

The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America

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Norway until scientific medicine all but ended the practice of bleeding. But not so fast. Plastic surgeons have recently found that “leeches facilitate the circulation of blood through transplanted tissues in a way that is unequalled and often impossible by other means. The anticoagulant in their saliva keeps the blood from clotting, while other components dilate the blood vessels and provide antibiotic and anesthetic effects” (208). In her closing chapter Stokker presents 14 pages of home remedies she has collected through the years from American correspondents and her students at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. This book proves that mature scholarship can also be “a good read.”

The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America, by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008. x, 390 pp. Illustrations, sidebars, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$29.00 paper.

Reviewer L. DeAne Lagerquist is professor of religion at St. Olaf College. She is the author of *In America the Men Milk the Cows: Factors of Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion in the Americanization of Norwegian-American Women* (1991).

Commissioned by the Augustana Heritage Association, *The Augustana Story* was written by professional historians deeply rooted in that tradition. Its interest to those personally connected to Augustana is obvious: they will find the names of family and friends, read the stories of beloved institutions, and be reminded of a rich ethos and history. But those readers should be warned that this is not merely the narrative equivalent of a family scrapbook or an anniversary commemoration brochure. The book deserves a larger and more various audience than such a volume attracts. By placing the story of the Augustana Synod (1860–1962) within and in conversation with other Lutheran and American stories, Maria Erling and Mark Granquist illuminate several shared themes of American history and current life as they recount the major story of their book. Readers learn here about the distinctive ways Swedish Lutherans faced challenges familiar to those of many other immigrant groups. Readers also become acquainted with a specific type of American Lutheranism and with its internal variety. The narrative’s lively description and carefully selected details go far beyond one-dimensional, paper-doll portrayals of Swedish American Lutherans. Here readers encounter individuals and institutions, a people and their culture in a robust account of their church and its life over a century.

Beginning in the introduction, the authors contend that internal cohesiveness, mission mindedness, and “a strong sense of the broader church” were distinctive to Augustana and its gifts to the larger Lu-

theran community. Their book goes a long way toward making their case in an irenic tone. Personal relationships nurtured at the synod's colleges and single seminary fostered Augustana's ethos; that is well documented here. The focus on Augustana, rather than on the entire range of Swedish American churches, makes the argument for institutional continuity. Augustana's position in the spectrum of Lutheran doctrine and piety in the United States gave it a particular mediating role in cooperative ventures and twentieth-century mergers; that is less central to the book, but clearly told.

The book is organized into four chronological parts and 20 thematic chapters. The authors split responsibility for chapters, allowing each to draw on prior research and expertise. Although the seams between their work are not visible, the strategy yields some repetition, which is more instructive than distracting. The volume contains an admirable interweaving of social, cultural, and theological concerns. Its concerns range from congregational life to negotiations over church polity. Topics such as assimilation, music, and women's ordination are treated in sidebar-like, self-contained sections varying in length from a paragraph to a few pages. Photographs interspersed throughout the text help readers visualize the times and the people: for example, Emmy Evald and the Women's Missionary Society Board in 1916, a group of mid-twentieth-century youth at a summer conference, and American and Swedish church leaders in clerical garb at an ecumenical gathering. Some, but not all, of the topical sections are included in the table of contents; there is no list of illustrations. An index allows readers to trace subplots or accounts of specific enterprises, such as foreign missions. The ten tables in the appendix give ready access to data such as membership statistics, founding dates of schools, and the Synod's presidents. The suggestions for reading section points toward primary and interpretive works concerned with the narrow subject of the book; reference notes reveal a wider range of archival, historical, and contemporary sources.

Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America, by Philip J. Pauly. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. xi, 336 p. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Lori Vermaas is an independent scholar. She is the author of *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture* (2003).

When historians study "culture," many intend high culture, the canonical arts, whose interpretation often depends on a constellation of cultural theories that largely eschew the empirical. But Philip J. Pauly, who died in April 2008, found its agricultural meaning much richer and