IMMIGRATION AS A FACTOR IN THE
DIVISION OF THE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION
by Terry M. Heisey

Arthur M. Schlesinger counted the last quarter of the nineteenth century a critical period in American religion. "Perhaps at no time in its American development has the path of Christianity been so sorely beset with pitfalls and perils" as in the tumultuous Gilded Age. Among these pitfalls and perils were higher criticism, Darwinism, and urbanization, but intimately connected with and, in a sense, basic to all the rest was a challenge as old as religion in America, immigration. Not only did immigrant churches of differing nationalities clash, but rival factions and generations within each church differed violently over adaptation to the American religious scene.

Degree of accommodation to the new land and its ways separated successive generations of immigrants from each other so effectively that they often could not co-exist under the same denominational roof. The partially Americanized descendants of former immigrations were "essentially alien" from their European-born brethren. Specifically, the arrival of four and a half million Germans in America between 1850 and 1900 splintered and transformed American Lutheranism and Judaism and shook even the Roman Catholic church to its very foundations. "In no wise . . . related to the German arrivals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," these new German arrivals of

the latter nineteenth century were, in fact, often contemptuous of their forerunners' rejection of German culture. They put up a conscious and determined resistance to the "inferior American culture" surrounding them by using the German language, the German press, German schools, and even German churches as bulwarks against the encroachment of Americanism. \(^5\) Given this mentality, conflict was almost inevitable when they joined German denominations organized in the eighteenth century and fused into the American mainstream by the fires of the Revolution.

The various branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church, being overwhelmingly Anglo-American, could avoid the full disruptive force of the German flood. Even the Church of the United Brethren in Christ escaped these frictions by limiting its witness to the Americanized descendents of earlier German immigrants. \(^6\) However, the Evangelical Association (Evangelische Gemeinschaft) after its first English language work ended in the Hamilton schism of 1830 committed itself to converting the German immigrants in their own language. \(^7\) "Remaining far more German than the United Brethren, Evangelicals felt the full impact of the tremendous surge of German immigration in the middle decades of the nineteenth century." At first stunned by the blow, they rallied and were soon locked in successful combat "with the forces which threatened to all but extinguish them." \(^8\) Soon churches and conferences spread from the German neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Baltimore through the German belt in the Midwest to the Pacific coast. Yet, with triumph came stresses that would result in schism before the century had run its course.

The unfortunate schism which divided the Evangelical Association between 1887 and 1894 has never been attributed to a single cause. Various authors have emphasized the personal, polity, and theological levels of the controversy. Nor will this article ascribe the division solely to the strains of immigration. However, the "language problem," the German-American dichotomy, did underlay and intensify all the other levels of dispute, compounding their poisonous effects on the body of the Evangelical Association.

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The Personal Rivalry

On one level, schism in the Evangelical Association grew out of the bitter personal rivalry between the clique headed by Bishops J.J. Esher and Thomas Bowman, who were related by marriage, and the faction led by Bishop Rudolf Dubs and the Reverend H.B. Hartzler, editor of the denomination's English language weekly, *The Evangelical Messenger*. Historians have noted elsewhere that "church divisions have often been the result of personal ambition on the part of leaders," or, to put it more bluntly, "as long as from three to ten men want to ride one horse, and all want to ride in front, there will be trouble, and so in church matters this is always, or nearly always, the case that from some cause, usually jealousy, the bitterest quarrels come from the leaders."  

Bishop Esher proclaimed Bishop Dubs the trouble-maker whose election was the cause of all strife, while the Dubsites declared "with one voice J.J. Esher to be the cause of the division of our church."  

In a sense both were correct. Whether or not Bishop Dubs was elected to the episcopal office in 1875 expressly to contain, or "put down," Bishop Esher as his opponents charged, he embarked immediately on a course of increasingly strident opposition to his senior colleague. Finally, in 1879 the rivalry and ill-will were exposed for all the world to see when the General Conference appointed Bishop Dubs and the Reverend D.B. Byers a committee to represent the Association at the Ecumenical Conference of Methodist Bodies in London. The Board of Bishops, meeting on October 5, 1880, voted, in the words of its secretary, Bishop Dubs, to include Bishop Bowman and the Rev. H. Hintze of the Germany Conference as additional delegates. However, Bishop Esher declared Bowman and Hintze the only delegates to the conference and sent a bitter letter to the conference organizer in London denouncing Dubs and Byers as imposters. Bishop Dubs, in turn, protested to the conference that Bishop Esher had no right to appoint delegates, and the resulting antagonism was such that the next General Conference (1883) refused to re-elect any of the bishops unless they could reach an amicable settlement. Under this pressure both bishops submitted apologies and assured the Conference that all difficulties had been settled. In reality, this was not the end of strife but

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the beginning.

Disagreement over the conduct of the Evangelical mission in Japan resulted in Bishop Esher and Editor Hartzler preferring charges of misconduct against each other at the General Conference of 1887. The Bishop's high-handed dismissal of a resolution signed by 41 of the 104 delegates protesting his narrow acquittal and the Editor's narrow conviction further enraged his opponents, who refused to sign the Minutes of the Conference. The Dubs-Hartzler faction then founded its own church weekly, *The Evangelical*, and the mud slinging began in earnest. With each side hurling epithets like "seditious," "evil," "device of Satan, the arch-traducer," "tyrant," "Popish," and "work of the evil one," bitter partisanship surged. Finally, friends of Bishop Esher with his son as legal counsel tried Bishop Dubs on February 18, 1890, under conditions which led the *Cleveland Leader* to label the affair "about as gross an outrage as an ecclesiastical court could be guilty of," and found him guilty of falsehood and failure to prove himself innocent of evil rumors in circulation for many years touching his chastity and purity. In retaliation, ministers of the opposing (minority) faction tried Bishops Esher and Bowman and not surprisingly found them guilty of other charges. Division of the church followed when those Annual Conferences dominated by the anti-Esher faction refused in accordance with the Discipline to allow suspended Bishops Esher and Bowman to preside and were thereupon declared illegal by these men. The resulting legal battles made establishment of the United Evangelical Church by the minority unavoidable. Thus, some have blamed the division of the Evangelical Association on personal rivalries.

**The Dispute Over Polity**

However, Bishop Esher was really more odious to his opponents as a symbol than as a person. In "Our Church Trouble, A Statement by the So-Called Minority in the Evangelical Association" the anti-Esher faction claimed to object only to Bishop Esher's "high church prelatical views" and authoritarian rule. On another level, then, the division was between the Esherite forces of law and order and the minority champions of individual rights. Each faction claimed to have Right on its side. Presiding Elder, and later United Evangelical

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13John Schneider, *et. al.*, "Our Church Trouble, A Statement by the So-Called Minority in the Evangelical Association..." (Harrisburg, Pa., Evangelical Co., 1891), pp. 2-6.
Bishop, W. F. Heil saw clearly that "those people on both sides of this controversy" for whom it was "a question of like and dislike for persons" had "not thought deeply on the subject of our trouble. It is a question of right and wrong, and while right is not altogether on one side, we are convinced there is much more right on the 'minority' side than anywhere else. It is conscience over expediency. Let us stand for CONSCIENCE."14 "It is a minority that have stood in the van of every moral conflict, and achieved all that is noble in the history of the world."15

These ministers of the Minority were not radicals trying to overthrow the episcopate but rather heirs to a democratic strain in the Association which had for eighty years worked to temper the authoritarianism of its German Lutheran founder and its Methodist Episcopal structure. For thirty-one years after Albright's death the Association had not elected a bishop, and while Majority historian Reuben Yeakel attributed this hiatus to a universal fear of the great responsibility of the office, Minority leader Ammon Stapleton saw instead a universal apprehension "that the office would be perverted to the injury of the society."16 It is a fact that the General Conference of 1830, even while the episcopal office was still vacant, placed limitations on the appointive powers of the bishop, deleted the form for separate ordination of a bishop from the Discipline, and limited the bishop's term to eight years.17 Further, an attempt in 1851 to increase the episcopal powers was soundly defeated because, to quote the official report, "the less power in the hands of the Bishop, it was thought, the safer for the society in the future." Four years later Bishop Long opposed the initial election of J.J. Esher, warning that "you must remember, first of all, that when you vote power to men, they will use it. This may do, as long as you have Bishop Seybert and myself in office, but you will get men who will use all the powers you give them, and not always for the best interests of the church."18

Yet, Esher was elected in 1855, and each succeeding quadrennium saw increasing centralization and episcopal authority in the face of continuing opposition from the democratic minority. Bishop Esher and his supporters saw the bishops as generals leading the army of God against the infidel. As such, discipline was of "inexpressible im-

17Albright, A History of the Evangelical Church, p. 174.
18Stapleton, op. cit., pp. 300, 558.
portance to the prosperity of the church," and no minister had any "liberty" to preach error or deviate "a hair's breadth from the Discipline." In contrast, the ministers of the Minority considered themselves as standing "as high in the sacred order of the ministry" as the bishops themselves. They demanded the freedom to protest an "ecclesiatical despotism unparalleled in the history of Protestant Christianity," while denouncing the equal representation on church boards of miniscule Esherite conferences like Texas (6 ministers, 300 members) with minority conferences like East Pennsylvania (105 ministers, 17,000 members). For them the Discipline stood for the rule of law as against one-man Episcopal tyranny.

Given this dichotomy, some students of the division have traced it to a dispute over polity. They cite analogous schisms in the Methodist Episcopal Church from Hammett's secession through O'Kelly's Republican Methodist Church, to the separation of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830. Even the great schism of 1844 was viewed by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South as basically a dispute over polity. "Methodist episcopacy has been the traditional storm center of the whole Methodist organization . . . partly by reason of an ambiguity involving its origin and powers, but more because of the exercise of these powers themselves."

Yet, the polity issue was not alone sufficient to split asunder the ante-bellum Methodist Episcopal Church. Rather, slavery and sectional loyalties divided the Methodists into rival factions which battled for control of the church and finally separated over the issue of polity. Similar forces may have been at work to bring about the division in the Evangelical Association. If so, what was it that divided the Evangelicals into rival factions whose struggle for power led to separation on the issue of polity? Surely, personal antagonisms played a part. Theological differences also helped to divide the Association, for the Esherite majority always suspected the orthodoxy of their opponents on the doctrine of complete sanctification, or Christian perfection.

20Lucere, op. cit., p. 18.
The Dispute Over Doctrine

The Association had inherited Wesley’s belief that at some point after conversion the true child of God reached a point of perfection, complete holiness, wherein sin had no hold. However, in 1857 Presiding Elder Solomon Neitz of the East Pennsylvania Conference published a pamphlet, “Christian Sanctification in Accordance with the Apostolic Doctrine,” in which he declared that no matter how good a Christian became he still had to resist the temptation to sin throughout his life. For this the Rev. W.W. Orwig secured his condemnation at the General Conference of 1859 and was consequently elected bishop. However, the Rev. T.T. Clewell was elected editor of the Evangelical Messenger at the same conference, and he and Neitz used the church paper to support their heretical views.24 Four years later, Neitz and his supporters had their revenge when they accomplished the unprecedented feat of denying Bishop Orwig reelection. They were, nonetheless, not strong enough to elect Neitz to the episcopacy, and when J.J. Esher was elected by the orthodox party he “along with the episcopal office inherited the ill will of Neitz and his followers” in Pennsylvania.25

So, it now appears that the personality and polity conflicts were mere outgrowths of a basic difference between factions of the Evangelical Association on the theological issue of Christian perfection. Clewell, Neitz, and their heretical views were thoroughly discredited over the next decade, so their faction had to accept champions of unimpeachable orthodoxy, Jacob Hartzler and Rudolf Dubs, but the Minority never forgave Bishop Esher and behind a facade of conformity continued its attack on the more acceptable issue of episcopal tyranny. In the words of Ralph Kendall Schwab, the “controversy over the doctrine of Christian perfection from 1857 to 1875 was the ax that started the cleft in the log of church solidarity, but personal ambitions and questions of church authority and polity were the wedges that completed the split.”26

Unfortunately, even this picture, as complex as it is, does not explain the division of the Evangelical Association. Ammon Stapleton found in 1900 that of living contributors to the Association’s orthodox holiness organ, The Living Epistle, two-thirds were with the Minority, and that while Minority leader Dubs had been prominent in the fight against heresy, Majority leader Bowman had been completely silent.27 Even Schwab conceded that “no one can say that it was differences

26 Ibid., p. 89.
27 Stapleton, op. cit., p. 572.
over entire sanctification that finally split the Evangelical Association of 1875 into two churches by 1894. The split did not occur because of doctrinal differences, for orthodox and irregular thinkers about entire sanctification were to be found in both groups."\textsuperscript{28}

The Association did not divide into orthodox and irregular camps, which then went to battle over the issue of polity. The theological issue was dead long before the schism. We must look elsewhere for the most basic cause of the division, the fundamental reason why one section of the Association sought out strong (and quarrelsome) leaders and fought for its minority rights against the autocratic leaders of the rival faction. If both sides were equally orthodox, then just what distinguished the Minority from the Majority? If Bishop Dubs was not the magnet that held the anti-Esher group together, then what did?

The Esherites characterized their opponents as "a lot of disappointed office-seekers and soreheads belching forth invectives, and personal epithets, and heretofore unthinkable ugly aspersions upon Bishop Esher, including also Bishop Bowman . . . If things were reversed and they possessed the offices, neither man, woman, or child would hear the slightest note of protest against anything; but, mark you, then there would be a revelation of ecclesiastical tyranny of the first order."\textsuperscript{29} Yet this still begs the question, why were they, the ministers of the Minority?

Germans Versus Americans

I would submit that they were the English-speaking, American-born, Pennsylvania-oriented core of the Evangelical Association, descended from its German-American founders but four, five, even six generations removed from their European heritage. They fought for democracy in the church because their few Annual Conferences carried less weight in the councils of the church than did the many small German conferences in the West. Like all minorities, they tried to limit what they could not control.\textsuperscript{30} Similarly, they opposed Bishop Esher because of his autocratic rule and high church views but also because he was German-born:

\ldots that he was a western man was not the only offense to this nativistic element, but that he happened to have been born on the other side of the Atlantic, although he came to this country when but seven years of age, was a still greater offense. For this reason, and because he was elected in preference to Rev. S. Neitz, who was the leader and especial favorite of the faction in the East, Bishop

\textsuperscript{28}Schwab, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 85, 88.
\textsuperscript{30}The imbalance in conferences is detailed in B. H. Niebel, "Some Comparisons," \textit{The Evangelical}, December 17, 1890, p. 401.
Esher was much disliked and opposed by them from the beginning of his episcopacy.  

The Evangelical Association was born in central Pennsylvania and always remained strongest there. Until 1887 all of its bishops, except Esher and Dubs, were born in Pennsylvania, all the editors of the Evangelical Messenger, with one exception, were from Pennsylvania, and a majority of the General Conference sessions were held there. In fact, for the first fifty years of the Association all the members of the General Conference were, with but few exceptions, Pennsylvanians either by residence or by birth. When the Association spread west it did so by sending circuit riders to keep in touch with members as they moved to the frontier. "The Evangelical Association, being of distinctively American origin, felt deeply the influence of American institutions and spirit," even as the Pennsylvania Germans, having assimilated with their English neighbors, were becoming a "new and distinct Germanic people, differing widely in many respects from the typical native of the Fatherland." 

Natives of the Fatherland, however, were converted in large numbers and soon controlled the conferences of the Midwest and Plains, even as the Pennsylvania Germans were abandoning the German tongue. Thus were the seeds of division sown.

In all bilingual communities there appears at one time or another a language question; the mother tongue is not just a neutral code used in communication which may easily be exchanged for another when the situation demands the way one switches from letter dialing to number dialing on the telephone. It is a means of group identification, the symbol of cultural unity and uniqueness of a people, the very manifestation of the spirit of a nation, in nineteenth-century Europe the central concept, the very core of national consciousness.

This "language problem" quickly wreaked havoc in denominations with a sizable German-American component from the Mennonites to the Catholics. That the German-Americans and Pennsylvania Germans in the Evangelical Association were able to remain united as long as they did is truly remarkable, attributable only to a common commitment to Methodist methods and genuine individual piety. The Evangelicals,

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31Thomas Bowman, Historical Review of the Disturbance in the Evangelical Association (Cleveland: Thomas & Mattill, 1894), p. 5.
32Ibid., pp. 1-2.
33Roy B. Leedy, The Evangelical Church in Ohio (Cleveland: Ohio Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1959), p. 117; Stapleton, op. cit., p. 135.
German and American, saw themselves as a uniquely spiritual people, set apart by godliness. To quote Bishop Bowman, "There is no apology for our existence as a separate church unless we continue to remain a holy, spiritual people," free from the superficiality and ecclesiasticism that is an eternal disgrace to church and pastor. Together Germans and Americans in the Evangelical Association championed total abstinence and the sanctity of the Sabbath while other German-Americans denounced these as Puritan invasions of their individual rights.

Eventually, however, total commitment became less than total, the flame of the Spirit burned low, and the differences between the German-American Evangelicals of the Midwest and the Americanized Pennsylvania Germans of the Association's heartland became more pronounced.

Most changes in a religious body do not come about by decisions of local congregations, nor of councils. Such changes are generally recorded, but comparatively speaking, those recorded are very few. In most cases, changes are gradual, just a slight difference here and a slight difference there, until a radical change is the result.

"The nineteenth century German immigrant coming to the Midwest bore the indelible stamp of certain conditions and developments that made him very different from the German immigrant to Pennsylvania 150 years before," and gradually this difference divided the church.

On the one hand, the German-Americans felt threatened by the "inevitable and natural tendency" of English to replace the German language in the Association. They demanded separate, all-German conferences in 1875, vowing to leave the church if refused. The Pennsylvania Germans objected, but three new conferences, Iowa, Erie, and Atlantic, were created so that the German-born would not have to endure minority status in any Annual Conference. Even though the Association was two-thirds German-speaking at the time of the schism, the German-Americans were complaining to the last of the "forcing" of English on

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38 Chimenhaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280; in several editorials S. P. Spreng explicitly ascribed the "crisis" to a decline in piety, see: "'Is there not a Cause?'" *Evangelical Messenger*, March 25, 1890, p. 184, and "The Need of the Hour," *Evangelical Messenger*, June 24, 1890, p. 392.


their children and the establishment of English Sunday Schools where German Schools existed.41

On the other hand, the Pennsylvania Germans and their allies in the Midwest saw the church of their fathers increasingly corrupted by foreign influences from Europe. Their “highest aim” was “the constant and courageous defense of the old landmarks of truth and love which our fathers have set.”42 While Esherites branded their opponents rebels and exhorted “every true son and daughter of the church” to “muster under the old flag,”43 Dubs and the Pennsylvania Germans vowed to “remain faithful to the old-time and well-tried Evangelical principles” precisely by not bowing to the “perfected papacy” of Esher’s Germans.44

The trunk of the Evangelical tree is not Esherism. The oldest and largest conferences ought to know whether Esherism is Evangelical or not. They very emphatically say NO! Pennsylvania will stay faithfully on the foundations laid by our fathers in the early part of the nineteenth century.45

Each side accused the other of subversion.

Similarly, each side accused the other of prejudice. The Majority claimed that the Pennsylvanians “assiduously cultivated the idea that the Church having had her origin in Pennsylvania ought, therefore, to be controlled by Pennsylvanians, and that especially persons of foreign birth should be compelled to retire to the rear.”46

Has it not been the watchword all along the lines here in the East that our present difficulties are simply a conflict between the German and the English? One of the principle and at the same time most bigoted and narrow minded and excited leaders of the revolt said sometime ago to a friend of mine, who asked him, “Why, what has Bishop Bowman done to you that you should be so bitterly opposed to him?” answered, “Nothing at all. I am not fighting Bishop Bowman, but those Germans out there.” Rev. C.S. Haman sent word to one of our good staunch loyal brethren at Slatington, Pa., that he was surprised to hear that he should “stand by the Dutch!”

Such facts could be quoted *ad infinitum*.  

In turn the Minority accused the Esherites of playing on the prejudices of their German-American supporters. They had “for years been doing their utmost to prejudice the minds of the German people against the English by telling them we Englishmen wanted to ‘down the Germans,’ and crush out their language,” and thereby created much deep-seated antagonism and hatred against the Pennsylvania Germans which should have been aimed at Esherite tyranny.

Both sides were probably correct, for it was a time when both ethnic and nativist feelings ran high. American fears of European radicals, religions, and races following the Haymarket riot became full-blown xenophobia, while church leaders began to demand restrictions on immigration. Here are the “Facts of Immigration” as revealed in an article reprinted from the *Christian Intelligencer* by Editor H.R. Hartzler in the *Evangelical Messenger* in 1887:

> A hostile army quietly landed on these shores last year . . . Some are people of intelligence and good character . . . but the number is large of those who are a very undesirable, troublesome and injurious addition to the population. They are enemies of the church, the Bible, the Sabbath, of virtue, industry and thrift. They have come here to engage, whenever it may be possible, in endeavors to overturn the existing social order, to put an end to individual ownership of property, and to threaten nearly everything the wise and good hold dear.

To make matters worse, this “evil leaven” of immigration was the main prop of the hated liquor industry. “Had it not been for the enormous foreign immigration during all these years -- had the increase in population been due to the natural excess of births over deaths -- rum today would be banished from the greater portion, if not all, of the United States.” Instead, these foreigners made the cities into “the strongholds of the rum power” and spread unspeakable vice in their wake. With nativist sentiment such as this among the Minority and the ethnic touchiness of the German-American Majority unity became impossible.

Of course, the rivalry between German-Americans and Pennsylvania Germans was not the sole cause of the schism. The United Evangelical Church was not totally English-speaking; neither was the truncated Evangelical Association completely German. There were too many cross currents in the murky waters of the Association for such a clear-cut

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distinction. Esher's home conference, Illinois, is a case in point. Here, exactly one half of the itinerant ministers were born in Germany, and about two-thirds of the members were German-speaking.\(^5\) It should have supported the Majority. Instead, it was won over to the opposition as early as 1877 through Esher's heavy-handed attempts at silencing all criticism of himself at the Union Biblical Institute (later Northwestern College) in Naperville, Illinois.\(^3\) Conversely, Annual Conferences like Indiana and Michigan with substantial English-speaking membership were retained by the Majority through a combination of parliamentary skill and church loyalty but suffered heavy losses to the United Evangelical Church on an unofficial basis.\(^4\)

Nevertheless, there are significant and identifiable differences between those Annual Conferences which sided with the Minority (the United Evangelical Church) and those which remained in the Evangelical Association with respect to language and ministers' national origin. For instance, all the ministers of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, which voted unanimously with the Minority, were born in the United States; the members of Esherite conferences were, on the contrary, forty-four per cent (Michigan), seventy-five per cent (Minnesota), and even one hundred per cent (Dakota) foreign-born.\(^5\) Further, the severed Evangelical Association elected a native of Prussia to replace the deposed Bishop Dubs, while the United Evangelical Church chose a native of Nazareth, Pa., to succeed the deposed Bishop Esher. Of course, the distinction is, once again, not clear-cut. Both the Majority leader (Esher) and the Minority leader (Dubs) were born in Germany. Yet, to contemporary observers there was a difference even here. While Esher was considered by his opponents to be partial to his German countrymen and both ignorant and intolerant of the "nature and spirit of the original people of the Evangelical Association" in Pennsylvania, Dubs was "thoroughly American," a man who understood the East.\(^6\)

Even more conclusive is the comparison of English versus German-


\(^{54}\) Stapleton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 588, 608.


speaking church members as reflected in subscriptions within each conference to the two denominational papers, the *Evangelical Messenger* and *Der Christliche Botschafter*, in 1887 on the eve of the schism.

**Subscriptions to Church Papers by Conference, 1887**

(Minority conferences capitalized)

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The basic difference between the Majority and the Minority thus becomes apparent. With the exception of Illinois, which was a special case as described above, *every* Annual Conference with an English-speaking majority sided with the Minority; conversely, *every* Annual Conference with a German-speaking majority voted to remain with the Esherite Majority.

**Comparisons**

To repeat, the German-American versus Pennsylvania German conflict was not the sole cause of the schism of the Evangelical Association. As we have seen, personal animosity, polity disputes, and the dregs of past theological controversies all served to intensify a basic weakness in the Association. Indeed, the Evangelical Association’s sister

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denomination, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, contained almost no German-speaking members, and yet it too suffered division in 1889. However, there were real differences between these two divisions which, in fact, serve to highlight the impact of immigration on the division of the Evangelical Association.

The divisive issues in the United Brethren Church were limited to theology and polity, on which identifiably conservative and liberal coalitions emerged, unwarped by the stress of cultural loyalties. In the Evangelical Association the Minority was generally progressive; it had supported Neitz’s theological innovations in the 1860’s and championed a democratic church polity with lay representation. Yet, they were also ambiguously conservative, intent on preserving the church of their fathers from foreign innovations. In the United Brethren Church there was no such equivocacy. During the 1870’s and 1880’s an avowedly liberal element gained control of the church, softening its stand against secret societies and supporting a new democratic church constitution with lay representation. The conservatives, in control only ten years before, found themselves hopelessly outnumbered by the 1880’s.58

Under the leadership of Bishop Milton Wright (father of Wilbur and Orville), who had been elected as a bulwark against secret societies, they established a church paper called the Christian Conservator and fought the new constitution, which they considered illegal, tooth and nail.59 After the new constitution was overwhelmingly approved by the church membership in November, 1888, and ratified by the General Conference and proclaimed by the Board of Bishops at York, Pa., in 1889, Bishop Wright and fourteen of the twenty delegates who had voted against the constitution withdrew from the General Conference. Like the Philadelphia Conference of the Evangelical Association two years later, they proclaimed themselves the only legal General Conference under the only legal (i.e. original) constitution and so separated from the church.

However, whereas the division of the Evangelical Association was a 3-2 split of major proportions, the United Brethren in Christ Church (Old Constitution) affected no more than ten to fifteen per cent of the denomination as a whole. Without the added allurement of nativistic bias the conservative idealists of the United Brethren Church simply could not attract a large following.

Again, the effect of language and cultural loyalties becomes even clearer when we look at the United Evangelical Church a generation later. By 1910 many of the original protagonists in the separation had

died or retired. More importantly, with the peak years of German immigration several decades in the past most of the German-born members of the Evangelical Association had also died, taking with them the fundamental reason for the division. Young people in many of the Evangelical Association churches, where the German language was used extensively, went over to United Evangelical churches, where English was used. With the conflicting personalities dead, theological issues past history, and the Evangelical Association forced to allow its laymen many of the rights won in the United Evangelical Church, persons of good will in both denominations came to believe that the differences separating them were not sufficient to keep the “spiritual sons of Albright divided.” Accordingly, negotiations were begun and finally presented to the General Conference of the United Evangelical Church meeting in York, Pa., in 1918. Unfortunately, an influenza epidemic cut the Conference short, and the matter was placed in the hands of a commission without a clear-cut declaration of procedure to be followed. Consequently, the East Pennsylvania Conference, where cultural loyalty still ran deep, refused to approve the resulting Basis of Union, claiming that the document had first to be approved by the General Conference before it could be submitted to the Annual Conferences. The conferences of the Midwest, where the first World War had accelerated the Americanization of the German-Americans in the Evangelical Association until there was little difference between the two churches, approved the Basis of Union, however, and forced a vote of approval through the General Conference of 1922. The East Pennsylvania Conference decided to abstain from the merger and with supporters in the other conferences formed the Evangelical Congregational Church. 60

Once again there was a division which cannot be attributed to recent immigration. However, once again the seceders comprised only a small minority (20-25% of the United Evangelical Church). They were led by an idealist, Bishop W.F. Heil, who it will be remembered had called the original division a matter of CONSCIENCE, and founded on a legal technicality. It is more significant that, with the divisive forces of immigration out of the way, the common ties were again strong enough to unite the “spiritual sons of Albright.” The democratic dissidents (23,000) amounted to less than ten per cent of the reunited Evangelical Church (260,000).

Conclusion

Every community of any size has its small percentage of idealists, for whom even the thought of compromise is intolerable. The democratic minority of the Evangelical Association had its share of these, and

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possibly they, like their counterparts in the United Brethren Church, would have been able to effect a schism in the Evangelical Association, even had that church never opened its doors to the massive German immigration of the nineteenth century. We cannot say that the tension between nativist and German cultural loyalties within the Association led inexorably to its division, that separation would not have occurred in the absence of these tensions. However, for most of the Minority public denunciations of the "vile tyrant Esher," the personal and polity issues intertwined, had their roots in an often unacknowledged or denied prejudice against the German-born Majority further west. This Americanized Pennsylvania-based camp found its first rallying point in a denunciation of Christian perfection. When this position was found to be unpopular, they chose the German-born Dubs to confront German-American leader Esher personally, and used each of Esher's clumsy attempts to silence them as evidence of tyranny. Soon, they had themselves believing that they were fighting for democracy in the church, but they could never have accomplished the cleavage of 1894 had not the church already been divided along the lines of language and culture.