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**Remembering and
honoring the heritage
of the Augustana
Lutheran Church and
Augustana Seminary**

Augustana Heritage NEWSLETTER

Tribute to Bergendoff

One of the purposes of the Augustana Heritage Newsletter is to recall the gifts of the Augustana Lutheran Church. This issue provides the opportunity to pay tribute Conrad J. Bergendoff. In 1985 the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago presented to Dr. Bergendoff the Founder's Award for his leadership in the purpose, location and mission of Augustana and LSTC:

Conrad J. Bergendoff: eminent scholar, luminous leader of Lutherans, decorated doctor of divinity, persistent pioneer in programs of theological education, superlative elucidator of Scandinavian and Swedish subtleties, knowledgeable nonagenarian, pastor, scholar and friend. Your lifelong commitment to the cause of Christian higher education has deeply touched the lives of thousands and has come to symbolize the best of Swedish Lutheran scholarship, piety, and churchmanship on the soil of America. Your distinguished career has been guided by the conviction that there is an essential connection between Christian faith and the highest ideals of a humanistic tradition. We honor you today for your many-splendored contributions to church, society and culture, and above all salute you on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for your originating vision of Lutheran theological education in an urban, ecumenical and university related context.

In December, 1995, Dr. Bergendoff celebrated his 100th birthday and in June, 1996 his 75th anniversary of his ordination. We are grateful to four alumni of Augustana Seminary who have written reflections about Dr. Bergendoff: George Hall, '34 a lifetime friend and colleague; Louis Almen '50, a faculty member at Augustana College when Dr. Bergendoff was president; Glenn Stone '53, whose family were members of Salem Lutheran Church, Chicago when Dr. Bergendoff was pastor and Byron Swanson '56, whose doctoral thesis at Princeton University in 1970 was titled "Conrad Bergendoff: the Making of an Ecumenist - a study in Confessionalism and Ecumenism in Early Twentieth Century American Lutheranism."



The Bergendorff Founders Award Plaque is hanging in the second floor main hallway outside the Chapel-Auditorium of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

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Reflections about Conrad Bergendoff

by George F. Hall

As I sit here with the empty computer screen before me I am asking myself "What can I write about Conrad Bergendoff without talking about myself?" The answer is practically nothing. So these reflections become a story of Conrad Bergendoff and me. Perhaps all who read this who knew Conrad Bergendoff would say the same.

Visionary

I saw Dr. Bergendoff from the balcony of a southside Chicago church where the Augustana Synod was meeting. The church was filled with pastors and delegates. Dr. Bergendoff was speaking and advancing his plan that an internship year become a part of seminary education. After the second year of seminary every seminarian would be required to spend a year for an internship at an assigned congregation to serve with a pastor. The pastor would make reports to the seminary faculty and make recommendations about the seminarian's ordination. At first viewed by other Lutherans and Protestants as an eccentric imitation of medical school, now nearly all of them have incorporated internship into their educational plan for clergy training.

Counselor

Sometime later, in the Spring of 1933, I had a note from Dr. Bergendoff asking me to meet him between trains in the railroad depot in Chicago where I worked for Ebenezer Lutheran Church while engaged in studies at the University of Chicago. He knew my record that I had finished two years at Augustana Seminary and had stayed out to work at Ebenezer and study at the University of Chicago. I wanted to stay at Ebenezer until I completed my doctorate. Dr. Bergendoff listened to me and disagreed. He said I should return to the seminary that fall. I told him I had no money. He explained that there was a small stipend available for me at Augustana if I taught beginning Greek (commonly known as dummy Greek). He further stated that he would try to locate me after ordination in a congregation where I could continue my work at Chicago. He was as good as his word. I was called to Gary (Miller) Indiana where I finished my doctorate.

Teacher

I was only in Dr. Bergendoff's office when there was an occasion to be there. Each time I saw heavy volumes of the Weimar edition of Luther's works. The volumes on Luther's Bible were my readings when I worked on my thesis. He gave each of us a copy of his Ecclesiastical Transformation in Sweden and Olavus Petri was now part of our historical store. I listened intently in his course on Jeremiah and wondered why he read so much of the text to us. Why didn't he just assign it and make comments in his lectures? After a long time I discovered the power of reading aloud and hearing it read. The training of the ear and brain is missed in reading silently.

Twice in my teaching career, Dr. Bergendoff asked me to consider coming to Augustana. They were tempting invitations but I couldn't get away. What if? I sometimes think of that now. When I was campus pastor at the University of Minnesota, Bergendoff invited me to give the Baccalaureate address at Augustana College. Bishop Anders Nygren was at the University of Minnesota for a quarter of special lectures. Dr. Bergendoff suggested that Bishop and Mrs. Nygren ride with me in my car to Rock Island. The ride was long and there was no air conditioning. Arriving in Rock Island we immediately went to Bergendoff's home where the

Bishop and his wife were entertained during commencement week. At that time I used a style from preachers of another generation of giving an introduction to the text to be read, a pulpit prayer and then the address followed. Bergendoff commented on this later about the changes in my voice and the reaction of the audience who wondered if I was already finished when I was only three minutes into the sermon.

Later when I was teaching at DePaul University in Chicago, Dr. Bergendoff asked me to write a history of Augustana Missions from its beginnings to the merger in 1962. I accepted the assignment, but novice that I was, I took a comprehensive view in my writing and wrote massively. One half was about the ambience of the church out of which world missions was nourished. I think there were about 200 pages or so. I thought it was pretty good but Bergendoff suggested that I pitch it all and start over only on missions. Then I was given suggestions to curb my scope: only about 200 pages. We struggled together on that. When the finished book was launched and I reviewed how much I had thrown away, Bergendoff replied before them all that he had been a sculptor that had seen promise in the stone or clay and had merely given expression to its substance.

Scholar

We became more or less regular correspondents. I often wrote him about the question of a word or fact. He always replied courteously in his clear and legible hand usually on lined tablet paper. I discovered that my father, George Daniel Hall, was one of the pioneer pastors in the Swedish Covenant Church and had written many articles for their religious weeklies. At the North Park Archives I made photocopies of these articles and proceeded to translate them into English for the Archives and the family. I asked Dr. Bergendoff if he would read it. He did. This was history and people from the Eastern United States which he knew from boyhood. He spent two full days reviewing the material and wrote a long review. I was amazed at his generosity and the excellent appraisal he gave the work.

Our Luther League under the leadership of Wilton Bergstrand had scheduled its national meeting in Colorado Springs, CO. About a dozen pastors and officers of the church were on the same train. It was a happy occasion. Dr. P. O. Bersell, an excellent raconteur and imitator, had us all laughing. Dr. Bergendoff sat alone apart from this group apparently reading. I went back and joined him and for several hours we discussed books and papers he had with him. It was a memorable experience for me as a young pastor. It also revealed how fortunate our Augustana Church was that we had distinguished leaders of many types. Not all were Bergendoffs, nor were all Bersells. The church needed and made use of gifts of many types. In a Chinese phrase they "let 100 flowers bloom". The Holy Spirit worked through us all whatever our gifts were. There was true freedom to develop ministry which was eager and ready to move into each opportunity as it presented itself.

The One Hundreth Anniversary of the publishing of Hemlandssanger called for a special observance in Andover, the pioneer parish of the Augustana Church. Dr. Bergendoff called and asked me to give the address. He helped me in preparation telling me not to spend any time on the publishing story but on the essence of the hymnal. I felt quite at home getting ready because almost every parish I had served was collecting the old hymns to publish which had been left out of the Green Hymnal. I understood the feelings of the church people who were instructed to use the Koralbok only in worship. But they could use other hymns in the evening services. So at Ebenezer I was accustomed to Hemlandssanger sung on

**"... I discovered
the power of
reading aloud..."**

Sunday evenings. It was quite an experience for me to stand and speak from the pulpit where Esbjorn had preached and to look out over the little cemetery on the church ground. The first to thank me after the service was Dr. Bergendoff.

Pastor and Friend

On June 9, 1995, my wife, Lorena, passed quietly away. Dr. Bergendoff heard about it and wrote this classic letter:

June 11, 1995

Dear George:

"She is gone," the doctor said quietly. After 57 years I was alone. In that instant my world changed in a way I cannot fully understand even now after 16 years.

What happens each one learns for himself. It is as if one somehow shook up a jig-saw puzzle over which two had been working together. . . now all the pieces had to be put together again. Or as if two vines had gotten entwined, the one pulled apart to leave the other to survive.

But you may learn that the two are inseparable. For years I will learn that she is not far away. At times you think she is calling from the next room. Or on occasion you will be asking what would she think or say about this?

We are not twain. We are one, as the Master said at our marriage. We are not separated, disentangled through the years; the "I" has become "we." Now in some spiritual way she is with me in a different form. Life has become a richer blessing because of this companionship with a heavenly being. The King James version of Philippians 3:20 reads, "Our conversation is in heaven."

You will be able to say, "The Lord gave. The Lord took. Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

In Christian Fellowship,

Conrad

Dear Reader: As you read this, your mind and memory went parallel to my account. You may have put the paper down a moment to remember what Dr. Bergendoff meant to you then and what he means to all of us now.

Conrad Bergendoff and the Augustana Heritage — A College Perspective

by Louis Almen

The first time I heard Dr. Bergendoff speak was at a missionary conference held at Augustana College in 1946. I was struggling with the question, What does God want me to do? He said, "God does not guide us with a flood light, but leads us with a lantern. All we need to know is the next step." I took the next step and applied for admission to Augustana Seminary. In the spring of 1953, as a young pastor pursuing graduate studies at Princeton, teaching part time at Upsala, and serving full time as a pastor of a New Jersey congregation, I received a letter from Dr. Bergendoff with a call to teach at Augustana College. I took that step, too, and enjoyed the privilege of working more closely with this highly respected Augustana leader.

Looking back, I think the most significant clue to Conrad Bergendoff is the *Confessio Augustana*. It defines his convictions and is the code book for interpreting his life. He knew other theologies thoroughly, but he was a Lutheran theologian. He knew many philosophies inside and out, but it was the Gospel which explained everything truly important. He has been a modern man conversant with modern literature, science, technology, organization, etc., but has kept it all under critical review from the point of view of the truth as he knows it in Jesus, the Christ and that as found in the *Confessio Augustana*, which is the heart of the Augustana Heritage.

In his chapel homilies he frequently used the Psalms which combine the intimacy of prayer with the exaltation of a sovereign God and as often expressed deep, passionate moral indignation against the inhumanities, inanities and disobedience of humankind. To close the worship he would most frequently use "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to the only wise God - be honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen" He spoke with authority, from an Authority, both Gospel & Law.

"...[Conrad Bergendoff] has kept it all under critical review from the point of view of the truth as he knows it in Jesus, the Christ..."

Dr. Bergendoff's history of Augustana College is entitled, *Augustana, a Profession of Faith*. A few brief quotations from his last report to the college community will define what is meant by calling Augustana's history a profession of faith. He begins by asking the rhetorical question, What is a university? He then quotes the president of one of our great universities writing in "The Key Reporter," a Phi Beta Kappa publication, who said of the university, "...it knows no established doctrines, accepts no ordained patterns of behavior, acknowledges no truth as given." Bergendoff acknowledges the freedom of any university president to so conceive his university, but goes on "...if church colleges explain their role as universities in this way, I believe they forfeit their right to be called Christian colleges...For how can one be a Christian and "know no established doctrine...and acknowledge no truth as given." He goes on, "in reality, however, no such institution exists." Then with dramatic and telling effect he quotes that university's position vis-a-vis communism---"as an institution we have pledged our opposition to the threats of international communism and we have promised ourselves to refuse it our fellowship. This is our unequivocal position." He exposes the hypocrisy of their self definition.

If the *Confessio Augustana* is the code book or grammar for properly understanding and living the faith, the truth about life, the unique character of the ecclesiological transformation in Sweden from Catholicism to Lutheranism gave birth to the specific idiom in which Swedish Lutheranism expressed itself. There are important differences in Swedish Lutheranism from the way Lutheranism developed in Germany, and U.S. Lutheranism has had no more

authoritative interpreter of those differences than Conrad Bergendoff whose PhD theses was published by Macmillan in 1928, *Olavus Petri and the Ecclesiastical Transformation in Sweden, 1521-1552, a Study in the Swedish Reformation*. Some of those differences are as follows: (1) Instruction from elementary through university education was a function of the church, not the state; (2) Luther's concept of the calling entered into Swedish piety more so than elsewhere; (3) Its corollary, the folk church, maintained that the faith of the congregation is to express itself in the total life of the community, giving the Swedish church a higher degree of involvement in civil life than developed in central Europe; and (4) In Sweden the church maintained relative independence from political control avoiding the German *cuius regio ejus religio* and developed a tradition which one bishop described as follows, "If the magistrate has wanted to do what he ought not do, the clergy has held the magistrate in check..." What lies behind all of these specific Swedish Lutheran expressions of *Confessio Augustana* is a drive, a faith, thought and life. Conrad Bergendoff has been an outspoken exponent for keeping theology integrated with other disciplines both in theological education and college education.

"... an endowed professorship in missions with the aim that all things might be united in Christ, honors Dr. Bergendoff and our Swedish Augustana Forebears."

In his final report to the college, Dr. Bergendoff cited "as one of the most significant events during my presidency the conversation which has been going on over the past three years between members of the faculty as a result of a grant from the Lilly Foundation." It was my privilege, along with Dean Betsy Brodahl, to coordinate those discussions to study "the relationship of the humanities, the natural sciences, the social studies, music and art, religion and philosophy, to the truth that is given in Christ." The idea and format for these discussions for interpenetration and integration of disciplines came from Dr. Bergendoff and were but one more expression of how the Swedish passion for keeping

things integrated found in the *ecclesiastical transformation in Sweden* has worked its way into American academic life.

Is this passion, drive, and force for interpenetration and integration of ideas, institutions, and peoples a thing of the past, a non-relevant tradition in a post modern, pluralistic, multicultural society, or is the blessed rage for truth and order both an enduring aspect of what it means to be human and what a society needs to survive and prosper? I happen to believe it belongs to the human mind and spirit and is the thrust of God's Holy Spirit upon us. It is the Holy Spirit who interpenetrates all things, and bears witness to the Lordship of Christ who also inspires all missionary efforts at home and abroad, to the end that every knee will bow, every principality acknowledge and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That passion has been at the heart of the Swedish Augustana Heritage in America, and thus, an endowed professorship in missions with the aim that all things might be united in Christ, honors Dr. Bergendoff and our Swedish Augustana Forebears. It keeps a lantern lighted, the Faith of our Fathers living still, showing the way for next steps.

Conrad Bergendoff as Churchman

by Glenn C. Stone

To speak of Conrad Bergendoff as churchman, one must begin with his years as parish pastor. It is sometimes forgotten that his long and immensely influential ministry began where the Augustana Synod insisted all ordained ministry must begin—as pastor of a congregation. For 10 years (1921-31), he served Salem Church on the South Side of Chicago as its beloved shepherd, one in a long series of distinguished pastors to lead that parish.

It happens that he was *my* pastor. I was born three years before his term as Salem's pastor came to an end with his call to become Dean of Augustana Seminary. So, of course, I do not remember him as pastor, but my parents certainly remembered him and his wife Gertrude with much respect and affection and remained their lifelong friends. They often spoke of events of his ministry at Salem. Those were pivotal years in the life of that congregation, the second oldest Augustana parish in Chicago, now almost 130 years old.

For more than 50 years, Salem had served in an historic Swedish neighborhood about two miles south of the loop. But in that post-World War I era, upwardly mobile Swedes were rapidly moving farther south, many of them to the rapidly developing Park Manor/Grand Crossing community. Salem was still a distinctly Swedish-American church; the new residents in the old neighborhood were predominantly Slavic Roman Catholics—not a fertile field in which to “stay and serve the community,” as one might have said in a later era. So it was Conrad Bergendoff's task to guide the parish in a move to follow its members to a new location.

My father, Rudolph B. Stone, had been a student in a class taught by Bergendoff at Augustana College. When he moved Chicago in 1923, he sought out the parish of his former teacher. My parents, upon their marriage in 1924, settled in Salem's new neighborhood.

As I write I am looking at a large framed photograph of the Salem Sunday School made in 1928. A couple of hundred children, accompanied by their teachers, smile and squint at the camera. Most of them appear to be blondes, though the hair of most of the girls and women is obscured by their cloche hats. My father, who was superintendent, rests on one knee, with arms folded, at front row right. I see dozens of faces I recognize 68 years later, with names like Anderson, Carlstedt, Dahlgren, Olson and Westerberg. There is Carl Bergendoff, Conrad's brother, and Arthur Nelson, his brother-in-law. Behind the group looms the bulk of the still-new Salem church building, with its brick Nordic Gothic architecture, arched carved stone portal, and the word SALEM boldly incised in limestone above. And at right rear there is a youngish face, protruding from clerical collar, with a hint of a smile, hair parted toward the middle, eyes clear and intelligent between crinkled lids. It is a face instantly recognizable in three other photos of Conrad Bergendoff before me, one from his mid-life, another made shortly after his retirement, a third at age 85.

All of this speaks eloquently of the successful “ecclesiastical transition” (to adapt a phrase) of Salem congregation under its young pastor, from old neighborhood to new, from Swedish to (primarily) English, from immigrant to (mostly) native-born. It also speaks of the conservation of tradition in a new setting. What it cannot tell is the quality and content of the

“... the quality and content of the preaching and teaching that sounded from this pulpit . . . when Salem faced another time of transition, it did in fact decide to “stay and serve the community.””

preaching and teaching that sounded from this pulpit and reached the ears and hearts of these children and adults. Testimony to the latter may well be found in the fact that, a generation later, when Salem faced another time of transition, it did in fact decide to "stay and serve the community."

Conrad Bergendoff's churchmanship was to be played out on a wider field than the parish. He taught theology to a generation of pastors who emerged from Augustana Seminary in the 1930s and '40s. He guided the "transformation" of Augustana Seminary itself—first as dean, then as president—with a reconfigured faculty and a new approach to traditional Lutheran theology—to be sure, still linked at many points to Swedish and other European models. It is one of the great regrets of my life that the much controverted separation between Augustana College and the seminary took place in the very year I entered the seminary, so I never got to sit under Bergendoff as a teacher and almost never heard him preach.

As a theologian, Bergendoff's specialty has been church history, though he certainly also made important contributions as a systematician. That's appropriate, for I think it fair to say that church history was the theological strength of the Augustana Synod. Its first published theologian was Erik Norelius, historian, and it gave birth to top flight historical scholars like Sydney Ahlstrom and George Lindbeck.

That historical grounding of theology meant that Bergendoff as theologian was never far removed from the Church. His thought is not purely speculative or "spiritual." Nor, for all his creative effort to relate theology to human life and culture, was he ever tempted by the "secular theology" that sounded its siren song so insistently in this century during which he has lived. Though a strong pacifist and a believer in the Church's social role, he could never be called an advocate of a "social gospel."

Dr. Bergendoff's theological development was, by his own estimate, strongly influenced by studies in 1917-19 at Mt. Airy Seminary in Philadelphia. In an interview 15 years ago, he told me that it was Charles Jacobs of that faculty who "gave me a new view of the meaning of church history." He also cited the impact of Henry Eyster Jacobs, Theodore Schmauk and Luther D. Reed. That "Eastern point of view," he said, "complemented what I had grown up with in the Middle West" and "helped to shape the direction in which I thought to deepen my own knowledge." It was they, he said, who pointed him toward the study of Luther, first in English, then in German, which has been a major aspect of his scholarship. He was the translator of Volume 40 of the American Edition of *Luther's Works*.

These contacts with the "Philadelphia" tradition of the General Council (of which the Synod was then a member) can rightly be credited with Augustana's decision during the 1950's to join the merger which formed the Lutheran Church in America, rather than the parallel merger into The American Lutheran Church. Bergendoff was the one who led the theological battle to tilt Augustana toward the United Lutheran Church, itself an heir of the old General Council. And he was a major Augustana spokesman in the subsequent negotiations leading to the merger of 1962.

Bergendoff's friendship with Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom is well known. That association began during Söderblom's 1923 visit to America. For many years, a tree planted by him grew outside Salem Church in Chicago, identified by a bronze plaque. The Archbishop invited the young Swedish-American pastor to study in Sweden. There he also served as Söderblom's private secretary and accompanied him to ecumenical events, culminating in the 1925 "Life and Work" conference in Stockholm, held under Söderblom's patronage. The Uppsala theologian's leadership in the views on ecumenism were greatly

influential for Bergendoff, who in turn helped shape Augustana's engagement in the ecumenical movement. This aspect of his churchmanship really deserves more treatment than I can give it here.

It is impressive how abiding are the contributions of this man, even a full third of a century after his "retirement." During the past year alone, I've had occasion to consult three of his books—all historical in nature: his 1928 dissertation on Olavus Petri, cited in Louis Almen's essay, his one volume history of Lutheranism, "The Church of the Lutheran Reformation" (1967) and his detailed compilation of lives and ministries of the 2,504 pastors who served in Augustana between 1850 and 1962, "The Augustana Ministerium" (1980). I suspect that many of the readers of *Augustana Heritage Newsletter* have often had occasion to consult the latter volume. The book of Olavus held an honored place in our home, and I treasure the inscription with which their pastor presented it to my parents.

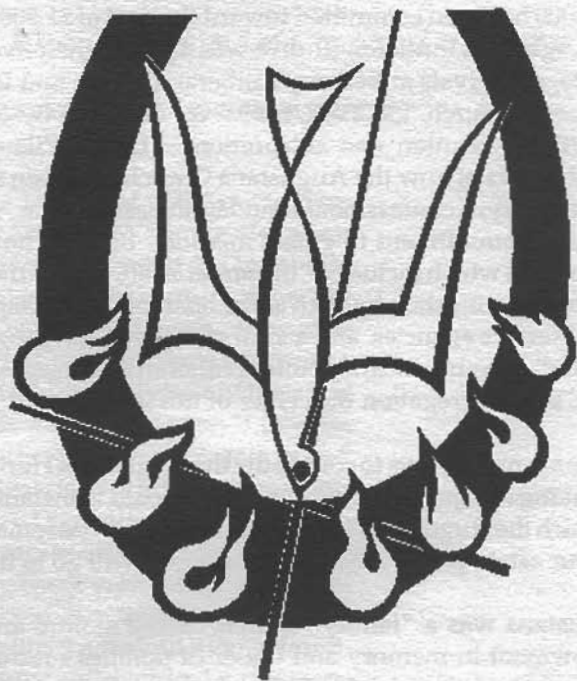
Conrad Bergendoff's own favorite among his voluminous writings, he told me in 1980, is "Christ As Authority," published at the time of the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1954. It's a book that seems to grow out of so much in his own background and that of the Augustana Church, illuminating questions of Biblical authority, Christian unity, ecclesiology, ecumenism and piety. For Bergendoff's academic theology is not divorced from the churchly piety which was an Augustana hallmark.

Bergendoff's churchmanship also extended to the liturgical area. While not widely known as a liturgical scholar, his citation of Luther D. Reed as an important influence in his thinking points to his interest in the liturgy. He was a member of Augustana's liturgy commission and on its behalf wrote a pamphlet on "Our Attitude Toward Liturgical Innovations."

He represented the Synod in the Joint Commission on the Liturgy which produced the Service Book and Hymnal of 1958. Perhaps his most abiding contribution to the latter was his enlisting of organist/composer Regina Fryxell to develop the second musical setting of the Service in the SBH, much of it based on Swedish sources. Some of us believe that was the finest liturgical music ever published in American Lutheranism. It was, in turn, a major source for the third setting in the Lutheran Book of Worship.

Like my colleagues in this issue of *Augustana Heritage Newsletter*, I have had to confine this review of Bergendoff as a churchman to a few of those areas where, either directly or indirectly, I have known him best. One obvious area of his churchmanship, of which I know very little, is his role as a member of a parish. He has belonged to St. John's in Rock Island for more than 60 years; I suspect that those who have served as pastors and lay members of that congregation could tell us stories well worth hearing.

I still wish that, historian that Conrad Bergendoff is, he had undertaken to write an autobiography. When I raised the possibility in my conversation with him in 1980, he



demurred. With typical modesty, he said something like this: If my life is worth writing about, others will have to do it. He also cautioned against the view that living a long life necessarily means that one has achieved supreme wisdom.

Let me conclude with an incident back at Salem Church in Chicago. Ten years after he left for Rock Island, Dr. Bergendoff returned to preach at the funeral of Grace Lindberg, beloved organist/choir director of the parish, who had joined the staff during his incumbency. His sermon, which again was reported by my parents, included a quotation of the poem, "The Lost Chord," by Adelaide Proctor (set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan.) Those were the days when using poetry in a sermon was still acceptable. (It's interesting that a memorial service for the victims of the TWA Flight 800 disaster included poems by Dickinson and Dorne; perhaps poetry still works at funerals.) I cite the fact here to underscore that the scholar and administrator could and did reach the heartstrings of common people. Imagine that impact on a full congregation (people went to funerals in those days!) of that final line, "It may be that only in heaven I shall hear that grand Amen!" Conrad Bergendoff's story has not been, like that of the narrator of "The Lost Chord," one in which "fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys." Yet it has, in its multiple strands, surely "struck one chord of music like the sound of a great Amen." For many of us that chord has been, in many and various ways, encouragement on our heavenward journey.

The Augustana Heritage Endowment - An Update

The endowment for Augustana Heritage Professorship for Global Mission is growing. As of June 30, 1996 over \$750,000 has been committed toward the goal of \$1,500,000. Graduates of Augustana Seminary and many for whom the Augustana Lutheran Church was a part of their lives are helping to make the professorship a reality. Augustana Heritage Festivals at Bethany Lutheran Church and Bethany College, Lindsborg, KS, and at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN were attended by over 1100 people. These events were occasions for worship, reflection, reunion and celebration. David Vikner '44, preacher at the Lindsborg gathering reminded the worshippers of how the Augustana Church's pietism is rooted in the spiritual renewal movement in Sweden in the 19th century; a confessional foundation based in the Augsburg Confessions; an ecumenical confessionalism and a strong commitment to global mission. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom '58, at the St. Paul event recalled the gifts of Augustana which included "the imperishable seed - the enduring Word of God"; "a confessional commitment which points to justification by faith as the heart of the message of the Bible"; "a church in mission" pointing to the hospitals, social service agencies and a vital global mission program; "a church that spoke out" on sensitive issues; "a bridge builder" in ecumenical and inter Lutheran relationships, "a leader in pioneering youth ministry" and "a church that made the congregation the center of mission."

There are many ways to contribute the Augustana Heritage Endowment: 1. By becoming a sponsor with a gift of \$500; 2. Making a major gift commitment to be paid in installments over as many as five years; 3. Invest in a life income plan in which the Augustana Heritage Endowment has remainder interest; 4. Include the Augustana Heritage Endowment in your estate plans. All undesignate gifts will go to the endowment of the the professorship.

Augustana was a "family" church. Some alumni and friends are considering a gift to the Augustana Heritage Endowment in memory and honor of families - recalling several generations who were a part of the Augustana Lutheran tradition. An Augustana Heritage Room will be established at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago which will list the names of all sponsors to the Heritage Endowment including the names of families. Others are considering gifts in honor of congregations, institutions, agencies and programs of the Augustana Lutheran Church. Please use the enclosed card to indicate how you wish to make your gift. All gifts will honor the past and undergird the support of future leaders of the church of Jesus Christ.

Conrad Bergendoff as Ecumenist

by Byron Swanson

Conrad Bergendoff, churchman, theologian, professor and president is also a committed and enthusiastic ecumenist—not an easy task given the era into which he was born. For a deeper understanding of Bergendoff's great contributions as an ecumenical leader, it is helpful to begin in the year 1910. That was the date traditionally accepted as the beginning of the modern "Ecumenical Movement." At the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference that year Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, reported to his readers that "the theme of Christian unity is running throughout the whole conference like a subterranean stream. It breaks through the ground of any subject the conference may be considering and bubbles on the surface for a time. It is almost the exception for a speaker to sit down without deploring our divisions. The missionaries are literally plaintive in their appeal that the church of Christ reestablish her long lost unity." The ecumenical movement had begun. It was "the great new fact of our era." The year 1910 was also the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Augustana Lutheran Church. In two memorial volumes of essays published for that Jubilee year, Augustana was reminded again and again of its confessional beginnings and heritage. Typical of the essays was one written by Augustana's president, Eric Norelius, who repeatedly praised the church for its confessional convictions, warning against any compromise or distortion of the confessions by engaging in practices such as unionism (i.e. fellowship of Lutherans with others not in complete doctrinal agreement.) A third significant event in 1910 was Conrad Bergendoff's confirmation, marking the beginning of his adult ecclesiastical membership in the Augustana Lutheran Church. Right from the beginning, then, whether he was aware of it or not, Bergendoff would be forced to deal with a basic question which would concern him for the rest of his life: can Lutherans be true to their confessional heritage and at the same time participate in ecumenical endeavors?

The warnings from Norelius and other 50th anniversary essayists made it clear that Augustana, like all of American Lutheranism in 1910, was not receptive to ecumenism. The major reason, made evident in the quote from Norelius, was the concern for confessional integrity. While Augustana's confessionalism was not as rigid as some, through its membership in the General Council, it did insist that the articles of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession "were statements of truth. . . in perfect accordance with the Canonical Scriptures," and they were to be accepted "without equivocation or mental reservation." All of the other confessions of the Lutheran Church were also declared to be "pure and scriptural statements of doctrine." In addition, because of their fear of unionism, Augustana adopted the defensive Galesburg Rule which insisted on "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only-Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only." Augustana's confessional position, like most of the rest of American Lutheranism at this time, has often been described as "scholastic confessionalism." Dogmatic, polemic, absolutistic and defensive in its claim of pure doctrine or orthodoxy, it represented an overwhelming obstacle that stood in the way of ecumenical involvement. There were other factors, of course, that also kept Augustana and the rest of American Lutheranism from jumping on the ecumenical bandwagon. Language barriers, preoccupation with the assimilation of immigrants, and internal strife over ethnic, cultural, linguistic, personal and doctrinal differences, had splintered American Lutheran into 24 separate bodies by 1910. Bergendoff was now a member of one of those bodies. Two years earlier, in 1908, his Augustana Church had rejected an invitation to join the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Then in 1910, it had disregarded an invitation to participate in the Edinburgh Missionary conference.

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And one year later, in 1911, Augustana repudiated the invitation to attend the first conference on faith and order. For the young Bergendoff it must have seemed impossible to be Lutheran and ecumenical at the same time!

But there were latent forces in Augustana and American Lutheranism Bergendoff was exposed to that had the potential of making the "impossible," possible. The language problem and the problem of assimilating immigrants would diminish in the next few decades. Even Augustana's position of "scholastic confessionalism," a deeper and much more persistent problem, was being challenged. One of the checks against this position was the warm and earnest "Augustana" pietism that permeated Bergendoff's father. Pietism, by seeking to be right with God—rather than right in doctrine—tended to minimize theology and thus weakened the dogmatic and uncompromising stance of orthodoxy.

But an even greater challenge to "scholastic confessionalism" was Bergendoff's exposure to Luther whose emphasis on the gospel—i.e., the good news of the forgiveness of sins, freely received from a gracious and living God—was the core of his theology. This was Luther's "unitive principle," viz, that Jesus Christ and his grace gave the church its unity, and those who did not teach this doctrine were guilty of separating themselves from the church, thus creating sects and schisms. The desire for unity was also clearly evident in the ironic and conciliatory Augsburg confession which stated quite simply that "for the unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel." And even the more scholarly, defensive and polemic Lutheran confessions retained this emphasis on the gospel of God's grace, calling it their "material principle" and proclaiming it "the chief article of the entire

Christian doctrine." This understanding of the confessions can rightly be called "evangelical confessionalism" and one who is committed to it can freely unite with others of any faith who accept this basic principle. "Scholastic confessionalists," from the 17th century on, had not abandoned the gospel's insistence on justification by grace. But they did obscure it and the place it was given in their systems tended to make it simply one doctrine among many. Thus the church which had adopted the name of Martin Luther was in danger of losing the dynamic central emphasis of Luther on trust and faith in a merciful God—and substituting instead, static knowledge and dogmatic, absolutistic and polemic claims about that God. But the "danger" for Bergendoff was nearly non-existent! Introduced to Luther through his father, the Small Catechism had been his standard textbook in Sunday school and confirmation and in his early teens he had committed it to memory. In 1915, during his senior year at

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Augustana College, he bought and read the first volume of the *Works of Martin Luther*. And two years later, in 1917, during the Luther quadricentennial, he read more Luther, including three books about the reformer by Bohmer, Jacobs and Kostlin. His doctoral dissertation in 1928 was on the Reformation in Sweden, in 1930 he wrote a book on the Augsburg Confession as a part of its quadricentennial, and in 1958 he edited and translated volume 40 of *Luther's Works*. But most revealing of all perhaps, was what he did in 1930 when he was appointed Dean of Augustana Seminary and professor of systematic theology. For 40 years this position had been held by C.E. Lindberg whose position of "scholastic confessionalism" was

clearly set forth in his text on *Christian Dogmatics*. Lindberg's attempt to uncompromisingly preserve the "pure doctrine" of 17th century orthodoxy had isolated him for the most part from both Luther and contemporary thought. And because his courses and text were in Swedish (and remained so until the year after Bergendoff had graduated from the seminary), the effect was to isolate and separate rather than unite and communicate with the rest of the Christian world. Under Bergendoff, however, the scholastic approach was discontinued. As Bergendoff later mused: ("how ludicrous to define God.") instead students were assigned lengthy readings in Luther (whose works became the focus of the course) and in the process they were introduced to "evangelical confessionalism." Bergendoff's students also read Gustav Aulen's grace centered and anti-scholastic *Faith of the Christian Church*, as well as many non-Lutheran authors, including Karl Barth.

There were other latent forces at work in the life of Bergendoff—especially in his younger and more formative years—that helped give him an "evangelical confessional" outlook and an openness to the ecumenical movement. Bergendoff was a serious student of the Bible and not surprisingly, the Bible is an inescapable witness of God's love and mercy for humankind, and of the expectation that having been loved, humans will express love and acceptance toward each other. While working at New York's Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church in 1917-1918, he took seven new Testament courses at the interdenominational Bible Teachers Training School (today's New York Theological Seminary), and without any conscious effort to do so, memorized the Gospels of Matthew and John. Additional Bible courses at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (1918-1919) and at Augustana Seminary (1919-1921) certainly would have increased his awareness of the Bible's frequent ecumenical themes. Still another factor that contributed to Bergendoff's appreciation of Christian unity was the missionary movement. The ecumenical movement grew out of the missionary movement as was overwhelmingly illustrated in Edinburgh in 1910. Bergendoff was elected president of the college and seminary "Foreign Missionary Society" and saw the membership swell from 12 to 2000 and the giving increase from \$20 to \$9,000 in three semesters. Bergendoff's leadership of the FMS and the sponsorship by the FMS of a "Young People's Christian Conference" which brought together over 4500 youth from throughout the Augustana Synod has remained as "one of the great memories" of the seminary days. But even more significant for this essay was the understanding that Bergendoff articulated that the "hope of the world was not an absolutistic Swedish-Lutheran brand of scholastic orthodoxy," but simply "the bringing of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations."

There were of course many other factors that helped open ecumenical doors and weaken the barriers established by "scholastic confessionalism." During his last two years in college Bergendoff served as reported and then as treasurer of the Augustana Prohibition League, delivered an oration supporting prohibition, and presented a paper on the subject. His concern was consistent with that of the Augustana Synod at that time but also allied him with groups such as the Federal Council of Churches. Thus (although perhaps unconsciously) another link was established with Christians outside the Lutheran Church. Inevitably, links were also made by the very fact that during his formative years Bergendoff lived in three of the major metropolitan areas in the country. After graduating from Augustana college he enrolled for a year of graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (1915-1916). then he went to New York for two years to work at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, do more graduate study at Columbia University and take classes at the Bible Teachers Training School (1917-1918). Then he returned to Philadelphia for a year of study at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (1918-1919), and finally, after graduating from Augustana Seminary he moved to Chicago to serve Salem Lutheran church for nine years (1921-1930). These major population centers threw him into contact with many

new cultures and new ideas, speed up the Americanization process, and made exposure to and appreciation of other non-Lutheran Christians much more likely.

Only one more ecumenical influence in Bergendoff's life will be mentioned, but it is probably the most important of all. Until the second decade of the 20th century Augustana had, for the most part, embraced a "scholastic confessional" and non-ecumenical stance. There were however, a few among the leaders in the church who were exceptions as they demonstrated some sympathy toward other denominations. Among them were Lars P. Esbjorn (especially in his early years), T.N. Hasselquist (an influence on Bergendoff's father), Olof Olsson (accused of heresy because he was the least scholastic and the most ecumenical of all the men in the Augustana Church in the 19th century. He befriended Bergendoff's father and according to Conrad Bergendoff, Olsson was the greatest influence in Bergendoff's father's life), and S.G. Youngert (one of Conrad Bergendoff's professors at Augustana Seminary).

But it was Nathan Soderblom, the archbishop of the church of Sweden, who without a doubt made the greatest ecumenical impact on Conrad Bergendoff. Soderblom was already being called "pioneer" and "prophet" of Christian unity and after his death it was claimed that he would "stand out as the man who did more than any other . . . to unite . . . churches, national and communions in a common fellowship." Thus when Soderblom came to the United States in 1923 he was given a cold reception by American Lutherans who for the most part were still anchored in scholastic confessionalism and opposed to unionism. Soderblom's mission therefore was to try to bring these Lutherans into the ecumenical movement and encourage them and (of course) the many ecumenists in this country to participate in his world ecumenical conference in Stockholm in 1925. His problem: the Lutherans were antagonistic because he was so ecumenical. (Thus to Lutherans he stressed his Lutheranism). But this made the ecumenists antagonistic because he spent so much time with the anti-ecumenical Lutherans. One of those Lutherans that he met who was not anti-ecumenical was Conrad Bergendoff. Bergendoff knew enough about Soderblom to have positive feelings for the archbishop. He had read Soderblom's book on Luther, *Humor & Melancholy*, on his honeymoon (!) and he appreciated Soderblom's love of Luther, his evangelical outlook, his freedom from scholastic defensiveness, his concern for missions (Soderblom had also been president of the missionary society when he was a student at Uppsala University), his pietistic background, his scholarly achievements, and his almost irresistible personal charm which Bergendoff described as "overwhelming." But at this time in his life, Bergendoff was not quite ready to call himself an ecumenist. That happened three years later in 1926 when Bergendoff was finally able to take time to accept an invitation from Soderblom to come to Sweden and among other things, serve as his secretary at a meeting of the Continuation Committee that had been formed to follow through on the Stockholm Conference of 1925. At the meeting Bergendoff met some of the world's foremost ecumenical leaders, but even more important Bergendoff saw ecumenicity at work. Bitterness and hatred from World War I still divided the Germans and the English and the French. But although "unspeakably difficult" the parties were able to make "sacrifices on both sides," seek forgiveness of sin, and achieve reconciliation! For Bergendoff, this was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Years later he confided that it was his "own introduction to the ecumenical movement." And "the inspiration of those days," he continued, "has never left me."

If there is such a thing as an ecumenical personality or nature, Bergendoff would certainly be the prototype. Even if there had been no influences (such as Soderblom) pulling him in this direction, Bergendoff's make-up alone would seem to make him a perfect candidate for ecumenical leadership. Being kind, generous, thoughtful, open-minded, even tempered, tactful, accepting of others, optimistic, objective, honest and ironic—all of these things so essential in ecumenical relationships—are just simply a part of who Conrad Bergendoff is

and has been. One of the best examples of this is found in an article he wrote for the student journal of the Missouri Synod's Concordia Seminary in 1961. The title, "A Letter to the Missouri Synod from One of Its Admirers," says much about Bergendoff's kind and generous ecumenical nature. He began by sincerely and honestly praising Missouri for its many strengths. Then, two pages later, he discussed tactfully, but with honesty again, some of the differences he had with Missouri:

We differ, it is claimed, on a wider plane, in our recognition of each other as Christians. We are 'unionists,' and that is a cause for your keeping away from us. You don't like our membership in the World Council or the National Council of Churches. You hold yourself aloof from the Lutheran World Federation and the National Lutheran Council, implying there is something wrong in this kind of fellowship (Bergendoff, of course, was involved in all of these organizations.) . . . I can understand your thesis that we must not compromise our confession by worshipping with those who are not committed Christians. But for almost forty years I have had some connection with the ecumenical movement, and in all faith. . . This has made me wonder and think . . . When I confess I believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church, I am speaking of a communion that embraces all believers, and the Lutheran churches have been slow, even reluctant, to draw the conclusions of this confession. When I refuse to have anything to do with other Christians, I am not thereby defending more perfectly my faith—I am denying one of the cardinal points of my faith. . . I cannot escape the thought that drawing a confessional curtain between ourselves and all other Christians is a sign of weakness. . . There is an art of Christian cooperation which we Lutherans yet practice poorly.

To correct the "poor practice" of Christian cooperation among Lutherans, Bergendoff devoted the rest of his life to ecumenical involvement. In addition to the organizations noted in the previous paragraph, Bergendoff was active and influential in comity talks between Augustana and the Episcopal Church, in Augustana's merger into the LCA, and in authoring several books (and chapters in books) that had unity as their theme. Honors from Roman Catholics and other varied sources have also acknowledged Bergendoff's ecumenical leadership. Six years after his "admiring" (quoted above) letter with its challenge to the Missouri Synod, Missouri's Concordia Seminary gave Bergendoff an honorary degree partly to recognize the fact that he was an "outstanding leader in inter-Lutheran and ecumenical approach."

So how does one describe the ecumenical contribution that Bergendoff has been able to make? Bergendoff—most often through the persuasively quiet channels of pen and speech (rather than through ecclesiastical office)—significantly helped liberate Augustana and elements of American Lutheranism from its scholastic bonds. And positively he has stressed the doctrine of justification by grace which has made it possible for many Lutherans in America to celebrate a oneness in Christ with all other Christians who share the same gospel of God's love.

A Personal Note from the Author:

I cannot close without expressing my profound appreciation to "Dr. B" for all he added to my life. My years at Augustana College during Bergendoff's tenure as president were life changing for me—as was the opportunity later to get to know him as a person, an ecumenist and a wonderful, grace-filled human being. Graciously he worked with me on my dissertation which dealt with the ongoing tension between confessionalism and ecumenism, and generously opened incredible doors for me in Sweden. He introduced me to the life and works of Sweden's inspiring archbishop, Nathan Söderblom, and again my life was deeply and forever changed. I am grateful! I'm certain my experience has been replicated in thousands of other lives on a world wide scale. Dr. B—what expansive gifts you have given to us all!

The Collection of Memoirs and Essays of the Augustana Lutheran Church

The Augustana Lutheran Church has a significant place in the life of American Lutheranism. Now is an important time to gather reflections and remembrances of Augustana for historical and archival purposes. The **Augustana Heritage Newsletter** is a means for gathering "eyewitness" accounts of this material.

Louis Almen '50 and Glenn Stone '53 have agreed to serve as *editorial advisors* of the **Augustana Heritage Newsletter**. They will assist in determining the focus and content of the newsletter. Material for the newsletter will come from reflections and memories of the Augustana Lutheran Church written by alumni of Augustana Seminary and laity who were members of the Augustana Lutheran Church. A **Collection of Memoirs and Essays of the Augustana Lutheran Church** has been established in the library at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The writings will serve as archival material about the Augustana Lutheran Church.

The reflection papers may include a wide variety of topics and themes including aspects of parish ministry and parish life; events such as Bible camp, district and conferences meetings, special emphasis such as youth ministry, Luther League, world missions, social ministry agencies and institutions, worship and music, church colleges, Women's Missionary Society, Lutheran Brotherhood etc.; personalities of the Augustana Lutheran Church; anecdotal material and other insights including the contributions of Augustana to the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America today. The length of each paper is to be determined by the writer. Copy for future issues of the **Newsletter** will include reflections as well as the names of all those who have submitted reflection papers. In addition, writers are invited to include information about publications - books, articles, translations, edited books or journals which will be included as information in the **Collection of Memoirs and Essays of the Augustana Lutheran Church**. If copies of this material are available, please include them with the reflections.

Please consider this your invitation to contribute to the history of the church that gave us deep roots of faith and an opportunity to share your insights with present and future generations.

Please send your material to Donovan J. Palmquist, 10940 57th Ave. N., Plymouth, MN 55442 Phone 612 559 5944; Fax 612 559 4526.

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