CONGREGATIONAL! EVANGELICAL! WESLEYAN?:
THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 1922-1950

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I

On October 14, 1922, the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church united to become the Evangelical Church. With near unanimity in the former and nine of ten conferences in the United Evangelical Church, the division of 1894 was closed. The East Pennsylvania Conference and pockets of opposition from Ohio and Illinois argued that the exclusion of four articles of faith from the United Evangelical Church’s doctrinal statement, and a somewhat weak statement of the rights of the Annual over the General Conference, made union uncertain. When the General Conference voted October 9, 1922 to approve the Basis of Union, East Pennsylvania was excused from the vote. Five days later the union was completed. East Pennsylvania, following Bishop William Heil, remained out of the merger, joined by churches from Western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois. This group kept the name United Evangelical Church (UEC). This choice was the source of continuing debate until 1928 when the name Evangelical Congregational Church (ECC) was selected.

II

Although the ECC had severed its relationship with the Evangelical Church, its sense of identity remained intact. The persuasion that it held the traditions and doctrine of the Evangelical Association as embodied in the UEC (1894–1922) was very strong. If anything, the new Evangelical Church was seen to have arbitrarily severed some of the ties of doctrine. One source described the ECC as the continuation of the Evangelical Association tradition and the Evangelical Church as the new entity with a new polity, and new Discipline.¹ The more democratic elements of the church of Jacob Albright were retained in the ECC, they believed.

Carried into the life of the church, soon to be called ECC, was a lasting memory of sometimes bitter litigation, loss of properties with a value far beyond material worth, and the alienation of Christian brothers and sisters. The ECC would take careful steps to see that denominational interests could not infringe on local ownership of properties. That is the meaning of “Congregational” in the Church’s name. A confusing term if it is used to

¹United Evangelical (February 13, 1923): 6. Hereafter UE. This was the ECC periodical.
describe ECC polity, which was episcopal in terms of the appointment of the ministry, it gave to the local church final control over ownership and disposition of property.

The identity of “Evangelical” was drawn from its continuing linkage to the “Albright people” and the doctrines and orders of the Evangelical Association founded by Albright.

III

Like the United Evangelical Church of 1894–1922, the ECC conceived itself as a democratic fellowship. Bishop Woodring’s episcopal address at the General Conference (1934) confirmed the centrality of lay representation. Every charge was assured a lay delegate at annual conference. Itinerant clergy were also given voting privileges.

General conferences met quadrennially to elect a single bishop, who might be elected to a second term if he were adjudged godly in character and conduct. In legislative matters, the General Conference was subservient to the Annual Conference. The church was initially divided into two conferences with several districts in the East Pennsylvania Conference and one in the West. The West was known as the Ohio Conference until 1933.

In 1931, the Illinois District, part of East Pennsylvania, affiliated with the Ohio Conference. In 1933, the Ohio Conference took the name Western Conference, which included seventeen churches.

East Pennsylvania Conference was comprised of about 136 churches dividing usually into three districts, Allentown, Reading, and Harrisburg, consistent with prior United Evangelical patterns.

If the conference structure was democratic, the appointment of pastors reflects episcopal polity. The bishop and the presiding elders made appointments based on their own sense of church needs and episcopal wisdom, under their sense of divine leadership. Pastors and their families came to the last day of annual conference in “fear and trembling,” knowing that they might soon be located in inner city Chicago or Philadelphia, or out in the country, in the coal regions or the plains of Western Illinois. Conventional wisdom suggested that a new parish would mean an improved financial picture for the pastor. Experience taught the uprooted families the pain of leaving friends at church and school in mid-year.

IV

The safeguards created by the ECC to prevent a recurrence of 1894 losses, did not solve the problems of Albright College. In 1895, most of the students and faculty of Schuylkill Seminary, Fredericksburg, had moved twelve miles into Myerstown. The School established there was soon named Albright College which continued in the borough until 1929. It served the East Pennsylvania, Central Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh conferences of the
With the oncoming merger, a debate was initiated concerning the best location for the college. The deeper question centered on the legal rights of trustees from the East Pennsylvania Conference (of the continuing UEC). They won the first round in court. The judge of the Lebanon County Court gave them legal right to elect Albright trustees. His decision was based on the UEC discipline and the irregular process of merger as interpreted through that discipline. An appeal resulted in the same decision, but in 1927, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania reversed the lower courts, affirming the legality of the merger.

In consequence, the East Pennsylvania Conference, the cradle of the church, again experienced loss of property, including Albright College. The debate continued regarding the location of the college. Should it remain in Myerstown or be located in Harrisburg or Reading? The leadership of the college seemed to believe that a significant building program could be the pivotal point on which the decision might turn. A $175,000 addition to the “Old Main” gave Albright a lovely chapel, a large dining room and two floors of dormitory rooms.

The hopes of the Myerstown proponents were finally dashed when the college closed and moved to Reading in 1929.

The major leader of the ECC during the transition years was W. F. Heil. Elected bishop of the UEC in 1902, he served three four-year terms from 1902–1910 and 1918–1922. After the ECC was formed, he was elected as bishop for one term, declining to serve a second. A prominent member of the merger committee from the UEC, he had given support to the Basis of Union in order, as he later explained, to allow a full hearing by the conferences. Because his vote in the union negotiations had been affirmative, his later opposition at annual conference level was roundly criticized. Considered by many to be an authoritarian figure, Heil’s supportive vote may be seen as democratic in intent, making conference action the primary focus of decision making.3

3 The Basis of Union had resolved that Albright merge with Schuylkill Seminary in Reading if feasible. Schuylkill had moved to Reading in 1902.

3 The Central Pennsylvania Conference had sought the college for the Harrisburg area, but could not produce enough funds in support. When it voted to approve Albright in Myerstown, it included a resolution that this was an interim stage until a location in a larger city could be found. See Gingrich and Barth, A History of Albright College (Reading: Albright College, 1956), 422–23.

4 In 1920, Heil spoke to the issue. He had believed that the move toward union was premature, but supported union whenever it was in the best interests of the two churches. Some folk held him responsible for movement toward union while others considered him the cause of postponement. He called upon the conference to prayerfully consider “the advantages and, if there are any, the disadvantages of union.” East Pennsylvania Journal (1920), 39. The tone of Bishop Heil’s message here is decidedly irenic.
Although Bishop Heil served until 1926, the voices of C. H. Mengel and E. S. Woodring, both General conference delegates in 1922, were being heard more widely. Woodring became bishop in 1926. Many activities deserving notice were in process. For example, in 1921, Woodring founded the School of Methods as a conference for youth. A summer Bible conference primarily for pastors and for junior preachers (ministers in training) started in 1923. Mission relationships were established with the China Inland Mission and the Christian Missionary Alliance Church.

In 1926 the Burd and Rogers Benevolent Care Home was begun near Herndon camp meeting. C. H. Mengel was president of the Board. The home moved to Myerstown in 1961. Other important ministries included the continuation of camp meetings at Waldheim Park (Allentown) with its unique mushroom tabernacle built in 1907, and at Herndon, and Rosedale in Reading.

When prospective ministers entered the ranks of the licensed, they soon met the formidable examiners and the four-year course of study. Among the books to be read were Jowett's *The Passion for Souls*, Binney's *Theological Compend*, Curtis' *Theology*, Broadus' *Homiletics*, and Terry's *Hermeneutics*. (Terry was the author of the doctrinal articles adopted in 1894 by the UEC). Sermons were to be written on justification, Christian perfection and baptism. Of interest is the requirement of Borden Parker Bowne's *Ethics*. Bowne was a Boston University professor, a true liberal in theology.5

In 1926, E. S. Woodring, who had served as presiding elder of the Harrisburg District was elected bishop. Educated at Moody Bible Institute in 1894, he received the B.A. (1894) and the M.A. (1897) from Muhlenberg College.6 A conference itinerant by 1903, Woodring's tenure was shaped by the evident intelligence of the founder of the School of Methods (1921). His conference reports reflect a spirited response to the union ("an unholy determination to force union upon an unwilling people"), and a recognition of the mixed emotions it left in its wake ("hard feeling," "splendid spirit of forbearance").

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5Bowne based his philosophy on "the ultimate significance of personality" surely far more in debt to liberalism than to evangelicalism insisting upon human freedom to the point where he undercuts the pervasive influence of sinful corruption in humanity. (See Robert Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism* (N.Y.: Abingdon, 1965), 135, n. 43, 35, 65.

In line with evangelical liberals, who loved the Scriptures but re-interpreted them in light of new philosophical and scientific theories, Curtis tended toward the optimism of nature. The E. C. Church has always stressed the optimism of grace. Yet Curtis continued to be required as long as 1963. (See *Journal* [1963].) Note: When *Journal* is used it refers to the East Pennsylvania Conference. Otherwise reference is to *Western Conference Journal* or *General Conference Journal*.

6*General Conference Journal* (1958), 64.

*Journal* (1923), 43.
Woodring’s most critical role, apart from the episcopacy, was his selection to chair the Conference delegation to the 1922 General Conference which voted on the Plan of Union. He carried the appeals of his conference to the General Conference and reported back to his conference November 14th at a special session in Bethlehem (Emmanuel). No bishop was present. In all of the sessions, Woodring’s gifts were recognized.

The East Pennsylvania delegates to the General Conference presented their petition that the United Evangelical Church might perpetuate its work, apart from the merged body. The request to make the merger non-binding on conferences and churches until these approved was not considered by the General Conference. In the end the East Pennsylvania claim that the merger was both irregular and illegal was rejected.

Bishop Woodring served the episcopacy from 1926–34, returned to the office of Presiding Elder, 1934–42, and closed his active service as pastor of Trinity Church (Allentown) in 1946. Trinity membership was 460, with Sunday School attendance at 279. Salary in his final year was $2,940. He died in 1957, in his 85th year, bishop and doctor of his beloved church. His obituary named him a “prince of preachers” who “held the lamp of Truth each day so low that none could miss the way; and yet so high, to bring in sight . . . the world’s great light.”

VIII

When Albright College departed for Reading in 1929, a campus of some 14 acres including an athletic field and at least six buildings remained. After failure to sell the campus in 1929, the Albright trustees sold the property to the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1932 for $25,000. In 1922, the north wing of Old Main had been added at a cost of $175,000. The property may have been worth $500,000 in 1932. Two factors may have entered into the sale price. One reason, as Gingrich and Barth suggest, “was the desire to erase some measure of bitterness in the ECC because of the fact that they had lost any claim to the college at Myerstown when they decided against joining in the merger of 1922.” A second factor in the low price was that the whole nation was being consumed by the Great Depression making money extremely scarce.

The master plan for the use of the campus included a publishing house, an orphanage, and education. Bishop Woodring recommended to the General Conference of 1934 that a religious training school could be started, to be succeeded gradually by a college and seminary.

The buildings of Albright received varied uses in the year ahead. The former Recitation Building became the location of a publishing house. Woodring called this, “including all of our interests at Myerstown,” “the Church Center.” In time the publishing house was named Church Center Press.

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9 Gingrich and Barth, History of Albright, 459.
In 1946, the General Conference moved toward development of a seminary. The East Pennsylvania Conference meeting in April had asked that should a seminary be considered, it might be located at Myerstown. The General Conference seemed to treat the establishment of the School as a done deed, although it used the terms “proposed Educational Institution.”

In 1950, the recommendation of the Education Committee that the church launch a seminary was adopted by the Seventh General Conference. Eleven trustees were named including Bishops Mengel and Smith, and the layman Lloyd Brownback.

Lloyd Brownback was a major influence in the development of the seminary, giving a memorable speech at the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1952. When the Annual Conference Committee on Education, citing the actions of the conference in 1950 and 1951, endorsed the seminary proposal, the conference defeated the report 32 to 31. A motion to reconsider was carried, whereupon Bishop Smith asked Brownback to give a layman’s point of view. In what he called “the most effective speech I ever made,” Brownback inspired the conference and the school’s future was assured. The seminary opened on September 22, 1953 with twelve students and four faculty. The third phase envisioned for Myerstown’s “Church Center” was in place.

IX

Charles H. Mengel became bishop-elect of the church in 1934. Along with Woodring, he was the influential leader of the church during years of international crisis. Mengel served the church from 1899 until his death in 1964. From the pastorate in Herndon to his election as presiding elder in 1922, and bishop in 1934, he represented a prominent voice for education and benevolence. He became the leader in 1926 for the development of Burd and Rogers Home.

As bishop, Mengel was keenly aware of the “moral confusion” of the time and general political and economic trends. Every Episcopal Address begins with comment about world conditions, war, economic difficulties, hunger, illiteracy. He called for a true “Christian Social Order instead of the hybrid system offered by unbelieving economic science.” The tragedy of war vexed his soul. “War is wholesale suicide and should receive the moral condemnation of the Church.” “Today we are witnesses of the most serious . . . satanic military aggression of all time.” The trend toward federal church union was condemned as well as local congregational independence.

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11 General Conference Journal (1946), 83.
14 Journal (1939), 40.
15 Journal (1940), 43.
Bishop Mengel held before the Church the purposes of the properties at Church Center. While the publications and benevolent care interests were progressing well, the Board of Education was one of "the weak links in the chain of our denominational organization."

X

From its beginning as the UEC, and in its continuing life as the ECC, concern for a church periodical had continued. To bind the churches into one fellowship and to expand the vision of the people beyond the local society was of critical import. The pages of the United Evangelical (hereafter UE) became the forum for teaching the church's faith, detailing its missionary activities, denominational programs, Sunday School lessons, Christian Endeavor topics and highlighting the personalities of pastors and laymen whose work was shaping the Church.

In 1923, the Fundamentalist–Modernist controversy was at its peak. The UE recognized the debate in articles by C. E. Unangst, pastor of Dixon, Illinois. "Fundamentalism stands for Apostolic Christianity in these latter days," he wrote. It would be a mistake to assume that the Fundamentalism would become the characteristic mood of the Church, but there were some tendencies in that direction.

Fundamentalism impacted the ECC in its doctrine of inerrancy. The ECC's Articles of Faith took the position of the English Reformation that Scripture is sufficient for salvation. The church had no doubt about that point, but wished to expand its doctrine to include inerrancy. The article on Scripture was never modified, but inerrancy was assumed.

The Bible Institute movement, a Fundamentalist creation, did not become the standard intellectual fount for ECC ministers. Although some were educated at Bible Institutes, most proceeded through the conference course of study. By the 1940's an increasing number graduated from liberal arts colleges, and attended such seminaries as Eastern Baptist, Moravian, Temple, and Princeton.

XI

The music of the church during these years ranged from the extensive use of gospel songs and hymns to serious choral music. The place of the church organ was assured with some excellent organists serving their churches, often for 30 to 40 years. Seibert, Allentown, had four in 71 years. Congregational singing was spirited. The hymn held the place of eminence, and gospel songs were treasured. Had not the church produced Elisha Albright Hoffman, son-in-law of W. W. Orwig, creator of "Down at the Cross

\[^{16}\text{UE (July 23, 1923), 2. See also UE (June 12, 1923), 12 and (July 3, 1923), 12.}\]
Where My Saviour Died,” “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,” and “I Must Tell Jesus”? Like Orwig, Hoffman taught a Wesleyan view of sanctification: “He cleansed my heart from all its sin, What a wonderful Savior,” reflects this view. The “Albright people” loved to sing, occasionally in “Pennsylvania Dutch” because they loved their Lord: “O how lovely is Jesus.” “O wie liebliche, Ist Jesu.” In 1930 the General Conference approved publication of a hymnal combining the Rodeheaver collection with the most popular hymns and gospel songs of the former “United Evangelical Hymnal.”

The ECC hymns placed particular focus upon evangelical hymns, songs, and choruses. Elisha Hoffman and H. B. Hartzler (“Hiding In the Rock”) are to be noted. The hymnal included forty-three choruses, especially for singing in revival meetings, formerly sung in “Dutch.”

XII

The important role of women in the church is obvious at every level in music, Christian education, Sunday Schools, benevolence, conference mission work, missionaries, children’s church, and more. The possibility that women might be used in ministry as pastors (“preachers in charge”) was subterranean.

In the Western Conference, however, may be found a rare exception. The unusual case of Amy Deck (Faust) details the struggle of the church in defining the place of women in ministry. Amy was licensed as a “minister” in 1930. In that year the minutes state: “Miss Amy Deck was granted the license to preach the Gospel on condition that the General Conference does not take an adverse position on the question of licensing women to preach.”

In 1934 attempts were made by some in the annual conferences to allow women to move toward ordination. Nothing came from these efforts. A significant approach by the Western Conference led to the recommendation that the Discipline be amended to permit “devout women and men” to be licensed “to preach the Gospel, to conduct and assist in evangelistic services,” but not to be a “preacher in charge,” i.e., a pastor.

The General Conference of 1934 modified the amendment slightly and passed, by a vote of 20 to 5, the Western Conference proposal. The legislation included for the first time the term “Christian Worker and Evangelist.” It gave authority to preach the Gospel and conduct evangelistic meetings but restricted the role of “preacher in charge” to men.

Amy Deck, nevertheless, was designated as “licensed” minister until 1938. Another woman, Roberta Craig, joined the ranks in 1937 as “Evangelist and Christian Worker.” Several others followed them in the next decade. In

\footnote{Western Conference Journal (1930), 14.}
\footnote{Western Conference Journal (1934), 22.}
\footnote{Western Conference Journal (1934), 20–21.}
1938, Deck and Craig were recorded as “Christian Workers and Evangelists.” Deck, for the first time, was included in a new category of preacher. Both were registered in the Stationing Committee report as Quarterly Conference members. Deck’s name appeared in the list of preachers until 1966, when the entire category of “Christian Worker and Evangelist” was dropped.

XIII

In 1940, before the United States had entered World War II, the annual conferences were urged by Bishop Mengel to “have some declaration to make on the subject of war.” The conference appointed a committee of three ministers and three laymen, with the bishop as chairman, to “formulate the position that the Church takes on the matter of war and peace.” The committee stressed the Christian church’s role in creating peace and good will. Although America had sought to avoid war as a national policy, other nations had plunged into the abyss.

In 1945, Bishop Cooper commented on the nearness of victory and asked the church to pray for the Peace Conference in San Francisco. They wrote the Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, commending him for effort toward peace, and urging that “freedom of worship [might] be one of the foundations of the peace.” Bishop Cooper raised the spirits of the people: “No wonder hearts are lighter—the outlook brighter. . . . Much fighting still lies ahead, but the issue is no longer in doubt.” The church must share in “the desire of all nations—a cooperative endeavor to prevent future conflicts. . . . This time failure is unthinkable. We really must win a world peace after we win this global war.”

Bishop Cooper addressed the Western Conference on August 23, 1945 with the glorious news of a world at peace. He praised the San Francisco Conference and its “noble beginning” and asserted the church’s proper role in leading people to Christ.

The San Francisco Conference on Peace for which the conference prayed so fervently was the founding conference of the United Nations. While East Pennsylvania met (April 26–30, 1945) the Peace Conference was in session beginning April 25. The U.S. delegation to San Francisco was headed by Stettinius.

XIV

In 1929, the crash on Wall Street sent shock waves throughout America. Millions of people suffered immensely in loss of assets and jobs, in family ties, and in church life. Conventional wisdom suggests that times of economic dis-

20 *Journal* (1940), 35.
21 *Journal* (1945), 83–84.
22 *Journal* (1945), 43–44.
location may lead to a great spiritual dependency. Studies of the Great Depression do not support that thesis, except for smaller churches like the Pentecostal bodies and others. Many persons viewed their financial exigencies as social failure.

Smaller churches, with a sturdy sense of social marginalization accented the theme of the heavenly reward, or "the child of the king" identity. "A tent or a cottage, why should I care? They're building a palace for me over there. Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing, All glory to God, I'm a child of the king," wrote Harriet Buell. This hymn was one of the United Evangelical Church's original selections.

XV

As discussed earlier, the ECC has been and is a layperson's church. The official board composition is lay, with the president and other members of the board chosen by quarterly (or local) conference vote. The committees are chosen by the board. Only the Steward Board had the pastor's stamp upon it.

Women in the church served with great dedication and skill in every area except the ordained ministry. Great energy was given to the work of the Sunday School and the Missionary Societies. One of those who epitomized service above self in both fields was Alice Schlappich, wife of William H. Schlappich. Together they labored in ministry for 24 years, until his death in 1926. Thereafter, she carried on a major role as President of the East Penn Branch of the Missionary Society, and carried out many other functions until her death in 1958.

Another of the key lay personalities was Charles E. Christ from Tamaqua, delegate to the General Conference of 1922. Christ assumed a prominent role in defending the East Pennsylvania decision to remain outside the merger, asserting that the UEC was built on "democratic polity and simplicity of doctrine" in total opposition to autocratic rulership. The merger violated the principles of democracy, he asserted. In particular he claimed that Albright College had received $300,000 from East Pennsylvania since 1908. That represented three-fourths of its gifts during the period 1908-22. "I would rather be part of a small company with no colleges, publishing house, or home ... than to have all these, largely organized and paid for by others ...," he wrote plaintively.23 In 1923, Christ wrote the Pottsville Journal repeating the claim of East Penn that the merger was "not legally consummated, ... that the laity did not have an opportunity to vote on the question; and that political ... measures would account for any apparent majorities.24

Morris C. Bastian, a prominent Allentown businessman (Arbogast and Bastian) may be best known for his leadership as chairman of the Building

23 *UE* (March 20, 1923), 7.
Committee at Seibert, Allentown. A charter member of Seibert, he was president of trustees and official board, and lay delegate. He served as member of the General Conference, member of Burd and Rogers trustees, and as trustee of Albright College. His gifts to Seibert Church were unstinting. In 1933, the new Seibert Church was completed and dedicated at a cost of $265,000, but Bastian was dead. He had given $150,000 of that amount toward the building. The Allentown Chronicle and News described Bastian’s church as “one of the passions of his life and, as in his business, he builded well in the service of his God and Master.”

**XVI**

A. W. Cooper, fourth bishop of the ECC was licensed in 1900, serving ten churches before his election as bishop forty-three years later. He served through the concluding war years and into the complex post-war years until his untimely death in 1950. Cooper was seventy-one. Educated at Albright College, Providence University (B.A.) and Temple University (M.A.), he was noted for his gifts in preaching; “His pulpit utterances were marked by clarity and backed by conviction.”

In his first episcopal address (1943) he appealed to the sovereign purposes of God at work through the world’s agony in war. War is caused by the rejection of God’s will among individuals and nations. America, having “sought to relegate God into a minor place in its affairs,” must accept some responsibility. “National calamities are signs of spiritual delinquency,” he insisted.

In his final conference, Cooper made several recommendations regarding the ministry and the work of the church, which included the need for a seminary for training and perpetuation of our faith; and association with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches (PCC) and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

More than any bishop either preceding or succeeding him, Cooper was moved by the vision of Christian unity. Having sought federation with the United Brethren in Christ (UB) and the Primitive Methodists (PM), Cooper in his 1948 episcopal message, expressed a hope for church union. He recognized the failures of “organic unions,” especially “forced unions” which damaged the spirit of the people. The unity he envisioned was “a real oneness of faith and experience.”

During this same period, E. Stanley Jones was preaching his idea of a Federal Union of the churches in America. Cooper deplored this concept which would lead, he thought, to one church. But he did affirm a form of

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2*Journal* (1933), 72.
3*Journal* (1951), 96–97: Memorial.
federalism, built upon the primary affirmation of the Lordship of Christ. The independence of each denomination, following the federal principle of states’ rights, was a proper model for church union.

Cooper expressed strong support for cooperation in an ecumenical program which would contain carefully defined parameters:

1. A limited General Assembly.
2. A defined doctrinal position with “accepted rules of biblical interpretation.” Jones “Federal Union” contained no such rules; Cooper asserted;
3. A union which must safeguard the principle of religious freedom;
4. There must be proportionate representation;
5. Matters of faith and practice, ritual, laws, and customs of each denomination may be changed only by that group, not the Assembly.
6. Evangelical Christianity “shall be the one rule from which no departure is permitted.”

That Cooper valued and enjoyed the larger fellowship of Christians is apparent. Nevertheless, movement toward the goals stated in his address was minimal. His message in 1949 contained nothing of the theme of ecumenical cooperation, other than the repeated appeal to seek membership in the PCC. In 1948, the Committee on Resolutions gave guarded support to the Bishop’s appeals. “We commend and support his views regarding the values of Church cooperation as over against organic church union.”

Cooper’s death in 1950 terminated any movement toward general cooperation with other bodies. Federation talks with UB’s and PM’s continued. No signs of a definite relationship with the PCC appeared.

XVII

The memory of struggles over polity and theology in the events leading to 1922, continued to the end of the first generation. It is possible that Cooper’s ideas on church unity were doomed by the conflict and rancor of the merger leading to the ECC’s break with the Evangelical Church.

The picture which was being formed from 1922–1950 is one of stability, but limited growth. Some of the most critical steps taken in the young life of the church included the School of Methods, the work of the Missionary Societies, beginnings of a retirement community, a publishing house, and progress toward theological education. The vision for a seminary, articulated in 1934 by Woodring, was fulfilled in 1953.

Churches at the local level would experience ebb and flow. Grand edifices were built at Allentown (Seibert) and Lancaster (Grace), and many other

\[28\] Journal (1948), 46–49.
\[29\] Journal (1949), 101.
city churches would minister to large congregations. Inner city churches would see the beginnings of social, economic, and demographic change. Few were able to adapt to the shifts of population.

Rural churches and their flocks carried on important ministries from the Delaware River to the Mississippi. Most of them remained small and sustained what some have wrongly called "maintenance ministries." Yet, while many very large city churches have closed, or moved away from original centers of ministry, many small churches have continued and faithfully embody the spirit of loving fellowship.

In its theological affirmations, the ECC held firmly to the faith once delivered to the saints. Evangelicalism, embodied in NAE principles, remained healthy and vibrant. Wesleyanism, with its appeals to graced free will and saving faith continued in opposition to Calvinist ideas of predestination. Wesleyanism which represents the defining theology of the ECC, gave serious attention to the holy life. From 1922 to 1950, however, there was a declining interest in the doctrine of "Christian Perfection" which the Discipline teaches so clearly. In its affirmation of evangelicalism, which has Calvinistic tendencies, and in reaction to some aspects of the Holiness Movement, the ECC became less Wesleyan than its prior history indicates. The theological reflections of another generation, trained in "our own" (Myerstown) seminary by highly educated scholars raised in "our own" churches would pick up this theological responsibility. In its continuing evaluations, the ECC would determine whether or not its course would be more or less Wesleyan, more Evangelical, even more Congregational.