

Ian Kleinsasser, *Blessings and Burdens: 100 Years of Hutterites in Manitoba*. MacGregor, MB: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre, 2019. Pp. iv + 111. Softcover, \$12.

The Hutterites represent the largest communal society in the world today with a membership of some fifty thousand individuals in five hundred communities (33). *Blessings and Burdens* focuses on the Hutterite experience in Manitoba and comes from a series of three lectures given by Ian Kleinsasser from the Crystal Spring community as the inaugural Jacob D. Maendel Lectures, held in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, in 2019. Previous studies, such as William Janzen's *Limits on Liberty* (1990), have taken a broad approach to how groups like the Hutterites relate to the Canadian state. In Kleinsasser's lectures, given to mark the hundredth anniversary of permanent Hutterite settlement in Canada, we see how commemoration is an important function of a community. The high-quality academic lectures were intended to benefit the church and for the church to influence academia.

The book is written as a "cautious 'first word'" (ii) about Hutterite history in Canada. It aims for readers who are already familiar with aspects of Hutterite history, such as the three main groups of Hutterites (Schmiedeleut, Dariusleut, and Lehrerleut). The focus is on the story of the Schmiedeleut, based in Manitoba.

Over his three lectures Kleinsasser describes the external and internal forces at work in Hutterite communities. As he notes, "the Hutterite church was constantly shaped by the changing social, legal, and financial systems of their host nation" (16). Persecution by their neighbours because of their peace principles prompted Hutterites to move from South Dakota to Canada. Re-establishing their communities took negotiations with government, a pooling of resources, determination, hard work, and dealings with land speculators. During the economic and agricultural depression of the 1930s, Hutterite communities incorporated so they could borrow money. During the Second World War they participated in the alternative service program established by the Canadian government. Governments in Alberta and Manitoba saw them as a "problem" and sought ways to assimilate the Hutterite population into Canadian society, and enacted legislation to restrict the expansion of their communities, some of which remained until 1973. Legal requirements on individuals to pay income tax and contribute to the Canada Pension Plan challenged the Hutterian communal lifestyle and were opposed. The Dariusleut group took a different approach to the

question of income tax than the others, which later led to tension between the communities.

Internal dynamics are also discussed at length, such as the question of what role mission should take in the Hutterite understanding of their communities. Does the church grow by natural means, or should individuals and even whole communities be welcomed into the Hutterian community? The relationship between Hutterites and the German-born Bruderhof community features prominently in this history. It became a significant source of conflict, and led to division not only between Hutterites and this fellow communitarian (but culturally distinct) community, but also between Hutterites.

A second internal conflict arose around education. To the author's amazement, the government-run education system was simply accepted by Hutterites. Teachers came from outside the community and German language and religious instruction were pushed to the outside of the regular school day. Education is one of the main vehicles of assimilation, Kleinsasser notes. He asks, "Has the public system served us well in cultivating vibrant faith communities?" (19) and contends that "we have maintained but not improved our foreparents' vision for communal life" (33). Schmiedeleut communities began addressing this by producing their own teachers with a cautious start in 1962, an effort which has since grown.

Leadership is a third internal force that Kleinsasser discusses. Strong leadership was needed to shepherd the communities to Canada, advocate, and negotiate with governments. However, leadership was challenged from other Hutterite groups, and there were tensions between American and Canadian leadership, and even within the Schmiedeleut group, causing legal actions and what Kleinsasser describes a "church war" (102). This led to the division of the Schmiedeleut into Group 1 and Group 2 in 1992.

This is a well-written book by an insider utilizing insider documents and oral tradition. An appendix or glossary explaining names and terms, such as the three main groups, would make the book more accessible to a wider range of readers.

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