⁴ Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches*. Trans. James Greig. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993). 29.

