

dialogue and understanding, and concludes: “the practical practice of self-imposed social exclusion is necessary to the idea and social reality of social inclusion” (222).

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Common Witness: A Story of Ministry Partnership between French and North American Mennonites, 1953-2003. By David Yoder Neufeld. Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies. 2016. Pp. 167. \$24.

Immediately after World War II North American Christians began to send missionaries abroad, and some of these went to Europe. Confident, buoyed by their countries' military victories, they typically practiced an evangelism designed to convert lapsed and lost Europeans. Within a few years North American Mennonite Christians also began sending missionaries to Europe where French Mennonites were willing to collaborate with them. The North Americans, who had been conscientious objectors an ocean away from combat, had suffered little from the war; their French brothers and sisters had suffered grievously. The North Americans were eager to serve and open to embrace a vision of mission that would appropriately address the religious and socio-cultural realities of war-torn Europe. The French were ready to work with the North Americans to give expression to this vision of the gospel in their national capital, Paris.

In *Common Witness* David Yoder Neufeld tells the story of fifty years of this collaboration. It is a complex story, but he tells it well, enabling the large narrative to emerge and the main issues to be clear. And he is fortunate to have colorful characters to write about: North American missionary administrators J. D. Graber, John Howard Yoder (Graber's assistant in the early 1960s), and Wilbert Shenk; Pierre Widmer, the most influential French Mennonite leader of his era, and the visionary Anne Sommermeyer; French administrators Ernest Nussbaumer and Victor Dos Santos; and a succession of gifted North American missionaries. Neufeld's characters faced challenges that were tougher than they had anticipated. As they faced these, they needed to work well with each other despite cultural differences, and their mission boards—in France the newly founded Mission Mennonite Française (MMF 1954), and in North America the older Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (MBM)—needed to collaborate effectively. Especially, both MMF and MBM needed to earn the trustful interest of the French Mennonites, primarily rural folk living in Eastern France, in missionary activities in distant, urban, poly-racial Paris where there was historically no Mennonite church. As I read Neufeld's account three things stood out.

First, the range of achievement of these Franco/American Mennonite collaborators in mission is astonishing. In fifty years they planted three churches in the Paris area, which is not so astonishing. But consider what they did in addition: they defied the intolerance of French culture by pioneering compassionate sheltered workshops for large numbers of developmentally disabled people in Paris, Hautefeuille, and elsewhere; they negotiated with government agencies to secure state subsidies for church-administered programs

for people with disabilities; they provided assistance to thousands of international students (many of them people of color) who had difficulty finding housing, some of whom received accommodation in Mennonite-operated student centers; and throughout they engaged in teaching, dialogue, and missiological thinking that eventually culminated in the work of the Paris Mennonite Center, which moved a growing number of French people to find a theological home in Anabaptism.

Second, the missional style of these French and North American collaborators is distinctive. Throughout they operated humbly, patiently, ready to change course in response to local initiatives, open to wait until the right moment. Further, their approach was holistic, a whole gospel witness so that, as an MMF document of 1967 put it, “preaching in deed may accompany preaching by word.” And most notably, the style of these collaborators was synergistic—French and North Americans in Paris worked together, sustained by mission boards that were convinced that collaboration was not only theologically imperative; it was also practically fruitful.

Third, the French/North American collaborators rarely achieved precisely what they wanted. As missionaries sensitive to the *missio Dei*, they believed that they encountered God who was already at work, and they showed flexibility in adjusting their priorities accordingly.

For example, in Paris in the mid-1950s pioneer missionary Orley Swartzentruber began his ministry with Bible study that led to the founding of a church in Châtenay-Malabry, anticipating that this would lead to dialogue with other Christians about peace and ecclesiology. But it was the vision of Anne Sommermeyer, a founding member of the congregation, that took precedence, leading to work with developmentally handicapped people that gave newly-arrived missionary Robert Witmer ample scope for his exceptional spiritual and entrepreneurial gifts. Sheltered workshops proliferated; theological talk-shops progressed more slowly.

A second example: in 1965 Mennonite Central Committee was interested in founding a peace center in Paris that would encourage conscientious objection in France and foster theological thinking about peace. At MCC’s invitation Marlin Miller visited Paris to explore this possibility. The response of MMF’s constituency to the idea was “lukewarm.” But in 1968 MBM appointed Marlin and Ruthann Miller to Paris (under MMF supervision) not only to engage in peace dialogue but also to learn to know African students and to explore the most effective ways to help them survive in the city’s inhospitable environment. Soon after the Millers left in 1974 Foyer Grebel opened in Paris, a student center jointly administered and funded by MMF and MBM and staffed by their appointees; in this center theological dialogue also would take place—a demanding double assignment that “could make more visible the reality of Christian unity across national and theological boundaries” (Larry Miller) and could also lead to burnout!

A third example: a Mennonite center. There had long been a vision of a center that would foster Anabaptist studies and missional reflection on post-Christendom culture in Europe. Already in 1954, in an article written in Belgium and published in the *MQR*, missionary David Shank had proposed the foundation of such centers in European cities where Mennonites could dialogue with other

Christians in a setting in which Anabaptist history and theological insights were honored. Upon his arrival in Paris in the mid-1950s, Swartzentruber was attracted to the vision. So also were the progenitors and animators of the Foyer Grebel in the 1980s and 1990s in the midst of the intensities and emergencies of student work. Only in 2003, when the second Mennonite church in the Paris region, Église Protestante Mennonite de Villeneuve-le-Comte, left the building in which it had been born, was the Centre Mennonite (under the guidance of Neal and Janie Blough) able to devote itself solely to its primary aim—to “develop, *together with the French Mennonite Conference*, a relevant missiological approach in a highly urbanized and secularized context.” After fifty years, Anabaptist theological reflection and advocacy had its proper place, always in collaboration.

Fourth, even in the one major initiative of these fifty years that was not allowed to develop, collaboration remained a central part of the story. By 1977, Robert and Lois Witmer had become involved in evangelistic efforts in and near Châtenay, during which they became friends of participants in the Catholic charismatic renewal. A Catholic sister invited Bob to lead a Bible study group in her home; soon this group was meeting in the basement of the Châtenay church. Friendships developed and matured; and a vision developed of a “therapeutic village” in which local people with acute social and spiritual needs could experience ministry and support in a setting more attentive than would be possible in a congregation. The Witmers asked for support for the initiative from MBM and the MMF. There ensued a period of intense discernment. Wilbert Shenk for MBM sensed that the proposal for the inter-confessional therapeutic community was “too good not to be implemented”; French Mennonite theologian Claude Baecher was also in favor of it. But there were hesitations from some in the Châtenay congregation, and also among MMF supporters in eastern France. In 1983, to the Witmers’ grief and grievance, MBM decided not to proceed with the vision locally; and by the following year it was clear that it would not be implemented elsewhere in France. The reason was deep in the tradition of the MBM-MMF partnership: collaboration. According to Shenk, whatever MBM might have preferred, the decision “privileged the preference of its partners in an attempt to protect the existing fruits of the partnership’s past efforts while leaving open the possibility for future collaboration.”

This is an important book. All who read it will be grateful to David Yoder Neufeld. As he has demonstrated in an article in the October 2016 issue of *MQR* he is one of the tiny group of emerging authorities on sixteenth-century Anabaptism. In this book he shows his adaptability, his historical craft, and his felicitous writing. The research undergirding *Common Witness* is impressive: Neufeld’s work with the sources—interviews, the French Mennonite periodical *Christ Seul*, the archives of the MMF and MBM, and Robert Witmer’s indispensable private archive—is meticulous. Using these materials, he thinks lucidly, sorts out issues, sees what is significant, and attempts at all times to be fair. At times I wished for Neufeld to engage the French and American Mennonite partners with greater theological depth; and I would have liked to see him adopt a global framework for North American missionary efforts—how did what MBM was doing in France fit in with what it was doing in West Africa or Japan? But Neufeld’s book will not only interest Mennonites; it will also speak to all

Christians who care about innovative forms of mission. The story that Neufeld tells is a bilateral story, a story both French and North American. The theme of co-working that courses through the story is a deep New Testament theme all too rare in mission history. May the Mennonite collaboration recorded in this book provide inspiration, point to precedents, and resonate widely.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

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False Prophets and Preachers. Henry Gresbeck's Account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. By Christopher S. Mackay. [Early Modern Studies Series, vol. 18] Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press. 2016. Pp. x, 317. \$ 65.

The book reviewed here is a careful, idiomatic English translation of Henry Gresbeck's eyewitness account of the Anabaptist rule in Münster in Westphalia, February 1534-June 1535. Gresbeck's property was confiscated by the Bishop of Münster in the aftermath of his restoration to power in 1535. Christopher Mackay reasons that the probable reason for Gresbeck's account was his hope for the restoration of his property, hence "one would imagine that the work was written sooner rather than later." Mackay refers to his companion volume that edits Gresbeck's Low German text and is likely based on Gresbeck's original manuscript, and is clearly superior to the later manuscripts that C. A. Cornelius used in the prior publication of Gresbeck, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das münsterische Wiedertäuferreich* (Münster, 1853). Cornelius first exposed the insufficiencies of the history of Münster Anabaptism produced in Hermann von Kerssenbrock's *Anabaptistici Furoris Ennarratio*, completed in 1573, and published in a Latin critical edition in 1900. In 2007 Mackay published an accurate English translation edition of Kerssenbrock, *Narrative of the Münster Madness: The Overthrow of Münster, the Famous Metropolis of Westphalia* (Leiden: Brill). As he observed, Kerssenbrock has had vast significance for the historiography of Münster, was an eyewitness of the events that preceded the Anabaptists coming to power, and preserved pertinent documents that would otherwise have been lost.

Mackay identifies Gresbeck as a carpenter who returned to Münster at the time of the Anabaptist takeover. Gresbeck claimed that he was previously employed as a *Landsknecht* (mercenary), a matter about which Mackay expresses doubt. Gresbeck himself explained his return to Münster as motivated by the need to look after his mother's property. Mackay reasons that since most non-Anabaptist men were either leaving Münster to avoid the Anabaptists, or expelled by them in February 1534, Gresbeck was probably at first sympathetic to the Anabaptists, especially to their ideal of abolishing money and equalizing wealth. He married after his return to Münster; the marriage was to a patrician woman probably left behind in Anabaptist Münster to secure family property. Gresbeck's aversion to the institution of polygamy in July 1534 seems very genuine. Also, as a Münster burgher, his account blames the entire Münster debacle on the "Hollanders and the Frisians." Even for Gresbeck, it was impossible to blame the whole Anabaptist regime in Münster on outsiders—prominent among the "rebaptizers" were