

1 **20th Century American Anabaptism**

2 **The MC and the GC**

- As the 20th Century began, the two largest Mennonite bodies were the “old” Mennonite Church (MC) and the Mennonite General Conference (GC).
 - The MC was made up of the churches that remained after the Old Order schisms of the late 19th century.
 - The MC was characterized by the acceptance of progressivism coupled with a concern for maintaining traditional Mennonite doctrines and practices.

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- The MC was made up of autonomous regional conferences that worked together in a general conference (later called a general assembly).
- The GC was characterized by strong progressivism, with less concern for maintaining traditional Mennonite doctrines and practices.

4 **The early 20th century was marked**

by increasingly strong leadership and resistance to change in the MC.

- Denominational organizations multiplied to support new efforts in missions, education, and other areas.
- Leaders such as Daniel Kauffman used their positions on church boards and committees to work against changes they considered dangerous.

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- Some who wanted more change in matters like dress standards questioned the use of power by Kauffman and others.
- Kauffman and his supporters believed they were fulfilling their responsibility to stand for truth for the good of the church.
- In some ways these issues mirrored the conflict between fundamentalists and modernists, and Mennonites often identified themselves and their opponents in this way even though their own issues were different.
- Bitter disunity often resulted, and many left the MC for the GC.

6 **Traditional standards began to weaken around mid-century.**

- Relief work and alternative service during World War II exposed many Mennonites to other points of view and led them to question traditional standards.
- New leaders such as Harold S. Bender were focused more on the church’s mission in the world than on maintaining standards in the church.

7 **Division**

- As traditional Mennonite standards of doctrine and behavior weakened, many congregations left their regional conferences in order to maintain their standards.
- Among the issues in the 1950s and 1960s were dress standards, womens’ prayer coverings, and television ownership.
- Later issues included the role of women in the church.

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- Many individual congregations joined with others in groups known as fellowships, which are similar to conferences but are more loosely organized.
- Other congregations left their conferences in groups and formed new, more conservative conferences that did not affiliate with the general conference of the Mennonite Church.
- These and later church divisions tended to be much more peaceful than the bitter conflicts of the early 1900s.

9 **The MC and GC eventually merged.**

- As conservatives left the MC, there was little reason for continued separation from the GC.
- The MC and GC united in 2002 to form the Mennonite Church-USA.