



August, 1997
Volume 3, Number 1

SPECIAL EMPHASIS ECUMENISM

Augustana's
Ecumenical Perspective

The Augustana "Spirit"

Beginning the Dialogue



SPECIAL EVENTS

Festival of Faith
Stanton, Iowa
September 20, 1997

and

Sesquicentennial
Heritage Gathering
Jamestown, New York
September 18 - 21
1998

Augustana NEWSLETTER Heritage

On April 20, 1997, a worship service using the liturgy of the Augustana Lutheran Church was held at Normandale Lutheran Church, Edina, MN. Coordinator of the service was Dr. John Swanson, a 1953 graduate of Augustana College, and organist at Normandale Lutheran Church. Preacher for the service was Dr. Marbury Anderson '48 of St. Paul, MN. We are pleased to include Dr. Anderson's sermon in this issue of the Augustana Heritage Newsletter.

Gifts of Augustana With Which I Live

by Marbury Anderson '48

As I think of the Augustana Lutheran Church, I am reminded that it is the church in which I was baptized, nurtured and in which I spoke my confirmation vows. It was in this church I found my wife. It was in a college of this church I was educated; in the seminary of this church I was trained to be a pastor. It was by this church I was ordained. The five parishes I served in 44 years of active ministry all had roots in Augustana, as did three of the four congregations in which I've had assignments in retirement. A college of the Augustana Lutheran Church conferred upon me an honorary degree.

As I think of the Augustana Lutheran Church, I am reminded that almost all of what I've been and am I owe to this church. It has been the point of challenge and source of joy for much of my life. What I've said about my own life I suspect could be duplicated by many of you gathered for this service. In thirty-five years since Augustana merged into a larger church fellowship, you haven't forgotten. You're still remembering and moved to great thanksgiving, for you, as I, have a debt. Our lives have been richer and fuller because of a common heritage in this church.

As I think of the Augustana Lutheran Church, four key words come to mind. The first is the name itself – Augustana (the Latin for Augsburg). The name reminds us of the rich heritage dating back to the Reformation, finding expression in the Augsburg Confessions. Those confessions point to the unique gift and continuing mission worthy of proclamation. The name Augustana was important for it was definitive and descriptive. Yet it didn't set us apart but placed us in the mainstream to become a church ready for merger and ecumenical relationships. For my initial parish I was sent to Wyoming, 359 miles from my nearest Augustana neighbor. I was not isolated for I could identify with brothers and sisters in Christ. I was privileged to be a Lutheran in the founding of the Wyoming Council of Churches and still later in the founding of the Texas Council of Churches. I recall the

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Presbyterian clergyman in Sheridan, Wyoming saying, "I'm always happy when something significant is happening in a church of the community I serve. It may not be in my congregation, but the fact it is happening in my community raises the Christian impact of the whole community. That, too, is good for the people in my congregation." How true his observation is.

A second word describing the Augustana Lutheran Church is the word family. This church was a national family. It had an ethnic linkage but it became far more than an ethnic church. To speak of it as a national family may be too limiting for in many ways it was an international family. It was not only churches across the United States but also many small congregations stretching from Ontario to British Columbia. Honan, China, Rajamundry, India, Tanganyika in East Africa were part of the family. The Augustana Lutheran Church was a family with a national voice -- The Lutheran Companion. It had one seminary. It had an annual convention. It was a family in which we knew the institutions -- its colleges, its social institutions. There were an amazing number of these considering the church's size. Lutheran Social Services here in Minnesota dates its starting point with an Augustana institution in Minnesota. It was a family in which we kept abreast of new missions whenever or wherever started. In this church we had a sense of responsibility as individuals have to their family. If we couldn't meet the budget it bothered us and was a matter of deep concern. 50% of our congregational income was often suggested as a goal for benevolence. *There was in this family considerable trust of the leadership as well as dependence upon that leadership.*

Another word that comes to mind as we think of Augustana is commitment. It is interesting to note that the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago penant given to donors to the endowment for the Augustana Heritage Professorship for Global Missions has the Scripture passage of John 17:3 on it "This is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

The Augustana Lutheran Church had a strong pietistic heritage, subject to the worst and the best of pietism. The worst manifests itself in legalism, judgementalism, and hypocrisy. The best relates to depth of commitment of one's life to Christ.

A woman in Reed City, Michigan said to me when I took out my New Testament to have devotions with her, "You don't need to have devotions; I've been baptized and lived a good life." The pietistic heritage of Augustana challenged that sentiment. Consequently there were spin-offs such as the Lutheran Bible Institute and the Lutheran Evangelical Movement. In our youth ministry there was a Pocket Testament League, the national conventions and the development of Bible Camps.

Commitment was evident also in our Seminary. Academics were important, but primary attention was focused upon having God's "call" into the ministry. The fourth word to describe Augustana is the word with which our worship begins, namely holy.

Augustana placed due attention upon the holy, the "otherness" of God.



Worship involved us in the awesome and the holy. There was even a feeling of suspense as we sinners came into the presence of God.

The suspense can be seen in the story of Dr. T. N. Hasselquist. While on his deathbed, he was visited by Dr. Olaf Olson, then president of Augustana College and Seminary. For a devotion Dr. Olson read I John 1:7b "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin." Dr. Hasselquist is reported to have looked up and said, "That is all I need, but I can't get along with less." Augustana people were no strangers to Isaiah's encounter with God. "Holy, holy, holy is

the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3) "Woe is me! I am lost for I am a man of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:8) "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

Closing Remanrks

It is 35 years since the Augustana Lutheran Church became part of what is now the ELCA. Dr. Paul Lindberg taught that a sermon should appeal to the intellect (giving information), to the heart (touching the emotions), and finally propose actions. Is there any action for us now, 35 years later? The first response is thanksgiving. But is there more?

Folksiness is the mark of worship today. The word "may" in the Lutheran Book of Worship has made Confession/Absolution appear to be an option rather than a necessity in worship. Is there need for a renewed call to the holy?

We seem alive these days to the social implications of the gospel, to issues of justice and concerns for the poor. Could it be that there is a need for attention to the inner dynamics of life, to the inner commitment lest the external involvements become superficial?

It appears that individuals and congregations are increasingly choosing their own projects and involvements. Are we not in a need to recapture the sense of family—a need to place the benevolences of the church as our first concern and then to reach out to the particular mission that captivates personal and congregational attention?

Augustana, holy, commitment, family! Four recalls. Could it be that they are also four calls for action?

ECUMENISM

Each issue of the Augustana Heritage Newsletter will have a special emphasis. This issue's emphasis is ecumenism. As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church move toward their historic vote on the "Concordat of Agreement," this summer, we remember that, in one sense, this development is the fulfillment of a process begun (on the Lutheran side) by the Augustana Synod.

The article that follows is excerpted from one written 30 years ago by Ernest Edwin (E.E.) Ryden '14 (1886 - 1981), for 27 years (1934 - 61) the editor of *The Lutheran Companion*. It was written at the request of Glenn C. Stone, '52 then editor of *Lutheran Forum*, and published in its May, 1967 issue. The first part of the original article (omitted here) reviews the ecumenical attitudes of Augustana during its first 70 years, focusing on President Erik Norelius' "strong prejudices regarding the Episcopal Church" and his suspicions of the Faith and Order Movement.

A BEGINNING OF DIALOGUE: Lutherans and Anglicans

In strong contrast with the isolationist policy of early Augustana leaders was the ecumenical spirit revealed by the Rev. Dr. G. A. Brandelle, who became Augustana's president during the tragic days of World War I. A rugged, outspoken personality with strong convictions, this man guided the destinies of his Church through 17 years of its most critical history.

Though an ardent champion of pure Lutheran doctrine, he was equally concerned about creating an atmosphere of understanding and concord with other Christian communions. So when an overture came to him in 1935 from the Commission on Comity of the Episcopal Church to engage in a discussion of the theological teachings of that communion and those of the Augustana Synod, Dr. Brandelle felt no hesitancy in urging Augustana to accept the invitation. The Church approved the proposal, named its president as chairman of a committee to represent it and authorized him to appoint the other members of the group.

The dialogue took place at Seabury-Western Seminary, an Episcopal institution at Evanston, IL, December 3 and 4, 1935. The Episcopalians were represented by the Rt. Rev. Frank E. Wilson, bishop of the Eau Claire, WI diocese who had made the original overture for the dialogue on behalf of his Church's Commission on Comity; the Rt. Rev. Stephen E. Keeler, bishop coadjutor of Minnesota; the Very Rev. Frederick C. Grant, dean of Seabury-Western Seminary, and Mr. Clifford Morehouse, editor of the *Living Church*. The Augustana representatives, in addition to Dr. Brandelle, were the Rev. C. A. Lund, president of the Superior Conference; the Rev. Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Rock Island, IL; the Rev. O. J. Johnson, president of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN and the writer of this article, who at that time was editor of the *Lutheran Companion*. Bishop Wilson was named as chairman of the conference.

It was made clear at the outset that neither group was authorized to make any commitments on behalf of its Church, but had been appointed merely for the purpose of exploring areas of agreement and to find possible common ground for future progress. Both concurred in the understanding that any approach toward closer relations could be achieved only by gradual steps. Discussion throughout the conference centered around four points: the Holy Scriptures, the historic creeds, the Christian Sacraments and the historic episcopate. These are the areas in which agreement is to be sought for church unity, according to the Anglican Lambeth Quadrilateral.

In the discussion on the Holy Scriptures, it was agreed that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the sole authority for all doctrine. In seeking for a definition of the Bible, the Lutherans expressed preference for the simple statement that "the Bible is the Word of God," but qualified this by agreeing that all parts of the Bible may not have equal significance from the standpoint of Christian faith. The Episcopalians, on the other hand, in order to escape the possible pitfall of a literal, verbal or mechanical theory of inspiration, stated that they preferred the statement that "the Bible contains the Word of God." The Episcopal group also took the position that the Church existed before the New Testament canon was established, and therefore contended that its message should be interpreted in the light of church practice. The Lutherans, in contrast, pointed out that the oral tradition, which is the substance of the Gospel, existed before it was given written form. There was complete agreement that Christ is to be found in the Scriptures, and that this is the all-important object of all Christian search. It was also agreed that the Holy Spirit guided the writers in the creation of the canonical books, but that there is no need of any theory of verbal dictation. The conferees eventually decided that there was virtual unanimity in respect to the position of the two groups regarding Holy Scripture.

Except for some difference in emphases, they likewise found themselves in substantial accord on the subject of the Sacraments. In the first place, they were at one on the sacramental principle which finds its supreme expression in the Incarnation of our Lord, and they recognized the binding importance of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper for all confessing Christians.

"It was made clear at the outset that neither group was authorized to make any commitments on behalf of its Church. . . any approach toward closer relations could be achieved only by gradual steps. . . There was complete agreement that Christ is to be found in the Scriptures. . . The conferees eventually decided that there was virtual unanimity in respect to the position of the two groups regarding Holy Scripture."

Moreover, they were unanimous in agreeing that the significance of Baptism as the instrument of spiritual regeneration was deserving of greater emphasis than is commonly given it. They also found themselves in substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Real Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, while acknowledging some differences in practice.

The discussion of the creeds brought out the fact that the Augustana Synod accepted all three of the ancient ecumenical symbols - the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian. The Episcopal Church, on the other hand, makes no use of the Athanasian Creed in its liturgy, and accepts it only in support of the other two. In its worship it makes use primarily of the Nicene Creed. The validity of the three confessions as an authentic summary of the Christian faith was recognized by both groups. The Augustana men explained that their Church had substituted the phrase "Holy Christian Church" for "Holy Catholic Church" only for the purpose of avoiding any suggestion of Romanism. The Episcopalians, on the other hand, experienced no such inhibitions and looked upon the word "Catholic" properly understood, as too significant to be surrendered.

The discussion centering on the Historic Episcopate proved to be one of the most interesting of the two-day dialogue. The Anglicans insist that the Apostolic Church recognized three orders — bishops, priests and deacons and contend that all three should be preserved. They hold that the order of bishops has been preserved in an unbroken line since the days of the Apostles through successive consecrations not only by the Church of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church, but subsequently by the Anglican Church, the Old Catholics and the Church of Sweden.

The Episcopal group explained that they did not question the validity of non-episcopal ministries, but declared they would find it difficult to envision a reunited Christendom without the inclusion of the historic episcopate. They made it clear that this must not be considered as the sole criterion for unity, but contended that over and above a subjective unity of faith there should be an objective center of unity in any visible society known as the Church. They further insisted that no unity could be satisfactory without a universally recognized ministry, and that the historic episcopate, with its long record and its present acceptance in 90 percent of Christendom, was the logical means for achieving such a ministry.

The exchange of ideas following this strong emphasis on the importance of apostolic succession and an episcopal order proved one of the highlights of the Evanston dialogue. The Augustana representatives pointed out that, of all churches which claim apostolic succession for their hierarchy, there is none that can point to an unbroken line with more historic certainty than the Church of Sweden, where bishops and clergy practically *en masse* forsook the Church of Rome to embrace the evangelical faith. It was also emphasized that, despite this fact, the Church of Sweden places no particular stress on the importance of apostolic succession.

"Reunion is not a question of subtraction but of contribution, not an effort to discover the least common denominator which would be harmless, but a willingness to incorporate and harmonize the fruits of Christian experience from all sides."

- - Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, December, 1935

The Augustana conferees also called attention to the fact that their pioneer pastors had been duly ordained as ministers by bishops of the Church of Sweden, but recognized no distinction between themselves and pastors who later were ordained by presidents of the Augustana Synod. One Augustana representative made note of the fact that when the chairman of their group, Dr. Brandelle, was inducted into the office as the first full-time president of the Augustana Synod, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, primate of the Church of Sweden, participated in his consecration. He also noted that the archbishop had subsequently presented the Synod with a bishops' cross, the gift of the Church of Sweden's House of Bishops, in recognition of the fact that the Synod's president possessed the status of a bishop in the Lutheran Church. Later, it was pointed out, Dr. Brandelle was invited to attend a conclave of the Lutheran bishops of northern Europe.

Augustana's purpose in bringing all this to light was to fortify its position that, although it might lay some claim to possessing the historic episcopate, it, like the Church of Sweden, did not consider it to be essential for a valid ministry or a necessary condition for a reunited Church. Lutherans, rather than stressing any type of church order as a means of effecting Christian reunion, rely instead on the "unifying power of the Gospel." Their own pastors, they explained, were ordained simply for the ministry of preaching, which implied the proclamation of the Law and the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments as ordained and instituted by Christ. They made it clear that, while they objected to the necessity of the historic episcopate as a condition for reunion, Lutherans in general might agree to such an order so long as it did not seem to imply in any sense a repudiation of the validity of their present ministry.

At the conclusion of the dialogue the two groups agreed that a reunited Church of the future must not be one of minimums but of maximums. "Reunion" declared a statement drawn up by Dr. Bergendoff and signed by all members of both groups, "is not a question of subtraction but of contribution, not an effort to discover the least common denominator which would be harmless, but a willingness to incorporate and harmonize the fruits of Christian experience from all sides."

Augustana's Ecumenical Perspective and the Church of Sweden

by Bernhard Erling, '46

Among the Lutheran synods organized by nineteenth century immigrants, the Augustana Synod was the most willing to participate in the ecumenical movement. This may have been due in part to its membership in the General Council. Though Augustana chose not to join in 1918 with the General Council, the General Synod, and the General Synod of the South to form the United Lutheran Church in America, she continued to relate to the ULCA and to share that church's openness to ecumenical relations. This later led Augustana to send delegates to the 1937 World Conferences on Life and Work and Faith and Order and to become a charter member of the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches.

The Ecumenical Spirit — An Inheritance from Sweden?

Conrad Bergendoff proposes that Augustana's ecumenical spirit was inherited from Sweden.¹ This paper will examine how such influence from Sweden could have been mediated through visits to the Augustana Synod by two Swedish church leaders, Knut Henning Gezelius von Scheele, Bishop of Visby (1885-1920), and Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala (1914-31), and the personal relationship that developed between these bishops and Lars Gustaf Abrahamson, editor of Augustana (1908-39), who was the Synod's escort for von Scheele and Soderblom during their visits.²

Augustana did not at the outset have a favorable opinion of the Church of Sweden. The prevailing attitude about the church from which the immigrants came is well expressed by G. Everett Arden:

*"[T]here is little doubt that religion in nineteenth-century Sweden needed revival and renewal. The National Church had absorbed elements of rationalism, secularism, and formalism. By reason of its close political ties with the State, the Church often found it difficult to maintain the kind of freedom which would enable it to live close to the common people. Political consideration, local as well as national, rather than the spiritual needs of the people, frequently determined ecclesiastical attitudes and action."*³

Arden stresses the renewal that the lay-oriented evangelical revival brought to Sweden. Leaders in this revival, such as P. A. Ahlberg and Peter Fjellstedt, were most active in finding candidates to supply Augustana's need for pastors in the early years. The Swedish bishops either paid little attention to this matter, or in some cases may have thought that the Swedish immigrants could be adequately cared for by the American Episcopal Church. T. N. Hasselquist did correspond with some influential Swedish church leaders, such as C. A. Toren and Peter Wieselgren, the deans of the cathedrals in Uppsala and Gothenburg, and two men who later became bishops, Martin Johansson in Harnosand and Uddo Lechard Ullman in Strangnas, but during the first decades of Augustana's history she had closer relations with the Swedish Evangelical Mission (Evangeliska fosterlands-stiftelsen) than with the Church of Sweden.

The Augustana Synod did, however, want the attention of the Church of Sweden, and through the initiative of two enterprising younger pastors an opportunity presented itself in 1893, when Augustana chose to share in the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Sweden's adoption of the Augsburg Confession at the Uppsala Assembly of 1593. Carl A. Swensson, then 36 years of age and president of Bethany College, Lindsborg, and L. G. Abrahamson, 37 years of age and pastor of Salem Lutheran Church, Chicago, published a book 499 pages in length celebrating the tercentenary.⁴ The first half of the book included a history of the Synod

and its conferences, biographies of the earliest pastors, articles about Augustana's educational institutions, home and foreign missions, social ministry institutions, and publishing house.

The remaining half of the book was devoted to Augustana's pastors and congregations. There were pictures of Augustana's pastors, churches, and institutions, as well as of the Swedish Royal family, and the bishops of the Church of Sweden. A page of statistics compared the Augustana Synod when organized in 1860, with her 17 pastors, 36 congregations, 3,748 communicants, \$429 given for benevolences and \$5,599 for current expenses, with 1890, when there were 308 pastors, 611 congregations, 78,295 communicants and 145,073 members, \$75,329 given for benevolences and \$580,854 for current expenses. Statistics for the whole Lutheran church in America in 1890 were also given: 4,692 pastors, 7,948 congregations, and 1,099,868 communicants.⁵ Augustana was very small by comparison, but could nonetheless report impressive growth in the 33 years of its existence.

The Jubilee-Album concluded with an account by C. A. Swensson of how Augustana had celebrated the tercentenary. The co-authors had hoped to make Augustana's members aware of the growth of the Synod during its short history, to strengthen the bond between Augustana and the Church of Sweden, and also to gain recognition from the older eastern Lutheran synods. Celebrations had been held in Boston, New York, West Superior, Minneapolis, Lindsborg, Rockford, Chicago, Rock Island, Burlington, Des Moines, Portland, Tacoma, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Jamestown, and Brooklyn. All Lutherans were invited to these events and Swensson states that in San Francisco the ecumenical Lutheran spirit was such that Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, German, and English were spoken that evening until midnight.⁶ Some of the celebrations extended over two days and there were facsimiles of the programs of the festivities in Minneapolis, Chicago, Rock Island, and Portland.

K. H. Gezelius von Scheele, Bishop of Visby, 1885 - 1920

What had made these observances so successful was in large part the fact that K. H. Gezelius von Scheele, Bishop of Visby, appointed by King Oscar II to represent the Church of Sweden, spoke at all of these events. In August 1890, C. A. Swensson and L. G. Abrahamson had attended the Fourth General Swedish Pastors Conference in Stockholm. Bishop von Scheele was vice chairman and had warmly welcomed the Swedish Americans present at the conference banquet. Swensson, speaking in response, expressed the hope that the bishop might travel to America to bring a greeting from the Swedish mother church to her daughter church. This proposal received enthusiastic approval, and Bishop von Scheele said that it could be possible if the king gave his approval. In the fall of 1892, the Swedish Lutheran Pastors Society of Chicago invited Bishop von Scheele of Visby and Bishop Martin Johansson of Harnosand to speak at their planned June 1893 celebration of the Uppsala Assembly Tercentenary, accepting financial responsibility for such a visit. The Synod later joined in extending this invitation. Abrahamson was selected to meet the guests and to travel with them as they visited congregations throughout in the Synod. Free passes were sought from the railway companies to expedite travel. Through the American ambassador in Stockholm, W. W. Thomas, Jr., the Swedish king's permission was requested, which was granted, and invitations were sent to the bishops. Bishop Johansson could not come, but von Scheele did accept the invitation.

Who, then, was Knut Henning Gezelius von Scheele (1838-1920)? In Arden's Augustana Heritage he is mentioned only once, in the list of guests at the 1910 Jubilee celebrating the Synod's 50th anniversary.⁸ People in Augustana were impressed by the fact that von Scheele's family belonged to the nobility. Through his mother he was also related to the Gezelius family, of which a father, son, and grandson had been bishops in Finland in the 17th and 18th centuries. He was educated at the University of Uppsala and began to teach in the theological faculty in 1867. He completed a Th.D. in 1877 and was appointed professor in 1879. He was an author and wrote *Den Kyrkliga Katekisationen* in 1869 and *Teologisk Symbolik* in two volumes

in 1877-79. The latter work must have been used at Augustana Theological Seminary, for I have a copy of the first volume in which is the signature of Otto Hallberg (1859-1909, ordained 1896).⁹ While teaching at Uppsala, together with U. L. Ullman von Scheele edited "Tidskrift for Kristen Tro och Bildning," in which journal *Augustana och Missionären* (the weekly periodical of the Augustana Synod) was commended, which commendation was deeply appreciated by the editor, T. N. Hasselquist.¹⁰ In 1885, von Scheele became Bishop of Visby, an office he held until his death in 1920. He made several trips to Palestine and was one of the organizers of the Swedish Jerusalem Society. From 1900-11, he was a member of the Second Chamber of the Swedish Riksdag.

As a church leader von Scheele had ecumenical interests. In 1890, he was the only Scandinavian who participated in the sixth General Evangelical Lutheran Conference (a German forerunner of the Lutheran World Federation) and he later organized the tenth meeting of that Conference in Lund.¹¹ Von Scheele's ecumenical interest extended beyond the Lutheran church. In his *Teologisk Symbolik*, he suggested that Paul's imagery of the body of Christ with its distinctively different members applied not only to individual Christians but also could be used to understand and appreciate how different churches complemented each other, thereby enriching the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

As a means of achieving greater church union, von Scheele supported the international Evangelical Alliance, organized in 1846 as an organ for cooperation in evangelism among Protestants of different denominations.¹² One of the rules of the Alliance was that the confessions of the different churches should be respected. In Sweden, however, problems arose as Baptists attacked infant baptism at Alliance meetings. This led the Church of Sweden to oppose plans to hold the 1884 international conference of the Evangelical Alliance in Stockholm. It was held instead in Copenhagen. Von Scheele, then professor at Uppsala, was in attendance and was one of those who signed an invitation urging Augustana leaders to send delegates to the conference.¹³

Yet another example of von Scheele's ecumenical interest was his election as president of the 11th world conference of the Young Men's Christian Association held in Stockholm in 1888.¹⁴

The First Swedish Bishop to Visit the United States — 1893

Bishop von Scheele arrived in Boston May 10, 1893, the first time a Swedish bishop had visited the United States. During the weeks of his visit he and Abrahamson traveled more than 12,000 miles. On most days the bishop gave one or more speeches. Von Scheele wrote a book about his visit after his return to Sweden containing sermons and addresses, as well as reflections about Augustana, that were largely positive.¹⁵ Augustana thought well of him and he was invited back in 1901, this time with his wife. They visited Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Bethany College, and Gustavus Adolphus College, where von Scheele spoke at the Reformation festival marking the 25th anniversary of the dedication of Old Main.¹⁶ His final visit was in 1910 at the jubilee marking the Augustana Synod's 50th anniversary. En route he stopped in Washington to bring greetings from the King of Sweden to President William Howard Taft, whose greetings he then conveyed to the jubilee convention in Rock Island.¹⁷

Of the two pastors who had initiated the plans to bring a Swedish bishop to visit Augustana, C. A. Swensson died suddenly in 1904 at the early age of 46 years, a great loss to the Synod and to Bethany College. L. G. Abrahamson remained involved in all of these visits and undoubtedly got to know von Scheele very well. From 1908-39 he was editor of *Augustana*. Bishop von Scheele's influence could well have broadened his understanding of inter-church relationships and led him as an editor to share some of the openness to ecumenical ventures that was to characterize the Church of Sweden.

Bishop Nathan Söderblom and University Theology. . .

The next Swedish bishop to visit Augustana was Nathan Söderblom. Augustana's attitude toward Söderblom was not at first wholly favorable. In 1897 a scientific congress on religion was held in Stockholm, chaired by Bishop von Scheele. An editorial in Augustana about the conference did not fault von Scheele for chairing it, but did criticize Söderblom, then seaman's pastor in Paris, for what he said about socialism in his lecture on religion and social development. As for the other lectures, the editorial insisted that nothing was more dangerous than false accommodation to other religions.¹⁸

In 1910 Professor Söderblom of Uppsala, together with Professors Magnus Pfannenstil and Sven Herner of Lund, organized an ecclesiastical-theological conference at Örebro. The modern university theology presented there was regarded as dangerous in Augustana news reports and editorials.¹⁹

An Augustana editorial took comfort, however, in distinguishing between the Swedish universities, where there were adherents to destructive biblical criticism, and the Church of Sweden, where it was said no one holding such views could become bishop. This confidence was shaken when that same year John W. Personne, whose "herdabrev" (pastoral letter) was deemed unacceptable, was appointed bishop of Linköping.²⁰

The attack on the university theology continued in 1912 in a harsh negative review of Söderblom's "Religionsproblemet inom Katolicism och Protestantism" (The Problem of Religion in Catholicism and Protestantism), 1910, by Professor Adolf Hult of Augustana Seminary.²¹ On May 20, 1914, Söderblom, a distant third in the slate of nominees, was named archbishop of Uppsala. Augustana published an editorial from Svensk kyrkoledning deeply deploring Söderblom's appointment, stating that the government had ignored the wishes of the voters and the long standing tradition of appointing experienced bishops to this post. The following week, however, Augustana published a letter from Söderblom inviting the Augustana Synod to send a representative to his installation. President Lawrence A. Johnston consulted with the conference presidents who agreed that the invitation should be accepted. Johnston, however, because of ill health was unable to make the trip and appointed in his stead L. G. Abrahamson. Due to the outbreak of World War I bishops invited from England were unable to come and Abrahamson was the only foreign guest who participated in the laying on of hands. He also was invited to give an address about the Augustana Synod at evening song in the cathedral the day before the installation.²² Years later in a memorial volume published after Archbishop Söderblom's death, Abrahamson stated that his opinion of Söderblom changed during his stay in Uppsala at the archbishop's residence. There he learned to know Söderblom's private and spiritual side, disclosed in personal prayer.²³ While Adolf Hult continued his attacks on Söderblom, his critique now had to be published in the Lutheran Bible Institute's *Bible Banner*.²⁴

In 1917 the war prevented Archbishop Söderblom from coming to Augustana's celebration of the 400th anniversary of Lutheran Reformation, and not until 1923 was he able to come. Once again Abrahamson was the escort of the Swedish episcopal visitor and Söderblom also wrote a book about his visit, *Från Uppsala till Rock Island*.²⁵

Except for a few negative reactions to Söderblom's ecumenical interpretation of evangelical catholicity, such as Dean Samuel Miller's refusal to attend a reception for him in Minneapolis.²⁶ Söderblom was warmly received in the Augustana congregations and institutions that he visited. One significant result of his visit was that he met Pastor Conrad Bergendoff of Salem Lutheran Church, Chicago, and invited him to come to Sweden to work on his dissertation about the Swedish Reformation. Bergendoff spent much of the academic year 1926-27 in Uppsala, doing research also in Bonn and Berlin, and served as Söderblom's secretary at the Berne Conference in 1926.²⁷

The Augustana Synod was represented at Söderblom's Stockholm Conference in 1925. Not everyone approved. S. J. Sebelius of the seminary faculty wrote in "The Lutheran Companion" warning against entanglement with the ecumenical movement, candidly identifying himself "with those who are afraid to enter into close fellowship with people whose religious views and aims are suspicious to say the least.... There are those who fear that the Stockholm Conference is but a step in the direction of an ecumenical council on Faith and Order. If that be so . . . then let us pray God night and day that at least the Lutheran Church in America will have nothing to do with it." This negative attitude was sharply countered by L. G. Abrahamson in Augustana, "who called upon the Synod to pray for the success of the Conference, and for all similar efforts to Christianize the existing social order."²⁸

Both Sebelius and Abrahamson had been born in Sweden and to this extent shared the Swedish heritage. Perhaps, however, Abrahamson's greater openness to ecumenical relations was due in part to the time that he had spent traveling and conversing with two Swedish bishops, Knut Henning Gezelius von Scheele and Nathan Söderblom.

1 Conrad Bergendoff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 237. ; 2 For an article that also stresses the significance of the relationships between these persons, see Maria Erling, "Hospitality and Influence: Encounters between Augustana and the Church of Sweden, 1893-1925," *Tro & Tanke, Svenska kyrkans forskningsrad*, 1996:5, 80-93. ; 3 G. Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage, History of the Augustana Lutheran Church* (Rock Island: Augustana Press, 1963), 5. ; 4 C. A. Swensson and L. G. Abrahamson, *Jubel-Album* (Chicago: National Publishing Company, 1893). ; 5 *Ibid.*, 448. ; 6 *Ibid.*, 456. ; 7 *Ibid.*, 455, *Augustana*, 38:71. ; 8 Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 228. ; 9 K. H. Gez. von Scheele, *Teologisk symbolik, första delen* (Uppsala: W. Schultz, 1877), 540 pp.; 10 *Augustana och Missionären* 30 (1885), 23. ; 11 Krister Gierow, "K. H. Gez. von Scheele," *Svensk uppslagsbok* (1953), 25:420. ; 12 *Teologisk symbolik*, vol. I, 26-33, 533-536. ; 13 Theodor Arvidson, "Evangeliska alliansen," *Nordisk teologisk uppslagsbok*, 2:805-8. ; 14 *Augustana*, 33 (1888), 406. ; 15 *Augustana*, 38 (1893), 500; von Scheele, *Hemlandstoner, En halsning från modern Svea till dotterkyrkan i Amerika* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1894), 19-20. ; 16 *Augustana*, 46 (1901), 265, 652. ; 17 *Augustana* 55 (1910), 474; 18 *Augustana*, 42 (1897), 600, 632. ; 19 *Augustana*, 55 (1910), 518-9, 638, 914. ; 20 *Augustana*, 55 (1910), 8745, 894. ; 21 "Tankar under läsningen af Söderblom's 'Religionsproblemet,'" *Augustana*, 57 (1912), 172, 192. ; 22 *Augustana*, 59 (1914), 471, 511, 531; 60 (1915), 232-4; Bengt Sundkler, *Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work* (Lund: Gleerups, 1968), 110. ; 23 Hagkomster och livsinttryck till minnet av Nathan Söderblom, ed. Sven Thulin (Uppsala, 1934), 25466, as cited by Maria Erling, *op. cit.*, 86, 93. ; 24 *The Bible Banner*, 5 (Jan., 1924), 6. ; 25 Söderblom, *Fran Uppsala till Rock Island, En predikofärd i Nya Världen*, 3rd ed. (Stockholm: SKDB, 1925). ; 26 Miller, "Visitors from Europe," *The Bible Banner*, 4 (Nov., 1923), 3-5. ; 27 Interview of Dr. Conrad Bergendoff by Maria Erling, July 5, 1995; Sundkler, *op. cit.*, 399. ; 28 Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 3045.

IREMEMBER. . .

When I reflect on the Augustana Lutheran Church I have a warm and nostalgic feeling bringing back memories of days long gone. Following are some thoughts on my times in the Augustana Church as a parish pastor.

I think of Saturday mornings in confirmation when it was apparent that we had not been diligent in memorizing Luther's Small Catechism. I remember the terror of the public examination. Then there were the Luther League programs with their readings and musical renditions, neither too impressive. I remember fondly the Luther League conventions at Gustavus on those hot summer days when our faith was questioned as we were pressed for a more positive acceptance of Christ as Saviour. College days when the Augustana influence was strong. The awe at being a seminary student on the road to the ministry. Internship when I learned with Paul that "whatever state I am in, therein to be content." Obviously not a very good year, but I did learn patience. The thrill of being ordained by the Augustana Church in annual convention with all of my classmates. Something lost in today's ordination practices.

At home as a pastor in Augustana where one enjoyed close fellowship and comradery with fellow pastors, sharing the excitement and trials, the joys and griefs inherent in the parish ministry. Growing in the faith with every new experience as a parish pastor for ten years and as hospital chaplain for thirty. What a privilege to be a part of Augustana, a unique church, theologically sound, evangelical in spirit, a true family of believers bound together as one in Jesus Christ.

-- Richard L. Hillstrom, '42

The Augustana "Spirit" and the Ecumenical Vision of the ELCA

by Herbert W. Chilstrom, '58

To agree to write on how the Augustana "spirit" helped to shape the ecumenical vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is one thing. We assume there is such a "spirit." But when one tries to capture it in words it tends to elude us. My guess is that anyone who comes out of Augustana will have his or her own definition of that "spirit," and it may or may not agree with my own. And we may or may not agree on how that "spirit" influenced Augustana's role in the ecumenical movement. But let me try.

Two "Streams" of Spirit

My own experience was that there were two streams flowing in Augustana, one local and one churchwide. While, as we shall observe later, the Augustana Synod was involved in many of the early ecumenical ventures in this country and in the world, there was little ecumenical activity or concern on the local scene. In my home town there were three Lutheran churches on adjacent corners. Though they had proper names -- First, Zion and St. Paul's -- their true identities were Swedish, Norwegian and German. There were no joint activities and surely no common worship experiences. I have not a single recollection from my growing up years of anything those churches did in common. Oh yes, there was that "Luther League" hay ride for the youth from First and Zion. Those three churches could have been on different planets.

Before rushing to judgment, however, one must remember that this was typical of most Lutheran congregations until the mid-50's. Though there had been attempts to serve more than one nationality in the very earliest years of immigration, that soon disintegrated with the flood of new arrivals.

We must also remember that our inclination to idealize the past needs to be tempered with a dose of reality. What Gritsch and Jenson observe about Lutheran churches in general could also be said of Augustana, namely, that they "live -- or do not live -- by the same mixture of fundamentalism, helplessness before every wind of doctrine, tag-ends of denominational tradition, and occasional saving theological and proclamatory miracles as do the other American denominations."

Were there, however, some aspects of life in the Augustana Synod and its congregations that helped pave the way for the day when that church would move beyond the immigrant mentality and into the broader ecumenical scene? Yes, I believe so.

Like many others out of Augustana background, I was raised in a setting where two things were very prominent in our Christian experience: Formal worship in the church on Sunday and private devotional exercises in the home during the week. As for Sunday worship, who out of that tradition can forget the sense of awe and wonder as the pastor intoned those opening words of the liturgy: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory?" Or the singing of the Gradual before the reading of the Gospel, the high point of the service? Or the General Prayer which encompassed such a broad range of concerns? Or the respect for the Sacrament of the Altar -- so profound that it was celebrated no more than four times a year.

Because of this careful attention to worship, Augustana was usually judged to be "high church" among Lutherans in America. I still recall the shock of attending for the first time some churches of the Hauge Norwegian background. I wondered if I was in a Lutheran church at all. They were, of course, an exception. As for Augustana, Conrad Bergendoff has

observed that it shared in "a remarkable uniformity" that was characteristic of most Lutheran churches around the world. Architecture, liturgy, the church year, musical rubrics, lessons, prayers -- all were given careful thought and were usually shaped by a long tradition.

What this meant was that when we of Augustana background first attended a service of worship in a Roman Catholic, Episcopal or Orthodox setting, we were pleasantly surprised by the parallels with our own traditions. In our cultural enclaves we were not aware of them. But once we moved out into the larger scene, we discovered that we had been prepared for that day through our worship experience in Augustana.

Augustana also gave serious attention to good preaching. Homiletics was an essential part of the seminary curriculum. This was reflected in the architecture of some of the Augustana congregations where the pulpit was positioned above the altar. The Jenny Lind Chapel at Andover, IL, is a classic example of this style. In the tradition of Luther, Augustana Seminary students were taught that preaching was not only essential to worship, but that the sermon should be grounded in the texts for the day. This concern for strong preaching helped prepare us for our early contacts with the Reformed churches where preaching was accented.

But worship on Sunday was not enough. Having been so deeply influenced by the pietistic movement, many immigrant families incorporated devotional exercises into daily life. Especially in the first years when itinerant preachers were available only on an irregular basis, devotional exercises in the home were the source of spiritual life for the faithful. My earliest memories are of a grandmother who rose from the table each evening, reached for her Bible and Psalm Book, and led us in reading and prayers.

Already as a young Christian I was introduced to the writings of C.O. Rosenius, the reformer who shaped the thinking of many Augustana immigrants. In his volume "A Faithful Guide to Peace with God" there is a strong accent on the relationship between right doctrine and right living. Assurance of forgiveness is to be accompanied by a good life. "When you have found comfort in Christ through the Word," wrote Rosenius, "you will discover the fruits of faith in your life."

This emphasis on a strong devotional life, joined to a concern for the world around us, was another way in which those of us out of Augustana background were being prepared for the broader ecumenical venture. At its best, the ecumenical movement is grounded in prayer. Some Lutherans in America found it impossible to pray with others until they had achieved doctrinal uniformity with them. Not so with Augustana. When communities of faith began to observe days of prayer we were prepared and anxious to join with them.

The "Fruits of Your Faith" that Rosenius wrote about were thought of primarily as personal involvement in the needs of others in its own family of faith. As G. Everett Arden pointed out, both by choice and by chance Augustana remained on the sidelines of formal ecumenism for its first 75 years. It stood aside from the those churches and movements which emphasized the social gospel and involvement in the political realm. Augustana was too busy caring for its own.

All of that began to change in the 1920's. Arden traces it to the participation of Augustana in the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work in 1925. Over the next decades a new social awareness emerged in Augustana that influenced the generations to come. All of us who studied at Rock Island from the mid-40's and on were challenged to carry out a ministry that moved the congregation out of its sanctuary and into the community.

Though social service ministries had been part and parcel of Augustana's way of caring for its

own, these also expanded their mission to include care and concern for all in the community. Hospitals, orphanages, nursing and diaconate schools, homes for the elderly, institutions for the disabled — all these were of prime importance in Augustana's self-understanding. The fact that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is today the largest provider of care of senior citizens and one of the major contributors to all social ministry programs in our society is no accident. And Augustana played a major role.

This emergence into the larger world meant that Augustana was well-prepared to take its place with other churches that shared its conviction that faith must be accompanied with good works and missions of mercy in the community. I think it is fair to say that Augustana as a church did not suffer from the conflict between correct doctrine and service in the world. That "spirit" helped the church to join with councils of churches at the state, national and international levels and with other congregations in the community to undertake projects where absolute uniformity on all matters of faith was not necessary. Augustana was the first Lutheran church in the U.S. to join the World Council of Churches.

In 1948, Augustana marked the centennial of its beginning in America. On that occasion Dr. P.O. Bersell, president of the church, observed that "In the family of Lutheran Churches in America we have taken our place and are helping to foster comity and closer cooperation, looking to the day when in the providence of God we shall be one Church, even as now we are one in faith and spirit. We know that the communion of saints transcends synodical and denominational cleavages. To be used as one of God's agencies in making confessional, evangelical Christianity triumphant in Protestantism is our heart's desire."

A dozen years later, when Augustana observed the centennial of its founding, Sidney Ahlstrom captured well the Augustana "spirit" in his "Centennial Essay:" "Pietism in Sweden had certainly made (the Augustana Lutherans) insistent upon 'experiential religion' -- the life in Christ, they knew, was not a dead and formal thing. Yet they did not make experience the Alpha and Omega of the Christian life. The very name they chose for their synod indicates another concern. The liturgy they adopted, the principles of church order they formulated, the government they established: all these attest to a single-minded determination to create a church that would withstand the seductions of culture and popular religious pressures...."

When we think of Augustana's final years and of the contributions women and men from Augustana have made until this day, I believe we can say that the hopes and dreams and expectations of persons like Bersell and Ahlstrom have been more than fulfilled. What they said is fully in keeping with the Statement on Ecumenism, adopted by the ELCA in 1991 and the guide for our ecumenical future: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks to be faithful to its scriptural and confessional foundations. As a confessional church that is evangelical, catholic, and ecumenical, this church will pursue the goal of full communion and will rejoice in all movement toward that goal."

Defining the Augustana "spirit" may indeed be difficult. But however we judge it, we can give thanks that that "spirit" has been a significant factor in the ever-evolving ecumenical venture of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

If you would like to contribute to the Augustana Heritage Newsletter with an "I Remember" article, please send it to: *The Augustana Heritage Newsletter*, The Editor, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615. (Please limit the article to 300 words).


REMEMBER. . .

Thirty-two days after my birth I was born of the Spirit in baptismal waters and the Word administered by Pastor N. P. Sjögren who signed my Swedish language "Dopt Attest" certificate. The date, April 9, 1917. The place, Oberon, North Dakota. The congregation, Calvary Augustana Lutheran. The parents, immigrant Swedes. I was born and baptized Augustana, reared, educated, ordained, married Augustana (now 55 years), served salaried in that church for forty abundant years, and I will die Augustana! A Calvinist might chide, "Have you no ambition?" Dr. Paul Holmer, retired Yale University professor of religion, I said, "I was old Augustana." He replied, 'I still am.' So I say, a loyal ELCA-er. My roots are deep, deep. My Mother Church memories are joyous, long and strong. "The Augustana Spirit" is upon and in me. "I remember the days of old." (Ps 143:5)

DAYS . . . of personal identity in a non-mega church body. At merger in 1962 (LCA) we were 1269 congregations, 630,000 members, 1004 pastors. We were nationally entwined; truly evangelically-oriented; sermons, lectures, writings declared the mercies of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We preached sin, sanctification, law and Gospel. Our clergy and laity gave sins new names (besides using Paul's list of "corrupt nature" in Galatians) like dancing, card playing, movies, gambling and secret societies. Imagine that! Above all we believed Horatius Bonar's great stanzas of grace in "Not What My Hands Have Done" (Black Hymnal #175). We had hymns sung in harmony (forbidden now), relevant, touching the heart, spiritual and scriptural, like "I Look Not Back," "I Love to Tell the Story," "Take the Name of Jesus With You," "Sun of My Soul," and "Jesus Lover of My Soul," lots more of "I, me, my, mine, we, you, our" titles, so comforting, so assuring, prayerful and unifying stress on missions. The Augustana Hymnal had 21 hymns in a section titled "Missions." We sang, preached, prayed and sent. The Women's Missionary Society saw to that as did the preachers. We had special leadership. In disproportionate numbers to our small size, Augustana people were called to lead in national and global Lutheranism and the ecumenical church. The acknowledged list is impressive. Their avowed "Augustana piety," like drops of blueing in a water-filled washtub, has royally permeated the whole.

I thank the Lord of the Church for these days of old, the memories and the glory and greatness in perpetuity of my fostering mother, Augustana, the joyful one!

-- Thomas W. Wersell '42



In Memoriam

Edna Nelsenius of Brooklyn, N.Y., died on March 16, 1997, at the age of 105. She was a daughter of the Rev. Gustaf Nelsenius (1853-1913), who organized more than 30 congregations in the territory of the New York and New England conferences, served as conference president, and was a founder of Upsala College. For most of her life, Miss Nelsenius was a member of Redeemer (later Redeemer-St. John's) Church in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, where she was a Sunday school teacher for 70 years. Her brother, Nelton, was active on the Board of what is now the Seafarer's and International House in New York City. Her sister, Ellen, was the wife of the late Rev. Lawrence F. Nordstrom, who was for 21 years secretary of the New York Conference. Edna is survived by two nieces, Lenor Nordstrom of Brooklyn, and Evelyn Johnson, widow of the Rev. Bernhard Johnson of Stamford, CN., and by several grand-nieces and nephews. Her funeral was at Redeemer-St. John's Church on March 19.

AUGUSTANA HERITAGE

Festival of Faith

September 20, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Mamrelund Lutheran Church, Stanton, IA

Dr. Reuben T. Swanson, Preacher
Pastor Joseph Dahlquist, Liturgist

*For reservations to the Festival Luncheon (\$8.00/person), please contact:
Carolyn Allen, RR#3, Box 130, Red Oak, IN 51566
For general information about this event, please call 1-800-635-1116*

AUGUSTANA HERITAGE

Sesquicentennial Gathering

September 18 - 21, 1998

Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY

Bishop Herbert Chilström, Speaker

*Please note: Program starts on Friday, September 18, 1998 at 1 pm
To receive registration and program materials in early 1998, please send your name,
address, tel/fax numbers to: Augustana 1998, Scandinavian Studies Program
525 Falconer Street, P. O. Box 20, Jamestown, NY 14702-0020
Telephone: 716-665-5220 Fax: 716-665-9110*

Send all other inquiries to:

Rev. Paul Cornell, "Spreading Oaks," Collegeville Road, Collegeville, PA 19426-1229
Telephone: 610-489-1496 Fax: 610-489-1496

*There is still time to become a Patron for the gathering. Send a minimum of \$10 per
person by December 31, 1997 to the Jamestown, NY address above, your check reading:
"Augustana 1998."*

Over 200 people are already on the list, with an average gift of \$40.00.