



FRESNO PACIFIC
UNIVERSITY

FPUScholarWorks

A merger that never was: the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites, 1953-1962.

Author(s): Kevin Enns-Rempel.

Source: *Mennonite Life* 48 (1993): 16-21.

Published by: Bethel College.

Stable URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/11418/576>

FPUScholarWorks is an online repository for creative and scholarly works and other resources created by members of the Fresno Pacific University community. FPUScholarWorks makes these resources freely available on the Web and assures their preservation for the future.

A Merger That Never Was

The Conference of Evangelical Mennonites 1953-1962

On June 14, 1953, some 350 people representing the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference (EMB)¹ and the Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) gathered at Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, to celebrate the founding of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites (CEM). After almost six years of conversations together, they had entered an experimental affiliation with each other and came together on this day to consummate that relationship. Following an inaugural sermon by H. E. Bertsche, EMC minister from Archbold, Ohio, and secretary of the new conference, members of the CEM General Board and commissions joined hands on the platform while John R. Dick, a faculty member at Grace Bible Institute and vice president of the CEM, led in a dedicatory prayer. The meeting ended with the singing of "Blest be the Tie That Binds," and the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites was born.²

In the following years this affiliation would frequently be referred to as a "courtship," during which time the two conferences would explore the possibility of an actual "marriage" or merger. After a less-than-passionate nine-year courtship, however, they decided that no such marriage was possible. The two groups quietly parted company in 1962, their relationship the victim of geographic distance, differences in church polity, a lack of broad-based support among their members, and a nascent ambivalence toward their own Mennonite identities.

The EMB and EMC were seemingly well matched for each other, bringing to their relationship similar experiences and values. Both were small splinter movements that had broken away from larger Mennonite groups several decades earlier. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference began in 1889

through the union of a congregation in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, led by Aaron Wall with two congregations under the leadership of Isaac Peters in Henderson and Jansen, Nebraska. All three congregations had split off from existing Mennonite congregations in the late 1870s and early 1880s, amidst accusations that their parent congregations accepted members without personal conversion experiences and did not practice adequate church discipline. The new groups also wished to begin Sunday schools and Bible studies, innovations that offended many in the existing congregations.³ Originally known as the Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America, it soon added new congregations in several other western states and provinces. By about 1918 the conference had changed its name to the Defenseless Mennonite Brethren in Christ of North America, and in 1937 became the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference. At the time of the affiliation it had a membership of approximately 1,900.

The Evangelical Mennonite Church was founded in 1866 at Adams County, Indiana, under the leadership of Old Order Amish bishop Henry Egly. As with the EMB, issues of church discipline and church membership precipitated Egly's break with the Old Order Amish in 1865. Originally known as the "Egly Amish," the group later adopted the name Defenseless Mennonite Church, and became the Evangelical Mennonite Church in 1948.⁴ Its membership at the time of affiliation stood at about 2,000.

Despite their similarities in origin and spiritual values, the EMB and EMC did also bring significant differences into their affiliation. The EMB was rooted in the Dutch-Prussian-Russian stream of the Mennonite church, while the EMC

traced its history back to the Amish Church and the Swiss-south German tradition of Mennonitism. While doctrinally similar, these two Mennonite traditions had developed markedly different attitudes and practices on a variety of issues.⁵ The EMC and EMB also were widely separated geographically. Most EMC congregations were located east of the Mississippi River, particularly in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The EMB, on the other hand, was thinly spread across the western United States and Canada with no large concentration of churches in any one area.

The first serious contact between the EMB and EMC occurred three decades before the actual founding of the CEM. In 1919 EMB evangelist George P. Schultz founded an English-language paper by the name of *Good Tidings* to supplement the official EMB German-language conference paper, *Evangelisationsbote*. Schultz, who was based in Chicago, also came into contact about this time with Christian R. Egle, minister of the Salem Defenseless Mennonite Church near Gridley, Illinois, and editor, until 1917, of the EMC paper *Heils-Bote*. Schultz and Egle were instrumental in arranging for a merger between *Good Tidings* and the English-language EMC paper *Zion's Call* in 1921. The new paper, known as *Zion's Tidings*, was published jointly until 1931, when Schultz resigned as editor. There was no further EMB involvement in the paper after that time, and it became a publication of the EMC alone.⁶

Evidently, Schultz and Egle also discussed the possibility of the EMB and EMC affiliating during this time and may have seen the merger of the two papers as a first step in that direction. It does not appear that these merger discussions progressed very far. The fact that the EMB still used German as its primary language in the 1920s, while the EMC had for the most part made the transition to English, undoubtedly stood in the way of such negotiations.⁷ It is also unclear whether many other EMB leaders shared Schultz's interest in such a merger. His location in Chicago would have put him in closer contact with EMC congregations and leaders than was the case for most other EMB leaders farther to the west. The EMB and EMC did, however, maintain sufficient contact for *The Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary* to note in 1937 that the two groups worked "in close harmony" with each other.⁸

Discussions of an EMB/EMC affiliation resurfaced in the mid-1940s. On October 17, 1947, representatives from both groups met in Chicago for the first "Joint Unity Committee Meeting." Committee members spent most of this first meeting discussing the respective conference positions on various issues. They found themselves compatible on most of them, the only significant difference being mode of baptism. The EMC generally baptized by pouring, though it would also immerse or sprinkle at the request of the person being baptized. The EMB had for the most part made a transition from pouring to immersion by the 1930s, though they allowed latitude similar to the EMC. At the close of this meeting, the delegates passed a resolution recommending that "definite steps be taken" to better acquaint the ministry and laity of the two groups with each other, and expressed confidence that a unified plan for affiliation could be reached with regard to issues of doctrine, polity, institutions and missions.⁹

The Unity Committee met several more times over the next two years to work out the various details for the proposed affiliation. Early in this process, the committee raised the issue of a "liberal/evangelical" split within the Mennonite world, and the possibility that their affiliation would strengthen the Evangelical faction. In November 1948 it was noted that "we have no Conference for the evangelical group." At the January 11, 1949, meeting, "the expression was made that the two camps, modernistic and fundamental, are automatically separating themselves in these days."¹⁰ It seems clear that the members of the Unity Committee saw themselves as creating a vehicle for "Evangelical Mennonites" who had become uncomfortable with the perceived liberalism of many other Mennonites. This agenda would be voiced many times over in the coming years.

At the January 11, 1949, Unity Committee meeting the members addressed the question of inviting the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (KMB) into their proposed affiliation. While this was the first time the KMB had contemplated unification with the EMC, there was already a precedent for such discussions between them and the EMB. Conversations regarding an EMB/KMB merger took place at the 1921 KMB conference and in 1922 it chose a committee to examine the issue more thoroughly. The

discussion reached an impasse in 1926 when the KMB decided that it could not unite with the EMB unless the latter's members were willing to be rebaptized by immersion.¹¹ It does, however, appear that occasional conversations with regard to a KMB/EMB merger continued sporadically over the following decades.

John R. Dick reported at the January 1949 meeting that he had been approached by KMB leaders interested in again pursuing the question of merger. The fact that the EMB had for the most part switched to an immersion mode of baptism by the 1940s undoubtedly paved the way for the KMB to approach Dick at this time. The Unity Committee agreed to invite KMB representatives to attend future meetings to ascertain their interest in formally joining the affiliation discussions.¹²

The KMB response to this overture was ambivalent. On February 8, 1949, KMB Chairman John J. Kleinsasser wrote to the members of the KMB Executive Committee,

Today I received a letter from Rev. J. R. Dick of Omaha Nebraska which almost made my hair turn a little grayer. In that letter Br. Dick invites our Conference to meet with the Committees of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference [sic] and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. The purpose of this meeting is to find a possible ground or bases of unity. Personally I would much rather meet with the E.M.B. alone and leave out the E.M.C. But as it appears it is too late for that. . . . The possibility of union with these two Conferences seem [sic] rather an impossibility. I can see a positive union with the E.M.B. but a union with the two is hard to imagine. However I strongly believe that we dare not turn down this proposal.¹³

Several KMB representatives attended the Joint Unity Committee meeting in March, 1949. Kleinsasser noted there that only the issue of baptism stood between the KMB and a merger with the other two groups. H. E. Bertsche of the EMC responded by noting that many EMC congregations were moving in the direction of immersion baptism; E. G. Steiner went further by stating that the EMC would likely be willing to adopt any form of baptism as a matter of polity, but was not open to making it a dogmatic issue. Despite reservations, the KMB representatives declared themselves open to presenting the program of affiliation at its next annual conference.¹⁴ The KMB, however, took no

active part in any future affiliation discussions with the other two groups.

On May 30 to June 1, 1950, the first Joint Conference of the EMB and EMC took place on the campus of Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebraska. This event marked the first time that more than a handful of representatives from each conference had met face-to-face. Following a keynote address by EMB minister A. P. Toews on "The Unity of the Spirit," the conference addressed the general theme: "An Evaluation of our Purpose and Conviction." Two addresses helped to set the tone for this theme. The first, by EMC minister Gordon Zimmerman, was entitled "The Modern Attack on Evangelical Christianity"; John R. Dick followed with a sermon on "Why We Believe We Can More Vigorously Approach This Problem Together."¹⁵ Once again, the concern of conference leaders to define themselves over against liberalism and modernism is evident.

The EMB and EMC met for a second Unity Conference on June 9-10, 1951. At that meeting the Unity Committee, now renamed the General Board, presented to the delegates ten proposals for affiliation. According to this document, both conferences would continue to function independently as before, "with due consideration of the confession of faith, policies and practise [sic] of the General Conference." The General Board would appoint a committee to study the merger of the two conference periodicals, *Gospel Tidings* (EMB) and *Zion's Tidings* (EMC). Mission programs would remain independent, "with a continual effort being made to unite these interests as time and opportunity permit." The two conferences would combine in electing joint representatives to national associations such as the National Association of Evangelicals and Mennonite Central Committee. The credentials of ministers would be recognized in each conference and an interchange of ministers encouraged. With regard to education, the committee agreed that "a list of approved schools be drawn up and recommended to the conferences until such time as we have such schools of our own." Neither the EMB nor EMC operated schools, and one of the often-repeated motivations for affiliation was the hope that a unified conference would have the necessary resources to run such a program.¹⁶ Finally, the General Board suggested that the name

of this new organization be the "Evangelical Mennonite Conference." This last proposal elicited thirteen other name suggestions from the floor, from which the name "Conference of Evangelical Mennonites" was chosen by ballot vote. The EMC approved the ten proposals at its annual meeting in August 1951; the EMB did so in June 1952.¹⁷

On April 1, 1952, an experimental combined issue of *Zion's Tidings* and *Gospel Tidings* was published. Beginning with the January 15, 1953, issue, this arrangement became a regular practice. Each appeared under its own title but with identical contents. Joint issues appeared until July 1953, when the two papers ceased publication and were replaced by the jointly-published *The Evangelical Mennonite*, edited by E. G. Steiner.

The lead article of this new periodical announced the creation of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites on June 14, 1953. Following the approval of the ten proposals for affiliation by the two conferences, they met in Omaha on June 11-14 for the inaugural meeting of the new conference. The General Board elected at these sessions consisted of President Reuben Short (EMC), Vice President John R. Dick (EMB), Secretary H. E. Bertsche (EMC), Treasurer H. H. Dick (EMB), J. R. Barkman (EMB), Milo Rediger (EMC), E. G. Steiner (EMC), and A. P. Toews (EMB). Three commissions were also created at these meetings: The Commission on Missions (A. P. Toews, Chairman), the Commission on Promotions (E. G. Steiner, Chairman) and the Commission on Education (Milo Rediger, Chairman).

In many ways, the inaugural conference of 1953 marks the high watermark of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites. The enthusiasm surrounding that event never seemed matched again in following years, and their ongoing relationship might best be characterized as one of indifference. For example, *The Evangelical Mennonite* during the years 1953-1962 contains almost no articles reflecting on the affiliation and its meaning for the two conferences. Given that *The Evangelical Mennonite* would have been the primary source of information about the affiliation for most members of the EMB and EMC, this absence of commentary is significant. Only a small percentage of each group's membership

attended the joint conferences, and even fewer participated on the General Board or commissions. Add to this the fact that the two conferences were not in close geographic proximity to each other, and one has the ingredients for a less than successful affiliation.

The issue of affiliation was not totally ignored by the editors of *The Evangelical Mennonite*. In August of 1954, for example, Reuben Short wrote an article calling for the creation of a unified Evangelical Mennonite college. He noted that increasing numbers of Mennonite young people desired a college education and that "the survival of a church group will be largely determined by taking advantage of this opportunity of educating its youth." Short acknowledged that Grace Bible Institute already served "to bring evangelical Mennonites to a common understanding and a common ground," but suggested that an evangelical Mennonite school with a liberal arts curriculum was also needed.

Short recommended that the CEM consider establishing a junior college in the near future, which could eventually grow into a full liberal arts college.¹⁸ While others in the conference echoed Short's concern at various points, no concrete progress toward the creation of such a school seems to have taken place. Even as a unified group, the CEM had a membership of about four thousand members—hardly a large enough constituency to support a viable college program.

Other articles in *The Evangelical Mennonite* suggested that neither the EMB nor the EMC had fully embraced the idea of an affiliation. In June of 1955, on the eve of the first CEM General Conference since the inaugural meeting of 1953, Reuben Short raised the question, "Can We Erase the Dotted Line?" He acknowledged that some could not understand the need for spending time and money to gather as a joint conference. In response, Short suggested,

We have gotten together for three preceding conferences. We needed to get acquainted. We still need more of the same. We formulated plans whereby we could start working together. . . . There is still a dotted line dividing our activity in the field of labor. . . . Are we ready to erase the dotted line?¹⁹

It is difficult to know whether the 1955 General Conference made any progress in erasing "dotted lines"; *The Evan-*

gelical Mennonite limited its reporting of the event to a one-and-a-half-column summary by editor E. G. Steiner that said nothing specifically regarding the affiliation.²⁰ Once again, those not in attendance at the conference would have had little opportunity to assess the value of the EMB/EMC affiliation.

Reuben Short's few articles on the topic of affiliation and merger in *The Evangelical Mennonite* were generally optimistic and encouraging. The same cannot be said of his EMB counterparts. In a 1957 article entitled "Too Old to Marry?" for example, John R. Dick compared the EMC and EMB to an elderly couple too set in their respective ways to marry each other:

It is not so easy for two or more conferences to unite after many years of independent existence. It would mean compromises, adjustments and some heartaches. The question is repeatedly raised—"Can our two Conferences continue to progress in our present affiliated relationship indefinitely? Are we cooling off instead of becoming warmer? . . . We feel a sense of inadequacy to determine a clear-cut answer on the question. While we are most reluctant to think of disbanding, we must on the other hand prayerfully continue to study the whole plan—present and future.²¹

In December of 1958 the CEM General Board met to examine the questions raised by Dick's 1957 article. The Board recommended that the affiliation, "which has been of marked mutual blessing for almost ten years," continue, but in a modified fashion. The triennial General Conference sessions would be scrapped and replaced by "representative and regional conferences," which would "give opportunity for members at a distance to attend." This decision almost certainly spelled the end of regular lay contact between the EMB and EMC. The large distance between their respective congregations made it unlikely that any single regional conference would include significant representation from both groups. The General Board further recommended that CEM commissions be discontinued and that only the General Board continue to function.²² The result of these decisions was to eliminate almost every point of contact between the two conferences, except for the jointly published *Evangelical Mennonite*.

In the spring of 1960 EMB President Henry Brandt wrote to EMC President Reuben Short stating his position on the

future of their affiliation:

I usually tell any prospective couple, that up to the point of the declaration in a wedding ceremony they can back out, but after that the deal is final. I think that we all realize that a merger would be final, and because of this fact, we seem to be either fearful or cautious towards such a move. I believe that our two constituencies are not too well acquainted with each other, in spite of our paper and our knowledge of our respective leaders and a few pastors. . . .

Our joint effort with the paper seems to have worked very well up to a point. But after all these years I have the impression that we have two church papers bound under one cover and one name.

From our side there are two questions which come to my mind when I think of a merger, namely: 1. Are we as the E.M.B. Conference willing to give up our *special interests* . . . and share them with others? 2. Are we as the E.M.B. Conference willing to assume responsibility in the work and interest of the E.M.C. Conference, as they are willing to share with us?²³

Short's response to Brandt indicates that the EMC may not have been quite as ready to give up on affiliation or merger as was the EMB:

The questions you proposed for yourself are equally adaptable to us. . . . I refer you to our business agenda for the conference held June 30 through July 3, 1955. In stating our policies which at that time we considered feasible, we said . . . "That the private interests of each group be respected, maintained, and encouraged. . . . That in such areas of life and service where united effort would be an advantage, the conference foster participation on a voluntary basis."

If we observe this principle of cooperation, I can see no reason why a merger of our two groups would not be possible. . . . We could be working arm in arm within the framework of the total Mennonite household. This would give us considerable prestige in the eyes of the world and surely would be a credit to the cause of Christ at large. We must not be deterred by a spirit of bigotry. This is a time when we need to throw our shoulders to the wheel in a united effort for the cause of Christ while we still have time and opportunity.²⁴

A few months later John R. Dick lent his voice to the discussion in another letter to Reuben Short:

Our conference days are before us. We regret that the dates of our conference days coincide this year. It was thoughtless on our part to fail to remember that you have your dates set for the third week in August. . . . I wish to assure



George P. Schultz, *Evangelical Mennonite Brethren* leader, ca. 1924

you, Bro. Short, that in establishing the date of our convention there was no intention of conflict—we just didn't think. And we are sorry it happened. Perhaps none of your people would have come this far west, and some of our people may yet attend your conference—we trust so. . . .

This matter regarding our future plans concerning the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites will likely come into focus at our respective conferences. . . . We are not all satisfied with the present plan, and neither are we united on either merging or disannulling the affiliation. . . . In your letter to Bro. Brandt, you seem to feel inclined toward a merger. Had we merged at the beginning, these nagging feelings of indecision need not have troubled us. The question is still before us—where do we go from here?²⁵

The decision by the EMB to schedule its annual conference at the same time that the EMC usually held its meetings, though inadvertent, reinforces the sense that the EMB in particular had no strong interest in continuing the affiliation and certainly not in moving toward a complete merger.

By 1960 it seemed obvious that there was little to stop the demise of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites. Triennial general conferences had come to an end in 1955 and joint commissions had been dissolved in 1958. *The Evangelical Mennonite*, though still published jointly, did little to serve as a forum for discussions of affiliation or

merger, or to strengthen a sense of unity between the two conferences. There is little surprise in the 1962 decisions by each group to dissolve the CEM after nine years of affiliation. The announcement of the decision, in September of that year, explained that

the proposal to terminate made note of the geographic distribution of the churches which prohibits an adequate desirable fellowship and wise employment of administrative financial resources, the problem of synchronizing methods in the missions program, the need for more direct promotion of the Conferences through singular efforts, and that said affiliation did not appear to resolve the problem of higher education for the two bodies.²⁶

John R. Dick, in the same issue of *The Evangelical Mennonite*, provided an epitaph for CEM, entitled "Still One at Heart":

Time and experiences have taught us that sincere intentions in laying the groundwork of a building can not always envision the completion of that building. This does not mean that our labors and prayers have been in vain. Lasting gain has come as a result of our unified effort to promote the fields of administration, missions and evangelism. While we concede to the annulment of our organizational ties, we do not herewith terminate our mutual love, respect and spiritual helpfulness gained during the past decade.²⁷

Still one at heart? Perhaps. The question is a moot one, since the EMC and EMB parted with scarcely a backward glance. *The Evangelical Mennonite* appeared for the last time as a joint publication with the September 1962 issue; in October 1962 the EMB revived *Gospel Tidings*, while the EMC continued publication of *The Evangelical Mennonite* as its own periodical. In subsequent years one is hard pressed to find any published references to the nine-year affiliation. How could two groups supposedly "one at heart" have so quickly forgotten about each other?

Two answers to this question stand out most prominently. First, the affiliation between the EMC and EMB never became a concrete reality for most members of either conference. The entire process—from the first conversations of the 1940s to the 1962 decision to end the relationship—took its cues from a small number of conference leaders rather than a broad-based cross-section of the two conferences. No grass-roots call for inter-Mennonite

cooperation seems to have brought EMB and EMC leaders together in the late 1940s, nor did those leaders make any efforts to bring their constituencies into the process except in the most superficial ways. The two groups met as a General Conference only four times—in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955; for the last seven years of their affiliation, no large-scale joint meetings took place. It seems likely that many CEM members never actually met anyone from the other conference during the nine years of their affiliation. Nor did the jointly-published *Evangelical Mennonite* serve to create a bridge between the two groups. While it did publish local news and mission reports from both conferences, there was almost no thoughtful writing on the meaning of the affiliation or efforts to educate the two conferences about each other.

A second reason for the demise of the CEM has to do with each group's attitude toward inter-Mennonite cooperation generally. As splinter movements within the larger North American Mennonite world, both the EMB and EMC found reason to distrust certain parts of that faith tradition. This attitude has been particularly evident within the EMB in the years following the CEM affiliation. In 1969, for example, the EMB withdrew from Mennonite Central Committee, largely because of that agency's perceived emphasis on ministry to physical rather than spiritual needs.²⁸ Also at the 1969 EMB annual convention the EMB first publicly addressed the question of whether it even wished to remain identified with the Mennonite faith tradition. Conference president Frank C. Wiens, in his keynote address, unhesitatingly identified the conference with the Evangelical movement, but raised questions about its continued participation with other Mennonites:

Who are we? . . . We say that we are MENNONITE. What does the light of truth reveal? . . . We don't like what we see and we are further confused by the apostasy of those who say they are also MENNONITE. . . . The defection of a segment of the MENNONITE Church to tradition, culture and the preaching of a mere social gospel has left us in a quandary as to who we are.²⁹

The question of Mennonite identity became a recurring theme at EMB conventions during the next two decades. It was resolved in 1987 with the decision to change the conference name to "Fellowship of Evangelical Bible

Churches" and in that way to remove itself from any explicit connection to the Mennonite faith tradition.

Ambivalence toward Mennonitism has been less pronounced on the part of the EMC. The number of "inter-Mennonite" articles and news items in *The Evangelical Mennonite* and its successor *Evangelical Mennonite Build* following 1962 was much higher than that in the *Gospel Tidings*, where they were virtually nonexistent. The EMC continues to participate in organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference, whereas the EMB/FEBC withdrew from both. Finally, the very fact that the EMC still uses the word "Mennonite" in its name indicates a higher level of comfort with its heritage than that exhibited by its former counterpart.

Nonetheless, ambivalence toward Mennonitism on the part of the EMC remains. The "Church Member Profile" studies of 1972 and 1989 indicate that the EMC scored lowest of all five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ groups studied on questions generally associated with "Anabaptist" beliefs.³⁰ Furthermore, a recent study of the EMC by Stan Nussbaum indicates that the EMC is less than certain of its Mennonite identity. He suggests that the

EMC respects the commitment of the Mennonite household to the principles of Christian discipleship and service. EMC enjoys cooperating with Mennonite agencies as its resources permit. Yet EMC which 60 years ago was considerably involved in inter-Mennonite fellowship now refuses to emphasize Mennonite doctrinal distinctives, and so it puts a strain on the brotherly relationship. EMC is not sure it still belongs in this family, and the family must have reason to wonder if a child with so little respect for the fathers is really a credit to the Mennonite name.³¹

While most of these examples of ambivalence toward the Mennonite faith tradition by both the EMB and EMC date since 1962, it seems clear that these attitudes were already present during the years of affiliation. One can interpret their dichotomy between "liberal" and "evangelical" Mennonites as the first stage in a wholesale criticism of the Mennonite church. The CEM thus represented an attempt at inter-Mennonite merger on the part of two groups beginning to wonder if they were indeed "Mennonite" at all. Given that their shared Mennonite heritage was the primary point of commonality between

the EMB and EMC, and that neither group was entirely comfortable with that religious tradition, it seems hard to imagine that the two could have created a lasting merger. Had other differences such as geographic distance not complicated the relationship, their shared ambivalence might have served as an effective bond between them. Under the circumstances, however, it probably served only to send the two groups in different directions and ensure the demise of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites.

ENDNOTES

¹Since 1987 known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches.

²*Report of Inaugural Conference of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites held at Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, June 11-14, 1953*; "Conference of Evangelical Mennonites a Reality: Impressive Inaugural Service Held at Omaha, Neb., June 14," *The Evangelical Mennonite*, July 1953, 1.

³Theodore Schmidt, "The Mennonites of Nebraska," (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1933), 29; Ferdinand P. Schultz, *A History of the Settlement of German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake, Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1938), 79-80.

⁴E. G. Steiner, "History of the Evangelical Mennonite Church" in *Report of Inaugural Conference of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites held at Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, June 11-14, 1953* (n.p., 1953), 18-19; Stan Nussbaum, *You Must Be Born Again: a History of the Evangelical Mennonite Church*, revised ed. (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Evangelical Mennonite Church, 1991), 2-3.

⁵James C. Juhnke, "Mennonite History and Self-Understanding: North American Mennonitism

as a Bipolar Mosaic," in *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Calvin Wall Redekop (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 83-99.

⁶Arnold C. Schultz, "George P. Schultz: Pioneer Chicago Mennonite Churchman," *Mennonite Heritage* 9 (1982): 42; H. F. Epp, "Glimpses of the History of Our Conference Paper," *Gospel Tidings*, August 1948, 9.

⁷E. G. Steiner, "History of the Evangelical Mennonite Church," 21.

⁸"Defenceless Mennonites," *Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary: A Compendium of the Doctrines, History, Activities, Literature, and Environments of the Mennonite Church, Especially in America* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1937), 76.

⁹Minutes of the Joint Unity Committee Meeting of the Defenseless Mennonite Conference and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 17 October 1947, Record Group T135, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Cal.

¹⁰Special Unity Committee Meeting, 11 January 1949, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

¹¹*Jahrbuch der Krimmer Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde und Berichte der 42. Konferenz Abgehalten in der Bethel Kirche bei Carpenter, S. Dak., am 24., 27., 28., 29. September 1921*, 14; *Konferenzbeschlüsse der Krimmer Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde vom Nord Amerika Zwischen den Jahren 1882 bis 1940* (Inman, Kans.: Salem Publishing House, [1940]), 45, 52.

¹²Special Unity Committee meeting, 11 January 1949, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

¹³J. J. Kleinsasser to members of the Executive Committee of the KMB Conference and the Foreign Mission Board, 8 February 1949, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church Records, Center for MB Studies.

¹⁴Minutes of the Joint Unity Committee Meeting, 15-16 March 1949, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

¹⁵"Program: The Joint Conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and the Evangelical Mennonite Church to be held on May 30 to June 1, 1950 at the Grace Bible Institute,

Omaha, Nebraska," *Gospel Tidings*, 1 April 1950, 6.

¹⁶Second Unity Conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference [sic] and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren held at Omaha, Nebraska, June 9, 10, 1951, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

¹⁷Reuben Short, *Guide on the Development of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites* (n.p.: The General Board of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites, n.d.), 2.

¹⁸Reuben Short, "A Most Worthwhile Endowment," *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 August 1954, 3.

¹⁹Reuben Short, "Can We Erase the Dotted Line?" *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 June 1955, 3.

²⁰E. G. Steiner, "Highlights of the General Conference," *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 July 1955, 2.

²¹John R. Dick, "Too Old to Marry?" *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 November 1957, 3.

²²"C.E.M. Board Meets in Omaha," *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 January 1959, 2.

²³Henry Brandt to Reuben Short, 10 May 1960, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

²⁴Reuben Short to Henry Brandt, 16 May 1960, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

²⁵J. R. Dick to R. D. Short, 27 July 1960, Record Group T135, Center for MB Studies.

²⁶"EMB & EMC Dissolve Affiliation," *The Evangelical Mennonite* 15 September 1962, 3.

²⁷John R. Dick, "Still One at Heart," *The Evangelical Mennonite*, 15 September 1962, 3.

²⁸"Highlights of the '69 Convention," *Gospel Tidings* (August 1969), 13; William Regehr to Kevin Rempel, 29 January 1982 (letter in possession of author).

²⁹Frank C. Wiens, "This We Believe," *Gospel Tidings* (August 1969), i-2.

³⁰J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later: a Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1975), 114-116; J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic: Identity and Modernization* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1991), 71.

³¹Nussbaum, 55.

The Evangelical Mennonite

Volume 1

July, 1953

Number 1

Conference of Evangelical Mennonites a Reality