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**The Hutterites and the Bruderhof:
The Relationship Between an Old Order Religious Society
and a Twentieth-Century Communal Group**

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Abstract: The twentieth-century merger of the Hutterites, an old order Anabaptist group established in the 1520s, and the Bruderhof communities, founded by Eberhard Arnold in Germany in 1920, was unexpected, complicated and singular. On two occasions, from 1930 to 1955 and from 1974 to 1995, the groups joined together as a single Christian communal body. During these years there was an active attempt to bring forth spiritual and institutional unity. Cultural, ideological and organizational differences, however, caused significant conflict between the two groups. These differences included theological emphases, styles of worship and decision-making as well as varying perspectives on evangelism, social action, education and church discipline. The relationship formally ended in 1995 but both groups have been changed as a result of the association.

The association between the Hutterian Brethren and the Bruderhof communities has been long and complicated. On two occasions, from 1930 to 1955 and from 1974 to 1995, the two communal groups joined formally in Christian fellowship. During these years there was an active attempt to bring spiritual and institutional unity to two, in many ways, very different societies. But in the early 1990s the relationship began to unravel and today little remains of the association that once existed.

The Hutterite-Bruderhof affiliation provides a rare opportunity to evaluate what can happen when an old order Anabaptist society and a twentieth-century religious movement attempt to merge. What is perhaps most amazing is the near success of this venture and the way in which it has changed both groups in significant ways, culturally and ideologically. This article reviews the history of the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship, discusses ideological and social differences and similarities, and reflects on the influence that each assembly continues to have on the other.

THE HUTTERITES

The Hutterites have their roots in the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement in Austria. Unlike most Anabaptists, with whom they were in agreement on other theological matters, they believed that true Christians should live communally. This teaching was based on accounts of early Christian life in the Book of Acts: on the proximity between communal organizational development and the Pentecost appearance of the Holy Spirit. The example of Jesus was also given reference. As a Hutterite sermon puts it: "Christ himself observed community [of possessions] with his disciples."¹ The Roman Catholic Church too had preserved communal forms of life for its secular and religious clergy, though not for the laity.

The Hutterites believed that there was no private property in heaven. Thus, in the words of one Hutterite minister, it followed that "there should be none either among God's people here on earth."² They taught the concept of *Gelassenheit*—that to be a true Christian one must turn over the individual will to God while simultaneously yielding, in a mutual sense, to members of the community of believers. It was understood that one could not be fully committed to God without being completely unified with other Christians.³

Because of intense persecution in Austria, many Anabaptists there resettled in Moravia and Slovakia in the late 1520s and 1530s, where they were initially welcomed by members of the local nobility. It was in Austerlitz (Moravia) in 1528 that Anabaptist leaders Jacob Wiedeman and Philip Jager first inaugurated community of goods with a group of 200 believers. Some members of that assembly along with other Austrian and South German Anabaptist migrants eventually organized into a church led by the Tyrolean hat maker and former Peasants' War sympathizer Jacob Hutter. Hutter was deeply committed to fully communal Christianity and believed that God had called all Christians to live this way. What became the largest communal Anabaptist group thus took on his name, although Hutter himself was executed in 1536.⁴

1. "Sermon on Baptism," in *Selected Hutterian Documents in Translation*, ed. John Hostetler, Leonard Gross, Elizabeth Bender (Philadelphia: Temple University Communal Studies Center, 1975), 102.

2. Hans Decker, interview, June 1988.

3. Robert Friedmann, *Hutterite Studies* (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1961), 83.

4. Important sources for information about the early Hutterites are the following: Hutterian Brethren, ed., *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume I* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1987); Hans Fischer, *Jakob Huter* (Newton, Kan.: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956); Werner Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the*

Peter Ridemann, who became the leader of the Hutterites in 1542, wrote his *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*⁵ (the Hutterite confession of faith) in 1540, while imprisoned in Hesse. Appointed members also began to document the group's history in the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, a unique Anabaptist accomplishment.⁶ The Hutterites then experienced a "Golden Age" in the mid-to-late 1500s, when they grew to as many as 30,000 people as the group continued to evangelize in Germany and Austria.⁷ Under the leadership of Peter Walpot major attention was also given to the development of internal organizational and governing structures.⁸ But periods of extensive persecution followed, causing the Hutterites to give up communal life on a number of occasions, and leading the small group that remained to continue to move eastward during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the pursuit of religious freedom.

By the 1850s about 400 Hutterites, who were no longer living in community, had established five villages near the Mennonite Molotschna Colony region in Ukraine.⁹ It was there, at Hutterdorf village, that Michael Waldner, in 1859, reestablished full community of goods, after being called to do so by a "spirit" of God, and feeling the strong pull of Hutterian communal theological traditions.¹⁰ Additional communal experiments followed in other Hutterite villages.

Reformation (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); and James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

5. Peter Rideman, *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1970). A later translation by John J. Friesen—*Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith* (Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press, 1999)—contains valuable biographical information.

6. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume I* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1987) and *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume II* (St. Agathe, MB: Crystal Spring Colony, 1998). Volume II was published after the Hutterite/Bruderhof division in 1995. Much of the editing and translation work for the second volume was done by Bruderhof members Eileen Robertshaw, John Hinde and Winifred Hidel. Final publication responsibilities were undertaken by the "progressive" Schmiedeleut group, under the leadership of Jacob Kleinsasser who did extensive editorial work himself.

7. Wes Harrison, *Andreas Ehrenpreis and Hutterite Faith and Practice* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1997), 19.

8. Leonard Gross, *The Golden Years of the Hutterites* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1998), 30-31.

9. John Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 105.

10. Robert Friedman, ed., "The Reestablishment of Communal Life among the Hutterites in Russia," *MQR* 35 (April 1965), 147-152. Stefan C. Christopher, ed., "A Description of the Beginning of True Christian Community Among the Schmiedeleut Hutterians, As It Began by the Power of the Spirit" (Unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author, 1972).

In the 1870s, the Hutterites immigrated as a group to Dakota Territory. They have lived in relative isolation there and in other parts of the northern plains of the United States and the prairie provinces of Canada, ever since. At the time of their arrival in North America, two-thirds of the members—known as *Prairieleut* or prairie people—settled on privately owned farms. They organized their own congregations, most of which later joined the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren or General Conference Mennonites.¹¹

The remaining one-third, about 425 people, established communal colonies along the James River. They could not agree on central leadership, however, and split into three different groups (or *Leute*), all of which adhered to Riedemann's confession of faith. The three groups are the Schmiedeleut, named after Michael Waldner, a blacksmith or *Schmied*; the Lehrerleut, after Joseph Wipf, a teacher or *Lehrer*; and the Dariusleut, after their leader, the minister Darius Walter. These three Hutterite groups still exist, although in 1992, the Schmiedeleut Hutterites divided into two separate factions, a development that was deeply influenced by the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship. Until recently, differences between the three groups were based primarily on highly distinctive social practices, idiosyncrasies that were difficult for an outsider to discern.

Today about 42,000 Hutterites live in some 430 colonies.¹² The old order group retains a unique Tyrolean dialect, *Hutterisch*, and a singular, plain and consistent clothing style. The Hutterites have been very successful historically in retaining high percentages of children in the society, leading to exponential growth. This continues to be the case among the Lehrerleut and Dariusleut, though not as much among the divided Schmiedeleut.¹³ The Hutterites have placed very little emphasis on missionary activity since the late eighteenth century. The community that has been created, therefore, is a somewhat closed assemblage of clans with only fourteen predominant surnames.¹⁴ The Hutterites have

11. Rod Janzen, *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists* (Hanover, N.H.: The University Press of New England, 1999). Hutterite-Mennonite Centennial Committee, ed., *A History of the Hutterite-Mennonites* (Freeman, S.D.: Hutterite-Mennonite Centennial Committee, 1974).

12. Sources for the 42,000 figure, which is an approximation, include Tony Waldner (Forest River Colony, North Dakota), David Decker (Starland Colony, Minnesota); *Mennonites and Brethren in Christ World Directory* (Kitchener, Ont.: Mennonite World Conference, 1998); *James Valley 2004 Address Book* (Elie, MB: James Valley Book Centre, 2004).

13. Hutterite authorities suggest a substantially reduced rate of membership growth among the Schmiedeleut since 1992 due to the Bruderhof/Hutterite split and a significant movement of Hutterites to various evangelical Protestant groups.

14. Rod Janzen, *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists*, 257-264.

continued to maintain as much separation as possible from mainstream American and Canadian societies.

THE BRUDERHOF

The Bruderhof has a much more recent history, with different social and theological roots. The society was established by Eberhard Arnold in 1920 as a Christian commune in the village of Sannerz, Germany. Arnold, who held a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Erlangen, was influenced by the life and teachings of a nineteenth-century pastor and theologian, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) and by Blumhardt's son, Christoph (1842-1919). Arnold was introduced to the Blumhardts through the Swiss religious socialist Hermann Kutter. While the elder Blumhardt was a churchman, the son was not so much interested in the institutional church as in the way that the kingdom of God breaks into people's lives.¹⁵

Arnold was also an active participant in the German Free Youth Movement (*Jugendbewegung*), which called for the rejection of bourgeois conventions, the implementation of social and economic reforms, a return to nature and the simple life, and a rediscovery of German folk traditions. And for a number of years Arnold was involved in the work of the Salvation Army and was a leader in the German Student Christian Union. He was influenced as well by the communal traditions of the early Church and the practice of the sixteenth-century Hutterites about whom he had read.

Three distinctive ideological streams thus affected Arnold's thinking: the German Youth Movement, in its secular and religious manifestations; the Blumhardts; and the faith and practice of the early Christians in Jerusalem. Imaginatively blended, these foundations form a unique theology and an important ongoing demarcation between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites. As Arnold put it succinctly in one of his last letters: "I hold firmly to the inward and outward uniting of genuine old Hutterianism with the attitude of faith of the two Blumhardts and with the life-attitude of the true Youth Movement as a real and wonderful providence for your future. . . ."¹⁶

15. Biographical information about Eberhard Arnold is found in Markus Baum, *Against the Wind: Eberhard Arnold and the Bruderhof* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough, 1998); Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1964); and Yaacov Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers: A History of the Bruderhof* (London: Transaction, 1996).

16. Hutterian Society of Brothers, ed., *God's Revolution: the Witness of Eberhard Arnold* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 90.

With his wife, Emmy (formerly Von Hollander), her sister Else and a handful of kindred spirits, Arnold not only established a religious community but also wrote numerous essays and pamphlets, many of which became foundational for the Bruderhof. Arnold also serendipitously discovered that the Hutterites were still in existence. There are a number of published accounts of how Arnold came to know this, often with the suggestion that the event occurred in the mid-1920s, and that the source was the Austrian Anabaptist scholar Robert Friedmann. Biographer Markus Baum has clarified that Arnold became aware of the Hutterite presence in North America in 1921, through an unsolicited letter from J. G. Evert, a philology professor at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas.¹⁷ It was Friedmann then who later, in January 1926, provided Arnold with the address of Dariusleut elder Darius Walter.¹⁸ Mennonite leaders John Horsch and Harold S. Bender were also helpful.¹⁹

Arnold began corresponding with Walter that same year, and without ever meeting a Hutterite face-to-face, he soon asked the group to accept the Bruderhof community into membership. As Arnold later wrote, he wanted to "ensure ... the continuance" of the Bruderhof, by establishing a concrete relationship with a like-minded Anabaptist group.²⁰ Arnold was not interested in forming yet another Protestant sect.

Understandably, the Hutterites would not consider Arnold's request without direct conversations. They wanted to evaluate Arnold's communal Anabaptist credentials. So in 1930, Arnold journeyed to North America, where he visited all thirty-three Hutterite colonies then in existence in an attempt to seek full communion with the old order group and to raise funds. We know from Arnold's detailed diary account that the Rev. Christian Waldner interrogated him for five and a half hours on a variety of theological topics.²¹ On another occasion a few Hutterites took Arnold's diary without his permission just to see what he was writing.²²

17. Markus Baum, *Against the Wind*, 134. See also Richard Dömer, Winnifred Hildel and John Hinde, *May They all Be One: The Life of Heini Arnold* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1992).

18. Baum, *Against the Wind*, 180.

19. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhon Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church* (Ulster Park, N.Y.: Plough Publishing, 1988), 2. This book is a translation of the Eberhard Arnold diary account of his visit to North America in 1930-31. It also includes an assortment of letters written between 1928 and 1935.

20. *Ibid.*, 186.

21. *Ibid.*, 158.

22. *Ibid.*, 127.

In his journal Arnold often noted the deep devotion of the Hutterites, as in the following comment: "Community is so totally supreme that the salvation of the individual member . . . is seen solely in terms of obedient yielding and surrender to the community, of joyfully and unconditionally placing the community above the individual."²³ Arnold felt he had much to learn from the Hutterites, and he incorporated much that he saw in North America into his own community in Germany.²⁴ He cherished the Hutterite *Lehren*, for example, and copied dozens of sermons for his own library.

But in his journal Arnold also raised two important concerns. The first was what he perceived as a lack of unity within the Hutterian community. He was saddened by the division of the Hutterites into three groups with no central leader or financial structure.²⁵ Each *Leut*, furthermore, was composed of independently-functioning colonies, with noticeable economic disparity between them, a phenomenon Arnold referred to as "cursed collective egoism."

Secondly, although Arnold had great admiration for much of the written legacy of the Hutterites, he did not like the fact that the Hutterite sermons (*Lehren*) and *Ordnungen* reflected the social and theological conditions of the seventeenth century, rather than the sixteenth century. Almost no Hutterite sermons had been written down during the enthusiastic early years of the group's history. As Arnold wrote to Emmy:

The difference between our Bruderhof and American Hutterism consists largely of this: We seek to find our spiritual nourishment and foundation in the first and the second Hutterian periods . . . whereas in the American communities it is the later period (seventeenth century) that serves that purpose. . . . We don't want to become Hutterian in the sense of 1692; we don't want to become Hutterian in the sense of 1780; neither do we want to become Hutterian in the sense of 1930-31; but we do want to become Hutterian in the sense of those first sixty years, from 1528-1589.²⁶

During the 1500s the Hutterites grew most rapidly and were recognized for their missionary work and willingness to suffer martyrdom. In the sixteenth century the Hutterite communities were

23. *Ibid.*, *Brothers Unite*, 91.

24. Eberhard Arnold, "Address on his Fiftieth Birthday at the Rhon Bruderhof, July 26, 1933," pamphlet, Woodcrest Archives.

25. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Brothers Unite*, 29.

26. Baum, *Against the Wind*, 207.

also more centrally organized and had developed a number of well-known craft industries, including the making of pottery. Most of the Hutterite *Lehren*, conversely, were written during the middle of the seventeenth century, during the years when Andreas Ehrenpreis served as elder. This was the period directly following the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) when the Hutterite communities in Moravia were burned, pillaged and abandoned. Those remaining in Slovakia were heavily decimated due to extensive persecution and the direct and indirect effects of war.

MEMBERSHIP

The Hutterites were impressed with Eberhard Arnold's knowledge of the Bible and early Hutterite history, and by his personal commitment to communal life. In December 1930, therefore, a quorum of Hutterite ministers, speaking on behalf of all three branches, formally accepted the Bruderhof into the Hutterian Brethren. Arnold himself was re-baptized (for the second time as an adult)²⁷ and ordained as a Hutterite Servant of the Word. The Bruderhof thus became the first colony, as Arnold put it, to "belong simultaneously to the Dariusleut, Schmiedeleut and Lehrerleut."²⁸

Though the Hutterites thereafter often referred to the Bruderhof as the "Arnoldleut," the new group consistently rejected this term. At the time of their founding in Sannerz in 1920, the community had called itself the *Neuwerkler*, after *Neuwerk*, the branch of the Youth Movement they were most active in. They started using the German term "Bruderhof" ("place of brothers"), a designation historically used by the Hutterites, in 1926.²⁹

The Bruderhof and North American Hutterites had only intermittent relationships between 1930 and 1950. Eberhard Arnold died in 1935, before any subsequent direct contacts had taken place. Furthermore,

27. Michael Barnett, "The Bruderhof (Society of Brothers) and the Hutterites in Historical Context," doctoral dissertation (Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 103. Michael Barnett, interview, April 2004. Arnold's first adult baptism occurred in 1907 when he was in college at Halle. Barnett's dissertation was written primarily from a Bruderhof perspective and without a personal visit to a Hutterite colony.

28. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Brothers Unite*, 187.

29. With regard to nomenclature, the Bruderhof began to call itself the "Society of Brothers" in the late 1930s, after founding a community in the United Kingdom and needing to incorporate under an English name. They used this name until 1974, when, after reuniting with the Hutterites, they became the "Hutterian Society of Brothers." In 1985, in order to demonstrate their desire to become a more integrated part of the Hutterian movement, they dropped this name and simply became the "Hutterian Brethren." Ten years later, in deference to Hutterites who felt they were not true Hutterites, they reverted to using the name "Bruderhof."

National Socialist policies in Germany caused the Bruderhof to establish new communities in Liechtenstein and England, and eventually, in 1941, to move en masse to Paraguay after unsuccessful efforts to settle in the United States.³⁰ During this time Germany's Nazi government targeted the Bruderhof, attempting to take over the Bruderhof's school and to conscript its young men. Two Hutterites, David Hofer and Michael Waldner, who were visiting the Bruderhof in 1937, helped to prevent the Nazis from sending some members to concentration camps, though the Gestapo imprisoned three members.³¹ Part of David Hofer's diary was later translated and published in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*.³²

The next face-to-face contact with Hutterites occurred in 1949, when the four Bruderhof communities in Paraguay sent Alan Stevenson and Bruce Sumner to North America to renew contact and to raise funds. The trip was successful on both fronts, with \$25,000 and twenty-seven tons of supplies sent south. Stevenson did note, however, that although they "had met many, many deep, earnest, warm-hearted brothers and sisters, and we felt very, very close to them," he and Sumner had also "seen so much that we could not accept, so much insistence on traditions and customs."³³

One year later, in August 1950, the Hutterites reciprocated by sending ministers Samuel Kleinsasser and John Wipf to South America, where they were taken aback by a community that called itself Hutterian, yet allowed smoking, folk dancing, instrumental music and theatrical productions.³⁴ There also appeared to be a lack of emphasis on the Bible: Bruderhof members did not quote or memorize verses and God was sometimes referred to as a "Great Spirit" or the "Center of Life." After listening to a report from Kleinsasser and Wipf, the North American Hutterites admonished the Bruderhof for abandoning many Hutterite

30. Donald Durnbaugh, "Relocation of the German Bruderhof to England, South America, and North America," *Communal Societies* (1991).

31. Hans Meier, *Hans Meier Tells His Story: the Dissolution of the Rhoen Bruderhof in Retrospect* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing, 1979). Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 27. Chris Zimmerman, "The Bruderhof 1933-1943: A Brief Overview," unpublished manuscript, 2004.

32. Robert Friedmann, ed., trans., "Hutterites Revisit European Homesteads: Excerpts from the Travel Diary of David Hofer, *MQR* 33 (October 1959), 306.

33. Alan Stevenson, correspondence to Primavera Bruderhof, January, 1950. Woodcrest Archives. Arnold Mason, "Our Relationship with the Hutterians: Forest River, August-September 1955," unpublished manuscript, 1973. Bruderhof Archives.

34. John Hinde, "History of Primavera," unpublished manuscript, 1998, Bruderhof Archives. Ulrich Eggers, *Community for Life* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988), 116. Heini Arnold, correspondence with Rev. Arnold Hofer Jr., July 1973. Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

traditions. This led to a de facto breach between the two groups and a gradual abandonment of Hutterite costumes by the Bruderhof.

No formal break occurred, however, until 1955, when 60 percent of the members of the Forest River Colony (near Fordville, North Dakota) voted to leave the Schmiedeleut and join the Bruderhof. Forest River was indeed a colony with unusually expansive interests. The colony had made contacts with a number of Christian communal groups in the United States, and established a particularly close relationship with Clarence Jordan's interracial Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia. In 1950, 1953 and 1954 Jordan visited Forest River personally and a few colony members took up temporary residence at Koinonia via a "family exchange" program.³⁵

The Bruderhof itself was successful in establishing an American outpost, Woodcrest, in Rifton, New York, during that same period. In 1955 Forest River sent five men to help construct Woodcrest's first building (the "Forest River House"). While in residence the Hutterite carpenters were impressed by the spiritual vitality and outward-looking vision of the Bruderhof, leading to a number of additional contacts.

For many at Forest River the Bruderhof seemed a perfect amalgamation of Anabaptist communalism and a sense of mission that they found missing in modern Hutterianism. The Bruderhof had a difficult decision to make, however, since a significant minority of Forest River members did not want to leave the Schmiedeleut. In response the Bruderhof accepted a majority vote request of the membership, deferring to the Hutterite *modus operandi*, even though the Bruderhof itself believed in consensus decision-making.³⁶ The outcome was a formal break with the Hutterian Brethren, who were outraged that one of their colonies had switched *Leut* allegiances.³⁷ The Hutterites cut off all formal relationships with the Bruderhof for the next nineteen years and Forest River residents who did not want to join the Bruderhof moved to Schmiedeleut colonies in Manitoba.

35. The Forest River/Koinonia story is told in Dallas Lee, *The Cotton Patch Evidence: The Story of Clarence Jordan and the Koinonia Farm Experiment* (Americus, Ga.: Koinonia, 1971) and Ann Coble, *Cotton Patch for the Kingdom* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2002). The author interviewed Solomon Mendel, Forest River Colony (North Dakota) in 1987, with regard to personal experiences at Koinonia Farm.

36. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Woodcrest's 20th Anniversary*, unpublished manuscript, July 1974. Bruderhof Archives.

37. Society of Brothers, correspondence with "Schmiedeleut Colonies in Manitoba and South Dakota" (December 1955), Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana. Tony Waldner, *History of Forest River Community: 1949-1989* (Fordville, N.D.: Forest River Community, 1989), 19.

FOREST RIVER

Forest River itself quickly became a merged Hutterite-Bruderhof community: part ethnic Hutterite and part Bruderhof. (The Bruderhof itself consisted of a number of ethnic groups.) But things did not work out very well in this first of many cross-cultural Hutterite-Bruderhof exchanges. One Forest River member said that there was a great deal of excitement at first but that much of what happened was “scary” to her because virtually every Hutterite custom and tradition, cultural and theological, was now open to critique.³⁸ As Bruderhof leader Hans Meier later acknowledged: “we felt superior and more modern than the Hutterites.”³⁹

The Hutterites were accustomed to centuries-old worship practices and ways of living. Bruderhof members had their own traditions, many of them shaped by their love of natural beauty inspired by the Youth Movement. Theologically, they were influenced by Blumhardt’s plainspoken sermons, which emphasized the need to live for the kingdom of God in the here and now. They were also more open to changes in direction, “as the Spirit led.” At Forest River, in 1955, this meant that *Ordnungen*, schedules and established ways of doing things were put aside in favor of greater freedom and flexibility, which included the use of musical instruments, folk dancing and abandonment of the head covering for women. Most alarming to the Hutterites was the fact that even the running of the farm was seen as being of secondary importance to the “inner life” of the community. This often meant long meetings dealing with spiritual matters.

Eventually a significant number of the ethnic Hutterites had second thoughts about the relationship, even as Bruderhof members were growing tired of living on the isolated northern plains. Most of the latter also had a difficult time adjusting to a different mode of farming. The Bruderhof presence in North Dakota was thus short-lived. In 1957 the entire membership moved east to a new community in southwestern Pennsylvania (later “New Meadow Run”) and over the course of the next seven years, the Hutterites that remained in North Dakota slowly moved back into fellowship with the Schmiedeleut. Thirty-six Hutterites, however, followed the Bruderhof members east. In October 1956 one of

38. Ruth Baer Lambach, correspondence, February 2004.

39. Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers*, 193.

them, Lizzie Mendel, married the Bruderhof's Hans-Uli Boller. This was the first marriage across Hutterite-Bruderhof lines.⁴⁰

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES: QUAKERS, MACEDONIANS AND BRETHREN

The middle to late 1950s was a period of great change for the Bruderhof. New communities were being established in the eastern United States and, by 1961, the South American centers were closing down. This was also a time when many new people were joining, including a majority of the members of the Macedonia community in Georgia, numerous Quakers and a significant number of members from Midwestern congregations of the Church of the Brethren. Members also came from Celo, Kingwood, Koinonia and several other small communes.

In a 1953 letter written from the perspective of his new life in the Bruderhof, Church of the Brethren seminarian Bob Wagoner admonished his own denomination for not adhering to the peace position, lacking a close-knit fellowship, and not engaging in mutual admonition and assistance.⁴¹ Other Brethren agreed and were influenced by a series of letters that Wagoner and his wife, Shirley, sent to friends and relatives. These glowing and articulate statements were copied and circulated, leading the Wagoners, who eventually decided not to join, to become important advocates of the Bruderhof. Bob, a professor at Juniata (Pa.) College since 1965, and Shirley, a former book editor for Silver, Burdette and Ginn, say they still encounter people at the Bruderhof who thank them for those letters.⁴² It was the Wagoners' experience, for example, that led Brethren Merrill and Kathy Mow to visit Woodcrest in 1955 and to become members there six months later.⁴³ Mow eventually became a Servant of the Word, and, in the late 1980s, wrote a semiautobiographical history of the Bruderhof entitled *Torches Rekindled*.⁴⁴ His well-known mother, the writer Anna Mow, and his father, Baxter, were close friends of the Bruderhof for decades and are both buried at New Meadow Run.⁴⁵

40. Richard Domer, Winnifred Hildel, John Hinde, 202.

41. Robert and Shirley Wagoner, *Community in Paraguay* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough Publishing, 1991), 4.

42. Robert and Shirley Wagoner, interview, February 2004.

43. Merrill Mow, "A Confession of Faith," unpublished manuscript, 1956. Donald Durnbaugh collection.

44. Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled* (Ulster Park, N.Y.: Plough Publishing, 1989).

45. Charles Moore and Joe Keiderling, interview, January 2004. Donald Durnbaugh,

The Mows, like the Wagoners, were attracted to what the Wagoners called "totalistic Christianity" and a more holistic understanding of Scripture.⁴⁶ According to Mow, when he was a member of the Church of the Brethren, he "doubted the virgin birth and practically all biblical miracles" and did not understand the importance of a "personal relationship with Jesus."⁴⁷ As he writes in *Torches Rekindled*: "Before coming to the Bruderhof, I had the misfortune of having been in seminary. . . ."⁴⁸

In the 1950s many other Brethren also joined the Bruderhof, and today many of their children and grandchildren are active members of different Bruderhof communities. This was a very important development since most were graduates of Brethren institutions and presumed destined for leadership positions in the denomination.⁴⁹ Instead, the Mows, Swingers, Bloughs, Snavelys and many others adopted a new faith tradition. In turn they brought the influence of Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan traditions into the Bruderhof, even as they were, to an even greater extent, persuaded by the religious beliefs and practices of the Society of Brothers.⁵⁰

Between 1959 and 1961, the South American and European Bruderhof communities also underwent a major crisis that led to the departure, often demanded, of 540 people, including 294 children.⁵¹ Many former leaders either stepped aside or were asked to leave, including Servants Hans Zumpe and Roger Allain.⁵² This was a time of tremendous

interview, March 2004. Chris Zimmerman, interview, August 2004.

46. Bob and Shirley Wagoner, interview, February 2004.

47. Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 297.

48. Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 51.

49. Dale Brown, interview, January 2004, Donald Durnbaugh, interviews, March 2004, April 2004.

50. Joe Keiderling, Charles Moore, interview, January 2004. In January 2004, Woodcrest set aside an entire week of evening meetings to give attention to the lives of members who came from Church of the Brethren background.

51. Chris Zimmerman, "The Bruderhof, 1954-1962," (Unpublished manuscript, Bruderhof Archives, 2004). John Hinde, "History of Primavera." Hela Ehrlich and BURGEL ZUMPE, "List of Members who left in 1960-61," (Unpublished manuscript, Bruderhof Archives, 1992). Of the 540, 146 rejoined the Bruderhof in later years; 76 of these were children.

52. The 1959-1961 crisis is discussed from a Bruderhof perspective in Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*; Richard E. Domer, Winifred Hildel and John Hinde, *May They All Be One: The Life of Heini Arnold* (New York: Plough, 1992); and Peter Mommsen, *Homage to a Broken Man: The Life of J. Heinrich Arnold* (Rifton, N.Y.: 2004). Alternative views are expressed (positively) in Yaacov Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers* and (negatively) in Roger Allain, *The Community That Failed* (San Francisco: Carrier Pigeon Press, 1992) and Elizabeth Bohlen-Zumpe, *Torches Extinguished* (San Francisco: Carrier Pigeon Press, 1993).

controversy, the expression of radical differences of opinion and a complete change of direction. In the official Bruderhof view, the upheaval resulted from an effort to rediscover the vision of the community's charter members, centered on the Sermon on the Mount. Allain and Zumpe, alternatively viewed it as a move in a more pietistic, less social revolutionary direction. The stage was also set for renewed interest in contacts with the Hutterian Brethren.

REUNITING

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Eberhard Arnold's son, Heini, felt especially pulled toward the Hutterites. When the Bruderhof recommitted itself to a distinctive devotionalism during the crisis in 1959-1961, Heini Arnold stood at the center of a movement advocating a less secular approach. Roger Allain wrote that this was the time when the Bruderhof moved from being a "revolutionary world movement" to one that practiced "sectarian particularism" associated with the old order Hutterites.⁵³ Bruderhof members, then and now, disagree, indicating that less involvement in social activist and ecumenical movements was only a short-lived phenomenon.⁵⁴

In 1962 Heini Arnold assumed the position of Bruderhof "Elder," the first person in the group's history to hold this title.⁵⁵ Influenced by his father Eberhard's deep interest in a relationship with the Hutterites, and believing that the Bruderhof communities had strayed from an original focus on the teachings of Jesus, he began to rethink past actions, especially as they related to the Hutterites. At Woodcrest, for example, "denim jeans" and "sleeveless blouses" were common attire in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶ As one of Heini Arnold's biographers put it, "Woodcrest was a different world from prim and proper Primavera."⁵⁷ Heini's own outward-looking views had also led to many contacts, in non-Hutterite fashion, with a variety of social activist organizations, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Kibbutz movement in Israel.

With regard to the Forest River merger in 1955 Heini Arnold had always experienced grave misgivings, and he noted in a 1973 letter to

53. Roger Allain, *The Community That Failed*, 330.

54. Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 269-273. Chris Zimmerman, "The Bruderhof: 1954-1962," unpublished manuscript, 2003. Bruderhof Archives. Of the 550, 150 later returned to membership in the Bruderhof.

55. Heini Arnold was selected for this position in 1962.

56. Barnett, "The Bruderhof (Society of Brothers) and the Hutterites in Historical Context," 152.

57. Peter Mommsen, *Homage to a Broken Man: The Life of J. Heinrich Arnold*, 257.

Schmiedeleut minister Andrew Hofer Jr. that he had “sinned” and had “acted wrongly” toward the Hutterite ministers at the time.⁵⁸ Arnold was even at an important meeting at Anna Mow’s home in Chicago, where decisions about Forest River had been made. Even though he was deeply conflicted throughout the course of the merger discussions, Arnold had not contested the 1955 plan. He later expressed deep regret that he had not spoken out against it.⁵⁹ This sentiment did make it easier for the Hutterites to relate to Arnold in the 1960s, although in 1955 they were of the opinion that actions speak louder than words.

In 1962, Heini Arnold made entreaties to Schmiedeleut Elder Peter Hofer, asking forgiveness for the Forest River incident and seeking reconciliation.⁶⁰ Arnold’s visit to Manitoba two years later did not restore fellowship between the two groups, but he was personally forgiven and contacts between the Hutterites and Bruderhof increased. John Hostetler, the Mennonite sociologist known for his work on the Amish and the Hutterites, assisted in the Bruderhof-Hutterite rapprochement, since he was held in high regard by both groups. The active support of Schmiedeleut minister Jacob Kleinsasser, who visited Woodcrest unannounced in March 1973 and who was later, in 1978, elected Schmiedeleut Elder also proved important.⁶¹

In January 1974 Heini Arnold returned to Manitoba with a number of Servants of the Word, nearly all of them former members of the Church of the Brethren. At a meeting with representatives of all three Hutterite branches at Sturgeon Creek Colony, including 71 Hutterite ministers, Arnold and the Bruderhof Servants publicly asked forgiveness for their involvement at Forest River.⁶² As a stipulation for a full pardon the Hutterite ministers required that all former Forest River members who resided in the Bruderhof undergo temporary “exclusion” for their past actions.⁶³ Then, to the surprise of the Bruderhof contingent, the Society of Brothers was offered full membership in the Hutterian Brethren, which the Bruderhof group accepted.

58. Heini Arnold, correspondence with Rev. Andrew Hofer Jr., (July 1973). Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana.

59. Arnold Mason, ed., “Our Relationship with the Hutterians: Forest River, August-September 1955,” unpublished manuscript, 1973. Bruderhof Archives.

60. Richard E. Domer, Winifred Hildel, John Hinde, 229.

61. Heini Arnold, letter to Rev. Andrew Hofer Jr., (July, 1973), Archives of the Mennonite Church. Yaacov Oved, 292.

62. “Agreement at Sturgeon Creek” (Jan. 7, 1974), unpublished document, n.a. Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.; Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 209.

63. Barnett, “The Bruderhof (Society of Brothers) and the Hutterites in Historical Context,” 162.

A participant said that this turn of events at first caused great emotional turmoil for Arnold, who was distressed about the decision that he and the Bruderhof Servants had made. Members in the various Bruderhof communities had deliberated for almost a year about the general issue and kept in close touch throughout the proceedings. Formal reunification itself was approved that same night via phone calls between Manitoba and the various communities.⁶⁴ Still the invitation to reunite came as a surprise.

With the Bruderhof restored to the Hutterian fold, direct contacts increased dramatically, especially with the Schmiedeleut, recognized in the mid-twentieth century as the more progressive Hutterite branch, even though it was the Dariusleut minister, Elias Walter, who had been most open to Eberhard Arnold's approaches in the late 1920s. The following years were exciting ones in the history of the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship. The new association had particularly strong impact on the Schmiedeleut, where there was an increased emphasis on education, different worship styles and the development of nonagricultural businesses such as furniture and clock making. On the Bruderhof side, dress became almost identical to that in the west and there was a greater emphasis on Hutterian practices, with a significant focus on the Hutterite *Lehren* and *Ordnungen*.

There was also joint Hutterite-Bruderhof participation in work and mission activities. One former Bruderhof member recalled being part of a work crew sent to a Manitoba colony in the late 1980s to put up a hog barn.⁶⁵ Bruderhof dentists, teachers and accountants went west to offer their services, while Hutterite ministers, carpenters and plumbers helped out in the East.⁶⁶ Jacob Kleinsasser and Christoph Arnold worked together closely, both in Woodcrest and at Crystal Spring Colony, with Arnold at times assisting Kleinsasser at baptisms, marriages and funerals. In 1987 the two groups established a merged Schmiedeleut/Bruderhof community, Oakwood Colony, near Rochester, Minnesota. And in 1988 both groups were involved—the Hutterites financially, the Bruderful with personnel—in the establishment of the Michaelshof community in Birnbach, Germany, and a joint mission project established four years later in Palmgrove, Nigeria.⁶⁷

64. Johann Christoph Arnold, correspondence, August 2004. Merrill Mow, "January 1974 Re-uniting," Plough Publishing pamphlet 86/10 (December 2, 1986).

65. Russ Eanes, interview, February 2004.

66. Chris Zimmerman, interview, August 2004. Elias Hofer, North Harlem Colony (Harlem, Montana), interview, July 2005.

67. The author visited Michaelshof in 1994 and found a community besieged by

Many Schmiedeleut leaders hoped that the infusion of an energizing spirit that they saw coming from the Bruderhof might appeal to an increasing number of young Hutterites who were attracted to evangelical or fundamentalist Christianity. This hope was expressed often to the author during visits to colonies during the 1980s. One could feel the excitement as different Schmiedeleut colonies discussed the impact of the Bruderhof relationship at evening social gatherings, although there were always differences of opinion on directions that might be taken; and in certain quarters skepticism and discomfort were evident in the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship.

Heini Arnold died in 1982 and, a year later, was succeeded as elder by his son Johann Christoph after somewhat stressful internal deliberations.⁶⁸ In a private letter to Christoph before his death, Heini commented on the relationship between the two societies:

Should it ever happen that a very strict Elder comes (which could happen from any of the three groups) I advise you to do all you can to win him over. . . . Never give way in questions of "inner freedom" and "genuineness."⁶⁹

Some Hutterites, believing that the Bruderhof wanted to remake Hutterite life in its own image, held similar circumspect sentiments.⁷⁰ This was especially true of the more conservative Lehrerleut and Dariusleut, who were generally not interested in making many changes in their church or social life.

Some disaffection was thus simmering below the surface at the very moment when Bruderhof supporter Jacob Kleinsasser found himself involved in a number of financial predicaments, leading to hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses.⁷¹ In the mid-1980s Kleinsasser was deeply

unhappy neighbors in the Birnbach area who did not like the fact that such a large community of English-speaking "foreigners" with different beliefs and practices had purchased property in the area. The sticking point was local fears of "American developers." The Bruderhof vacated this property in March 1995, selling the site to a Rosicrucian group.

68. Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers*, 256.

69. Heini Arnold, *I Wish You the Way, the Direction* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1982), 3.

70. This is based on hundreds of personal conversations and interviews with Schmiedeleut and Dariusleut Hutterites during the period 1983-1993.

71. Wilma Derksen, "Hutterite conflicts exposed in court," *Mennonite Reporter* (July 10, 1989). Brian Preston, "Jacob's Ladder," *Saturday Night* (April 1992). Harold Jantz, "Hutterite trial tests the fabric of communal vision," *Christian Week* (August 8, 1989). See also Samuel Hofer, *The Hutterites: Lives and Images of a Communal People* (Saskatoon, Sask.: Hofer Publishers, 1998), 136, and Marlin Jeschke, "The Church Discipline Case Among the Hutterites," unpublished presentation, Communal Studies Association (1993). Alvin Esau, correspondence, June 2004. This story, as well as a discussion of its impact on internal

committed to communal Christianity and seeking a greater sense of dedication from individual members. In a 1985 public "letter" he noted: ". . . we should take more seriously our calling and not take it too much for granted that we live in community, that this is all we need."⁷² But Kleinsasser's more centralized approach to church leadership also caused conflict within the highly independent Schmiedeleut ministerium. Kleinsasser had instituted, for example, a new policy that asked visitors to secure prior permission before visiting colony sites.⁷³ More importantly, he began to assess colonies for centralized purchases (which allowed bulk buys and were often financially beneficial). These actions, however limited, took power away from individual colony members.

THE LEHRERLEUT/DARIUSLEUT BREAK

Hutterite discomfort with the Bruderhof had many causes and was related to differences of opinion on education (before 1974, very few Hutterites had high school diplomas), worship services (the Hutterites read seventeenth-century sermons while the Bruderhof drew on a more diverse canon, including the Blumhardts, Eberhard Arnold and Meister Eckhart) and relations with outsiders (the Bruderhof was more open to ecumenical collaboration on different projects). In November 1990 the Lehrerleut and Dariusleut Hutterite branches decided to end their relationship with the Bruderhof. In a strong letter they noted:

We, the Darius and Lehrerleut congregations, declare and reveal to you the Arnold Congregation, that hereafter you are not recognized as Brothers in Faith, and ask you to refrain, yes, stop using and tarnishing the Hutterite name and image with your anti-Hutterian deeds.⁷⁴

These "anti-Hutterian deeds," according to the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut statement, included an emphasis on secondary and higher education, community involvement, the use of fire and candles at

Schmiedeleut politics, is told and analyzed in great detail in Alvin Esau, *The Courts and the Colonies: The Litigation of Hutterite Church Disputes* (Victoria, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 2004). One major investment failure was a hog processing plant in Neepawa, Man.

72. Jacob Kleinsasser, "A Letter to the Whole Church: Especially to the Servants of the Word," *The Plough* (1985), 3.

73. Visiting permission form (circa 1987), in the possession of the author and provided by Tony Waldner, Forest River Colony, Fordville, N.D.

74. "The Hutterian Brethren Church to the Society of Brothers" (Dec. 11, 1990), unpublished document. Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Calif.

meetings (i.e., a different style of worship and celebration), the use of courts of law and musical instruments, the neglect of the Hutterite sermons and the Bible itself, and a belief in the millennium.⁷⁵ The joint statement ended with a pointed reminder: "Although it is said that you say you don't live on customs but on life, may we point out to you that a church without customs and traditions is not a true church."⁷⁶

But there are customs and traditions in the Bruderhof as well. In many ways it was the unique social practices of both groups—not just the Hutterites—that caused problems between the two societies. Although the Bruderhof yielded on relinquishing wedding dresses, outdoor baptisms and folk songs at religious services, commitment to specific ideological traditions—and the highly-charged terminology that accompanied such traditions—made it difficult for either side to fully accept the other. For example, one of the reasons given for the Lerhrerleut/Dariusleut break was disagreement on the issue of the millennium. Many Hutterites could not understand what Bruderhof members were saying when they suggested that the kingdom of God, in some form, might be attainable on earth.⁷⁷ Bruderhof member Charles Moore describes this belief, drawing on Christoph Blumhardt:

God is not concerned that we get into heaven; rather, heaven must come down to earth. . . . Down here is where Jesus appeared, not above in the invisible world. Here on earth he wants to appear again and again. Here on earth we may find him.⁷⁸

Moore then associates this "coming to earth" with the development of unity within the Christian community. In some ways Hutterites believe the same thing. Following a major sixteenth-century Anabaptist precept they accept the idea that the "kingdom of God" is, as Hutterite Samuel Kleinsasser has noted, "part present, part future."⁷⁹ But Hutterites use different terms to describe their beliefs and this led to significant definitional confusion stemming from two very different worldviews.⁸⁰

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. This statement is based on conversations with many Schmiedeleut Hutterites and is confirmed by Jacob Kleinsasser's published response in Hutterian Brethren, ed., *East-West Conference* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough, 1991), 16.

78. Charles Moore, "Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt," (Bruderhof.com web document, n.d., 6).

79. Samuel Kleinsasser, "An Open Letter to the Hutterian Church," unpublished manuscript 1993), 22, 23.

80. Ibid., 2.

It is also true that most Hutterites never read the Blumhardts nor would they accept some of their assertions if they did so. For example, in his sermon "The New Revelation," Christoph Blumhardt notes, "We dare boldly to say that 'revelation' is also needed today; it did not terminate with the Bible."⁸¹ Hutterites, by contrast, are strict biblicists. The Bruderhof understanding of what constitutes the "Word of God" places major emphasis on experiencing the "inner" "Word of God." This raised major concerns for the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut, who claimed to follow the "outer word," the Bible, literally.

SCHMIEDELEUT FACTIONS

After the Dariusleut/Lehrerleut expulsion the Bruderhof was in fellowship only with the Schmiedeleut. But this relationship did not last long. In 1992, in a surprise move, the Council of Schmiedeleut ministers moved to replace Jacob Kleinsasser as elder by a 95-75 vote. The ministers were upset by Kleinsasser's management procedures, financial ventures and a lawsuit filed against a fellow Hutterite, Daniel Hofer, over contested patent rights.

Many of the Schmiedeleut ministers believed that Kleinsasser had been unduly influenced by the Bruderhof. And they were especially uneasy now that the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut had cut off relationships, feeling that on their own the Schmiedeleut might not be able to forestall a feared Bruderhof makeover, a position that tended to overlook a simultaneous Hutterite-inspired transformation of Bruderhof life in the east. Continuous visits and conversations, short and long, caused both groups to undergo changes in different directions.

Jacob Kleinsasser, however, refused to recognize the validity of the ministers' vote for constitutional reasons and insisted that only those colonies who recognized his leadership were true Schmiedeleut.⁸² This led to a painful series of conflicts, including court battles, colony splits, family divisions and theological controversies, resulting in one of the worst crises in Hutterite history since the communal/noncommunal divisions in Ukraine in the 1850s and 1860s. The Schmiedeleut then divided into two separate groups: the followers of Jacob Kleinsasser (referred to in this article as "progressives") and the conservative

81. Vernard Eller, ed., *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdman's, 1980), 60.

82. Jacob Kleinsasser, correspondence with "Servants of the Word," Aug. 4, 1992. Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Schmiedeleut, who initially selected South Dakota minister Joseph Wipf as their elder (referred to here as “traditionalists”).⁸³

Table 1
“Hutterite” groups (2004)

1. Schmiedeleut
 - a. Traditionalists (Committee Hutterites, Gibbs)
 - b. Progressives (Hutterian Brethren, Jacob Kleinsasser group, Oilers)
 2. Lehrerleut
 3. Dariusleut
-

The traditionalists—who today represent about two-thirds of the old Schmiedeleut—cut off relations with the Bruderhof almost immediately after the break with Jacob Kleinsasser in 1992. They did so in consultation with the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut, and with statements like the following from Samuel Kleinsasser:

Our two cultures should not be blended because they are distinctive and incompatible. It is our wish that the Society’s members serve God in their own unique way, and leave us to serve Him as we see best.⁸⁴

Samuel Kleinsasser’s fifty-page “Open Letter to the Hutterian Church” accused the Bruderhof of being a “Trojan horse” within the

83. Names for the two groups have been in constant flux since 1992. A progressive Schmiedeleut Web site refers to the two groups as the “Schmiedeleut Hutterites” (the progressives) and the “Committee Hutterites” (the conservatives) because the latter presently function without a single *Leut* elder. On a day to day basis, however, the two groups are more commonly known as “Gibbs” (the conservatives) and “Oilers” or the “Jake Kleinsasser group (the progressives), due to the fact that banker Donald Gibb first publicized the extent of Jakob Kleinsasser’s financial difficulties, that Kleinsasser had once made investments involving oil wells and that Kleinsasser continued in his role as Elder in the progressive group. Whereas many traditionalists do not mind being called “Gibbs,” progressive Schmiedeleut do not like the term “Oilers.” It is interesting that the *James Valley 2004 Address Book* continues to list all Schmiedeleut colonies in alphabetical order, with no official recognition of any division.

84. Samuel Kleinsasser, “Our Broken Relationship with the Society of Brothers,” unpublished manuscript (1994).

Schmiedeleut.⁸⁵ In any case, by 1992, the Bruderhof was aligned with less than half of the Schmiedeleut.

A further divide between the Bruderhof and the progressive branch of the Schmiedeleut occurred three years later. One difference of opinion related to the joint mission in Palmgrove, Nigeria. This was a fascinating instance where the progressive Schmiedeleut ultimately displayed a greater resilience in an international mission effort than did the Bruderhof. The Bruderhof dropped its support for Palmgrove after large investments of time, money and human resources, while the progressive Schmiedeleut continue to be in fellowship.

During the mid-1990s Bruderhof members became increasingly dissatisfied with the progressive Schmiedeleut.⁸⁶ Many members had no interest in making more changes in Hutterian directions, feeling that the weight of Hutterite tradition was blunting the power of the spirit of God in their midst. It was only with gritted teeth, many former members said, that they had been able to accept Hutterian dress and sermons, and the need to hide certain books, musical instruments, tape recorders and compact disc players whenever Hutterite ministers visited.

Bruderhof members also suggested that the Hutterites were lax in their raising of young people, especially with regard to male-female relations and the monitoring of the various activities of young children.⁸⁷ Hutterites in response said Bruderhof children who attended public high schools were involved in the same, if not worse, activities.⁸⁸

It is also true that husbands and wives, who were part of the twenty-two Bruderhof-Hutterite mixed marriages that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, often experienced significant cultural discomfort in the places where they ended up, whether at a hof or a colony. There were differences of opinion on child-rearing and work assignments. In the Bruderhof, for example, men often washed dishes, something that did not happen at Hutterite colonies. Spouses from the opposite group were sometimes offended by comments made about "their people."⁸⁹

85. Samuel Kleinsasser, "An Open Letter to the Hutterian Church," 22.

86. Johann Christoph Arnold and Joe Keiderling, interview, April 2004.

87. Johann Christoph Arnold, *Letters to Manitoba 1994* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough, 1994). Chris Zimmerman, interview, August 2004.

88. Interviews by the author with dozens of Schmiedeleut Hutterites in 1992 and 1993, in South Dakota, North Dakota and Manitoba.

89. This comment is based upon interviews with many Hutterites as well as former Bruderhof members.

This was certainly a difficult time for the Bruderhof, as members watched events unfold on the North American plains and prairies.⁹⁰ In the January 1995 issue of the Bruderhof publication, the *Plough*, Elder Christoph Arnold finally made a public statement suggesting that the Hutterites did not live in full community and had "little or no spiritual leadership." As he put it:

Ministers are no longer true servants of their flocks, but lord it over them, seeking to increase their personal authority. There is no clear guidance of youth by parents, rampant alcoholism, even among some community leaders; premarital sex is widespread and there is a false emphasis on eternal salvation.⁹¹

The break with the Hutterites was de facto complete after this statement was published in the *Plough*, and following a number of attempts to achieve reconciliation.⁹² In November 1995 a letter from the progressive Schmiedeleut formally ended the relationship.⁹³

Table 2
The Bruderhof-Hutterite Relationship

Years	Status	Group(s)
1920-1930	Unaffiliated	N/A
1930-1955	Full	All Hutterite branches
1955-1974	Unaffiliated	N/A
1974-1990	Full	All Hutterite branches
1990-1992	Affiliated	Schmiedeleut Hutterites
1992-1995	Affiliated	Progressive Schmiedeleut
1995-present	Unaffiliated	N/A

It is interesting to note that afterward almost every combined Bruderhof-Hutterite family unit moved east to join the Bruderhof. Many young

90. Johann Christoph Arnold, *Letters to Manitoba* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough, 1994).

91. Johann Christoph Arnold, "An Open Letter from the Bruderhof," *The Plough* (Winter 1995), 3.

92. Rich Preheim, "Hutterites Break Along East-West Lines," *Menmonite Weekly Review* (June 15, 1995).

93. Chris Zimmerman, "The Bruderhof and the Hutterites: A Brief Timeline," (Unpublished manuscript, Bruderhof Archives, 2003).

people as well, especially from progressive Schmiedeleut colonies, headed east. In his "Open Letter" Christoph Arnold had expressed concern for colony young people "who are looking for something new, who are sick and tired of tradition. . . ."⁹⁴ Very few persons with Bruderhof background, conversely, stayed in or moved to the old order colonies in the west.

Today the Bruderhof has a residential membership that exceeds 2,600, with five communities (Hofs) in New York; two in Pennsylvania; two in England; one in Camden, New Jersey; one in Kingston, New York; one at the original Bruderhof site in Germany; and two in New South Wales, Australia.

KEEP IN TOUCH (K.I.T.)

An additional development that affected the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship during the late 1980s and early 1990s was the creation of an ex-Bruderhof support group, K.I.T. (for "Keep in Touch"). K.I.T., and its publication arm, the Peregrine Foundation, published a newsletter that contained numerous stories, some of which described Bruderhof mistreatment. Copies circulated in the colonies, providing added material for already skeptical Hutterites.

One may, of course, find similar stories of wrongful treatment told by ex-Hutterites in any large city or town that is situated near a group of colonies. The problem with any association of former members, whether they are Amish, Catholic, Foursquare Gospel or Latter Day Saint, is that, notwithstanding the validity of heartfelt personal experiences and the obvious shortcomings of all religious institutions, members typically focus on the negative aspects of the group to which they once belonged. Scholar, and erstwhile mediator, John Hostetler, was also estranged from the Bruderhof in the early 1990s due to concerns he expressed with regard to Bruderhof decision-making procedures. In May 1988, Hostetler had written Christoph Arnold: "By admiring your example at Woodcrest the Brothers at great distances from you [i.e., the Dariusleut, Lehrerleut and Schmiedeleut] will eventually take you as a model of dedication."⁹⁵ Four years later Hostetler stated: "When a group is purely spirit-led instead of scripture-led, authority tends to become centered on personal authority instead of textually interpretative authority."⁹⁶

94. Johann Christoph Arnold, "An Open Letter from the Bruderhof," 3.

95. John Hostetler, letter to Johann Christoph Arnold (May 5, 1988). Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

96. John Hostetler, "Expelled Bruderhof Members Speak Out," unpublished but widely

HUTTERITE-BRUDERHOF SIMILARITIES

Differences that helped precipitate the Hutterite-Bruderhof fissure may be broken into three general categories: cultural, ideological and organizational. This is not to downplay the Hutterite and Bruderhof belief that disruptive "spiritual" forces were present and even central to the break, as these were manifested within cultural, ideological and organizational constructs. Both groups strongly acknowledge the power of evil. Both Jacob Kleinsasser and Christoph Arnold have stated publicly that dark supernatural forces are especially powerful when new forms of Christian unity are about to be realized.⁹⁷

But amidst the many specific differences there are also important similarities. Both Bruderhof members and Hutterites, for example, live socially distinct lives and consciously strive to incarnate values that often oppose the broader culture. In both societies, even in the modern age of high technology, access to media is more controlled than one finds in mainstream America, while there is a strong emphasis on *Gelassenheit*, the submission of the individual will to God. In the Hutterite colonies, for example, the "breaking of a child's will" occurs at the age of two, with the use of the strap when necessary. The Bruderhof, by contrast, discontinued the use of corporal punishment in 1975 and, in accordance with progressive educational principles, looks on *Gelassenheit* as a more subtle journey that extends over a longer period of time.⁹⁸ Bob and Shirley Wagoner note that "individuality" is emphasized in the Bruderhof, while "individualism" is not.⁹⁹ Still the importance of being obedient to God is heavily emphasized in both groups.

The Mennonite historian Leonard Gross believes that to become fully part of the Hutterites or Bruderhof, one has "to join culturally," which he suggests is almost impossible to do.¹⁰⁰ Historians and sociologists have customarily believed that a closed cultural context is primarily a characteristic of the ethnic Hutterites, not the Bruderhof.

circulated manuscript (1992). Important information with regard to the K.I.T./Bruderhof relationship was provided by Yaacov Oved, interview, September 1998, correspondence, February 2004; Donald Durnbaugh, interview, March 2004; Ramon Sender and David Ostrom, interview, February 1995.

97. Rich Preheim, "Hutterites Break Along East-West Lines." Johann Christoph Arnold, interview, April 2004.

98. Eberhard Arnold, *Children's Education in Community* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1976).

99. Bob and Shirley Wagoner, interview, January 2004.

100. Leonard Gross, interview, February 2004.

But the Bruderhof is now more than eighty years old. It is one of the most resilient communes in the United States, and the Western world. Bruderhof demographics have always mirrored general trends in the culture at large. In the mid 1950s and the early 1970s, for example—periods marked by a groundswell of interest in cooperative and communal living—there was a major influx of new people in the Bruderhof. For the next twenty-five years, however, there were few guests and even fewer new members. Only since 2000 has this trend began to reverse. Christoph Arnold agrees that this demographic stabilization in the late twentieth-century has been one of the Bruderhof's primary contemporary concerns.¹⁰¹

From 1975 to 2000 the Bruderhof created its own high context culture as most members were born and raised in the unique confines of the Hof. The often-noted distinction between a highly ethnic Hutterite group—a self-contained subculture—and a constantly changing multiethnic Bruderhof culture, was quickly becoming obsolete. To this day Bruderhof members describe certain surnames like “Potts,” “Meier,” “Shirky” and “Domer” as “Bruderhof” family names. It is also true that neither group, Hutterite or Bruderhof, practice birth control. A recent informal study of Bruderhof members, excluding the 1980s-era influx of western Hutterians, shows the following: whereas about 50 percent of members age 70 and over were born outside the Hof, this is only the case for 30 percent of those ages 50-70; and the number decreases significantly in the 20-30 age group.¹⁰² This is historic and potentially transformative as the community begins to look more and more like other ethno-religious assemblages. As Benjamin Zablocki noted over thirty years ago: “It can be argued that an intentional community can only become a true community by undergoing a devolution to the state of ethnic subculture.”¹⁰³ The Bruderhof disagrees, however, and is actively working in different evangelistic directions. Chris Zimmerman notes:

A true community will die if it insulates itself from change and external interactions. It is precisely in order to counter this development that we have embarked on new ventures in the inner city and in Europe where the “traditional” form of an enclosed Bruderhof campus has been set aside in favor of a new model—

101. Johann Christoph Arnold, interview, April 2004.

102. This phenomenon was confirmed by Johann Christoph Arnold and Joe Keiderling, interview, April 2004.

103. Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community: An Account of the Bruderhof – A Communal Movement Now in Its Third Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 65.

small "Bruderhof Houses" whose members take jobs in the vicinity so as to interact with other individuals on a daily basis.¹⁰⁴

CULTURAL PARTICULARITIES

Each Hutterite colony and Bruderhof community has significant cultural particularities. Even seemingly mundane disparities sometimes have important social and psychological implications. For example, among Hutterites, talk is blunt. Hutterites have a tendency to tell you exactly what they think of you and your ideas. Many do it with sarcasm and a sense of irony. There is no reason to take offense at any of this because it is expected that you will respond in the same manner.

Conversely, with Bruderhof members, conversations are more courteous, controlled and time-constrained. Appointments are made in advance; schedules are adhered to. Careful thought precedes speech as words are weighed. Bob Wagoner claims that at the Bruderhof no one would laugh at his jokes, his point being that life was taken very seriously there.¹⁰⁵ Although the author has personally engaged in many humor-laden conversations with Bruderhof members, a number of ex-Bruderhof residents did say that whenever they walked into the apartment of a family with Hutterite background, it was like entering a different cultural world.¹⁰⁶ Hutterites who visited the Bruderhof in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s say the same thing.¹⁰⁷

The bluntness with which Hutterites communicate is evident in their sermons. Note the following selection that describes those Christians who have decided not to live communally:

As soon as the pigs are brought home from the field and driven to the trough, one hears and sees how they grunt, whine and scuffle, step into the trough, slobber and squeal so that others dare not approach. Therefore it is impossible for godless men to live together. One cannot see any more evidence of rebirth in them than in a dog.¹⁰⁸

104. Chris Zimmerman, correspondence, August 2004.

105. Bob Wagoner, interview, February 2004.

106. This statement is based upon interviews with nine former Bruderhof members, from February-May 2004, in four different states.

107. This statement is based upon interviews with twelve Schmiedeleut and/or former Schmiedeleut Hutterites, February-May 2004, in Minnesota, Pennsylvania and North Dakota.

108. Hans Friedrich Kuentsche, "The Pentecost *Lehren*," in James Anderson, "The Pentecost Preaching of Acts 2: An Aspect of Hutterite Theology," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1972), 280, 281. Anderson translated the entire Pentecost sermon into English.

Another sermon, on Matthew 6, includes the following description of some church service attenders:

They sit during a sermon from the word of God, their hearts and minds wander after some other temporal things which they love....In the same way that a woman who besides her husband, looks at young boys, hangs her mind on them and wants to love them, is not true, honest and right.¹⁰⁹

GOSSIP

Another Hutterite distinctive is straight talk about the various people who reside at different colonies, about their strengths and weaknesses, the work that engages them, the decisions that members have made or are about to make, and virtually anything that takes place on the colony grounds, positive or negative. One might describe this phenomenon as "gossip." In any case it is an integral part of Hutterite life. The Bruderhof, conversely, has actively opposed negative speech from the beginning of its formation. Members do not like the way that information is rarely held in confidence in the colonies, the way that people constantly talk about each other. The Bruderhof's "First Law of Sannerz" states:

There must never be talk, either in open remarks or by insinuation, against a brother or sister, against their individual characteristics—under no circumstances behind the person's back. Talking in one's own family is no exception.¹¹⁰

As early as the 1930s Eberhard Arnold suggested in a letter to Elias Walter that "evil gossip" needed to be abolished in the colonies.¹¹¹

Gossip is a two-edged sword. As Ruth Lambach writes about the Hutterites, "Petty arguments and human likes and dislikes are much too often passed on, from one generation to the next."¹¹² But gossip can also serve as a protection against people taking themselves too seriously, a common human problem. In one of her books on spirituality Kathleen Norris writes that gossip can provide insights into the workings of the mind and heart.¹¹³ It also provides a different kind of forum for

109. Joshua Hofer, ed., *Hutterite Lehren on Matthew 6* (Elie, Man.: James Valley Colony, 1981).

110. Eberhard Arnold, *Foundations and Orders of Sannerz and the Rhon Bruderhof* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1976), 48, 49.

111. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Brothers Unite*, 260-262.

112. Ruth Baer Lambach, correspondence, March 2004.

113. Kathleen Norris, *Dakota* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1993).

expressions of dissent. Among the Hutterites it does not really matter what you think or say, as long as your actions adhere to the *Ordnungen*. Hutterites also insist that Bruderhof Servants do not adhere to the Law of Sannerz when they speak judgmentally of the shortcomings of certain members. The Bruderhof response is that such conversations take place face-to-face.

WORK AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Yet another cultural difference concerns perspectives on work. In the Bruderhof—as in the Shaker community—work is recognized as worship. And work is interrupted if an important spiritual issue requires discussion, as was discovered at Forest River in the 1950s. This is not the way the Hutterites view work. For them work is simply a way to put bread on the table and work is rarely interrupted. Hutterites do not dislike how they make their livelihood. They simply do not associate the construction of a new hog barn with the worship of God.

The two groups also view nature quite differently. Although the Hutterites know the natural world intimately—and are perhaps “more connected to their specific place,” as a former resident in both societies puts it, they do not emphasize the importance of celebrating nature in song or verse. In the Bruderhof communities, on the other hand, literature, artwork and music often commemorate the beauty of nature. Bruderhof festivities are often held out-of-doors.

EDUCATION

Until the last two decades North American Hutterites did not emphasize the importance of formal education. Young people in Hutterite colonies typically attended school only as long as state and provincial governments required them to do so. Recent changes in practice relate primarily to a Schmiedeleut interest in training their own schoolteachers. When doctors or other professionals are needed, Hutterites contact outsiders with graduate degrees.

The Bruderhof, by contrast, has historically employed its own professionals, even in the medical field. It has encouraged young people to attend college and develop appropriate professional skills and the community is now welcoming its first Bruderhof born-and-raised lawyers, dentists and pilots.

One can find many examples of the cultural divide, all of which created significant problems between Hutterites and members of the Bruderhof. Different styles of personal interaction and communication

and varying approaches to work and education stirred up conflict. Yet one wonders how much this gap will narrow in the future, even without a formal institutional relationship. Consider that as a result of the Hutterite merger in the 1970s and 1980s almost 450 of the present 2,600 Bruderhof residents have ethnic Hutterite background.¹¹⁴ This very recent phenomenon has yet to be critically assessed.

IDEOLOGICAL DISPARITIES

Between the two groups one also finds significant disparities in faith and life. Important to any discussion in this area is the central role played by the writings of Eberhard Arnold in Bruderhof religious life and the similarly pivotal role played by the seventeenth-century sermons (the *Lehren*) for the Hutterites.

In the Bruderhof, Arnold's writings remain extremely important and Bruderhof ideology is founded on three distinct streams of thought, all of which influenced Arnold, as noted above: sixteenth-century Anabaptism, the nineteenth-century reflections of the Blumhardts and the early twentieth-century German Youth Movement. Arnold thus pulled various religious and social traditions together. Comparing this developmental process to that of the Hutterites, Leonard Gross notes, "Anabaptism developed with a highly collective discernment process, with no one charismatic leader providing most of the vision. Hutter passed on a tradition; he didn't invent one."¹¹⁵

While the Bruderhof honors Arnold's understanding of the Christian faith, and added such writers as Andre Trocmé, Soren Kierkegaard and Fyodor Dostoevsky to the list of Plough publications, the Hutterites listen to sermons written by leaders 350 years ago. In the Hutterite view, the *Lehren* are the best way to find out what the Bible means and how to live the Christian life. The *Lehren* typically begin with a passage from the Old or New Testaments, followed by a verse-by-verse exegesis and practical suggestions, with contextual transmediation made by some ministers. The sermons are considered specially blessed by the Holy Spirit and, with rare exceptions, they are the only sermons delivered in the colonies.¹¹⁶ Sources for theological understanding are thus very different in the two groups.

114. Joe Keiderling, Charles Moore, interview, January 2004; Johann Christoph Arnold, Joe Keiderling, interview, April 2004.

115. Leonard Gross, interview, February 2004. Leonard Gross, "Review of Markus Baum, *Stein des Anstosses: Eberhard Arnold, 1883-1935*," *MQR* (April 1999).

116. According to Herman Wollman, Starland Colony (Gibbon, Minn.), interview, May 2004, many progressive Schmiedeleut ministers are now reading from the collection of

ECUMENISM

Another contrast is the greater openness of the Bruderhof to work with other Christian groups on humanitarian and social justice projects. In recent years the Bruderhof has made common cause with Mennonite Disaster Service, Habitat for Humanity, John Perkins, Cesar Chavez, Pete Seeger and Ramsey Clark. And this is nothing new. Dwight Blough, Christoph Arnold and Milton Zimmerman marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in Alabama in the early 1960s.¹¹⁷ The Bruderhof has also established mini-communities in urban settings like in Camden, New Jersey. There is much greater awareness of popular culture, thus the large painting of Rastafarian reggae musician Bob Marley, alongside honored personalities like Dorothy Day, on the wall in front of the dining room at Woodcrest.

In the past few years Christoph Arnold has revised a previous book on forgiveness (*Why Forgive?*) and has made joint presentations with a former New York City Police Department detective, Steven McDonald, who was paralyzed by gunshots in Central Park but has forgiven his assailants for their actions.¹¹⁸ In June 2004, Arnold and other Bruderhof members were given a private audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.¹¹⁹

The Hutterites have not historically been involved in these sorts of endeavors, not even with other Anabaptist groups. Unlike at the Bruderhof, a visitor will not find New Left historian Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* used in Hutterite colony classrooms nor will one find a colony member dressed up like Santa Claus sliding down a plastic moonbeam as part of a Christmas season celebration.

THE "WORD OF GOD"

There are also differences of opinion on what constitutes the "Word of God." Hutterites believe that God's "Word" is found in the Bible as interpreted by the sermons. The Bruderhof agrees that the Bible—and particularly the New Testament—is central. The 1995 Bruderhof

sermons translated into English by Jacob Kleinsasser.

117. Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled*, 236.

118. "Breaking the Cycle of Hatred," *Staten Island Advance* (n.a., March 31, 2004). Johann Christoph Arnold, *Why Forgive?* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002). *Why Forgive?* is a revised version of the 1997 book *Seventy Times Seven* (Farmington, Pa.: Plough).

119. Jesse J. Smith, "Bruderhof Elder Meets With Pope," *Kingston (N.Y.) Daily Freeman* (June 30, 2004).

Constitution notes that the "foundation" of the church is built on "the words of Jesus" with emphasis on the "Sermon on the Mount."¹²⁰ But the Bruderhof places much more emphasis on the Bible's "inner meaning." Eberhard Arnold put it this way in one of his most important works, *Innerland*: "In this relationship between the Word of God in the heart and the word of God in the Bible, in this coming of the Word of God, the life-giving spirit is decisive."¹²¹ He also wrote that it is the "spark of light in every person" that brings the Word of God to life.¹²²

For the Hutterites, the fact that the "Word of God" is elucidated through the sermons ensures a stable and unified interpretation. Beliefs are clear and fixed. The Bruderhof, on the other hand, is more "spirit-oriented" than "word-oriented," as John Hostetler has pointed out.¹²³ From this perspective the Bible comes alive within the heart in the here and now. The "Word of God" also appears in many forms. Although Hutterites do not necessarily disagree with some of this thinking, they consider it precarious because of the possibility of multiple interpretations of inner experiences. As Michael Barnett notes, "Bruderhof members regularly discuss the messages of the Bible, but they do not emphasize its reading in public or commit it to memory."¹²⁴ From the Hutterite perspective there is too great a reliance on the Spirit as a guide without the tempering hand of ecclesiastical traditions and forms.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

While both groups believe in the "binding and loosing" authority of the church, there are also differences with regard to church discipline.¹²⁵ The Hutterites, like some Old Order Amish, cushion youthful temptation by allowing a measure of adolescent misbehavior, at least among males. This is sometimes described as "going up fool's hill."¹²⁶ The Bruderhof has a more active mentoring approach, and perhaps higher expectations,

120. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Constitution of Hutterian Brethren Church International* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 1995).

121. Eberhard Arnold, *Innerland* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough, 513).

122. John Howard Yoder, ed., *God's Revolution*, 33.

123. John Hostetler, "Expelled Bruderhof Members Speak Out."

124. Michael Barnett, "The Bruderhof (Society of Brothers) and the Hutterites in Historical Perspective," 235

125. Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Constitution*, 6. Peter Ridemann, *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*, 131-32.

126. A minister and I once came upon a group of Hutterite girls and boys dancing in the dining hall. This was "fool's hill" kind of activity.

although Bruderhof young people have also been known to engage in dishonorable activities (for example, the use of profanity and smoking) while attending public high schools, or on the Hof.¹²⁷ The practice of sending young people to public high schools directly introduces Bruderhof teens to American adolescent cultural trends and helps ensure that church membership does not happen automatically and thoughtlessly. In any case, transgressors are more strictly disciplined in the Bruderhof communities than they are in many Hutterite colonies and the Bruderhof takes a more conservative approach toward sexual matters.

The two groups also respond to unacceptable behavior on the part of adults in different ways. In both societies, Hutterite and Bruderhof, admonishment is part of everyday life. In the 1950s Clarence Jordan described this manifestation (among Hutterites) as an "I am my brother's keeper" mentality.¹²⁸ But expulsions from Hutterite colonies, when they occur, are generally self-chosen. A repentant individual can always return. One South Dakota Hutterite, Levi Tschetter, surreptitiously earned a master's degree and attended Lakota spiritual services. Still he was never expelled from the colony in South Dakota where he served for many years as an elementary and secondary school teacher.¹²⁹ Members who do something wrong in a Hutterite colony, admit it, stand up in front of the church, show repentance and humility, and the ritual is over; the sin forgiven and forgotten. The process is highly programmed. Everyone knows exactly what is going to transpire.

The Bruderhof, alternatively, believes that people undergoing discipline should reflect deeply—and often, at least in the past, for a lengthy period of time—on attitudes as well as behavior. They may even be asked to do this while living outside of the community, especially if the infraction is deemed serious. Individuals, as well as entire families, are at times asked to leave, not only for behavioral problems but for pushing particular agendas.¹³⁰

127. Myron Dietz, interview, February 2004. Steven Scott, interview, January 2004. Interviews were also conducted from February-April 2004, with former Bruderhof members and residents as well as non-Bruderhof high school students in Pennsylvania.

128. Dallas Lee, 100.

129. Levi Tschetter, interview, July 1983.

130. Families are presently kept together in these disciplinary actions, which in effect make children suffer the consequences of their parents' shortcomings. From the Bruderhof perspective, this practice draws family members more closely together.

THE CROSS

Another ideological difference involves the cross, the belief that true followers of Jesus will encounter persecution. The Hutterites expect to be harassed. When criticism comes—and it comes regularly from neighbors, the media and disaffected former members—they usually choose to ignore it. Throughout their lives Hutterites have sung the stories of the Anabaptist martyrs from the Hutterite *Gesangbuch*.

During the past two decades the Bruderhof, on the other hand, has developed a reputation in Hutterite, ex-Bruderhof and academic circles, deserved or not, for taking offense at people who criticize them.¹³¹ Many Hutterites wonder why there is such a strong need to respond to the opposition and to do so both in the courts and through published apologetics. In response, the Bruderhof say that very few critics have been taken to court and that many sixteenth-century Anabaptists as well circulated strongly worded polemics against those whom they felt misrepresented them. “The rare instances in which we went to court were an aberration from the norm,” notes one Bruderhof member.¹³²

MISSIONS

Until recently, and then only minimally, the Hutterites have not engaged in evangelistic endeavors. Instead they have remained separate from the outside world. In customary old order fashion, Hutterites have seen their present historical role as one of modeling Christian belief and practice, not evangelism.

The Bruderhof has taken a different approach, believing that God has called Christians to give testimony to their faith (as did the sixteenth-century Hutterites). The Plough publishing enterprise and the Bruderhof Web site are examples of the way that the Bruderhof has used, and continues to use, media to give witness to communal Christianity. In terms of ideology, therefore, differences of opinion on sacred texts, relations with nonmembers, evangelism, responses to criticism and church discipline all helped build walls between the two societies.

ORGANIZATIONAL DIVIDE

There are also significant organizational differences between the two groups. Some of these distinctions are related to size. Hutterite colonies

131. For specifics see Alvin Esau, *The Courts and the Colonies: The Litigation of Hutterite Church Disputes* (Victoria, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

132. Joe Keiderling, correspondence, September 2004.

rarely number more than 150 people, with each colony operating independently; the Bruderhof communities are larger (typically 250-350 people) and the entire society is centrally managed. Where practical, Servants at the different Hofs discuss issues of importance on a daily basis. The Bruderhof communities have also worked intentionally on creating a unified sensibility by connecting all seven United States Hofs (as well as the European and Australian communities on some occasions) via audio technology. General meetings of the American Hofs occur about once a week. Technology makes it possible for members, from upstate New York to southwestern Pennsylvania, to hear each other, helping to nurture a sense of common identity and unity.

Due to the small size of their independently-functioning colonies, individual Hutterites, however, are in actuality very close to centers of power. Hutterites thus believe that they are more empowered personally than are typical members of the Bruderhof. They consider decentralization to be a strength, not a weakness.

DECISION-MAKING

Some of the organizational differences are related to economic structure: manufacturing, for example, versus farming. Most Bruderhof members work in the "Community Playthings" and Rifton Equipment industries, not in the fields. Also significant, however, is the way that decisions are made. In the Bruderhof all policy determinations are made by consensus.¹³³ Heini Arnold wrote that making decisions this way is "the source of the spirit of Divine unity."¹³⁴ This is one reason why internal crises occur. The Hutterites by contrast make most policy judgments by majority vote and they do not expect full agreement as the decisions are made.

An important question in all discussions of consensus decision-making is the extent to which dialogue takes place before a determination is made, and who is involved in the process. In a colony policies are analyzed informally by everyone via the gossip mill, even before a vote is taken. Nothing quite like this happens in the Bruderhof, which relies more intentionally on formal discussion and Spirit-led discernment.

To give the reader some sense of what the method looks like, note that in late 2002 Christoph Arnold approached the various Bruderhof

133. Bruderhof Communities, "Constitution of Hutterian Brethren Church International" (1995), 1, 2.

134. Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers*, 257.

Servants of the Word and asked to be replaced as Elder.¹³⁵ This led to a time of prayerful consideration of successors by members in the various Bruderhof communities, who were asked to nominate potential candidates.

This process resulted in the submission of fourteen names.¹³⁶ In response Bruderhof Servants of the Word discerned two people for central leadership positions. The two names were then sent back to the membership for consideration at a general meeting of all of the Hofs. At this meeting there was opportunity for conflicting opinions "as the Spirit might lead." Any member might have questioned the choices. Joe Keiderling told the author that he has experienced times when "a lone voice of dissent" changed community directions.¹³⁷ In this case, however there was full unanimity. Richard Scott became the Elder; Gary Stanaway, the assistant Elder.¹³⁸

Former members insist that a quick assent to proposals brought forward by the Bruderhof leadership is a common reaction and reflects a lack of individual empowerment. Hutterite Samuel Kleinsasser describes Bruderhof members as "agreeable, docile, polite and submissive to leadership."¹³⁹ Bruderhof member Chris Zimmerman disagrees, noting that "depending on the gravity of a decision, the process may take a minute (buying a tractor, deciding to dig a new well, agreeing to a staffing change) or weeks (choosing a leader, deciding whether to buy a new property)."¹⁴⁰ Zimmerman said that proposals are often tabled with the simultaneous caveat that they not be discussed, except with spouses, for several days so that everyone has time to think about the issue independently and prayerfully, and to respond in writing or verbally.¹⁴¹ The Bruderhof thus does recognize the dangers of group-think. One individual who spent forty years in the Bruderhof noted, however, that she always felt extremely "alone" during the decision-making process, particularly if she had initial misgivings about the direction most members seemed to be taking.

135. This account is based upon conversations with Joe Keiderling and Charles Moore (January 2004), Charles and Leslie Moore (March 2004) and Johann Christoph Arnold and Joe Keiderling (April 2004).

136. Charles and Leslie Moore, interview, March 2004.

137. Joe Keiderling, correspondence, February 2004.

138. Gary Stanaway has since (in May 2004) resigned his position.

139. Samuel Kleinsasser, "An Open Letter to the Hutterian Church," 26.

140. Chris Zimmerman, interview, August 2004.

141. Chris Zimmerman, interview, August 2004.

LEADERSHIP

With regard to church leadership, Bruderhof Servants of the Word almost always, at some point, relinquish or are asked to give up their positions. The belief here is that power ultimately corrupts anyone who holds it. As Charles Moore puts it, "We understand that Servants are fallible and not exempt from the human weaknesses that plague all of us."¹⁴² The practice of at least temporarily removing Servants from leadership roles provides an important check on the development of overly-authoritarian governance structures associated with particular individuals.

This almost never happens in Hutterite colonies where ministers are chosen by lot, in a somewhat complicated procedure that gives God a special and direct role in the final selection process, but which also shows certain democratic elements due to the open-ended nomination procedure and the probationary period that follows selection. Still Hutterite ministers serve in their positions for life. They are treated with great respect and they wield significant influence, though this is all within the confines of very small colonies.

WOMEN

The position of women in decision-making is also different in the two groups. Although Bruderhof women may not serve as Servants, they are involved in the consensus decision-making process. Hutterite women, by contrast, do not have the franchise and do not attend meetings where policy decisions are made. Still Hutterite women believe that they are just as empowered as Bruderhof women, because of the strong influence of the unregulated conversational grapevine that reaches behind the scenes across colony and even *Leut* boundaries.¹⁴³

Differences of opinion on the role of women, general decision-making mechanisms and leadership determinations made it difficult, organizationally, for the Hutterites and the Bruderhof communities to unify. In all three areas discussed—culture, ideology and organization—there were significant obstacles standing in the way.

142. Charles Moore, correspondence, September 2004.

143. Gertrude Huntington, "A Separate Culture: Hutterite Women within the Colony," presentation, "The Quiet in the Land: Women of Anabaptist Traditions in Historical Perspective" conference (Millersville, Pa.: June 1995). Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the last few years, there has been some healing of relationships between Bruderhof members and individual Hutterites, as well as with former members and even old friends like John Hostetler. Before he died Hostetler sent a handwritten Christmas postcard to Christoph Arnold in which he said he had just read Arnold's book on forgiveness, and desired reconciliation.¹⁴⁴ According to Leonard Gross, Hostetler's neighbor and friend, this was an attempt on Hostetler's part to bring healing at the end of his life.¹⁴⁵ A return letter from Arnold requested Hostetler's forgiveness in turn. In a 1998 letter addressed to Jacob Kleinsasser and other progressive Schmiedeleut ministers, Christoph and Verena Arnold wrote, "We are not requesting to be called Hutterites again, but this animosity between us is sinful and against God's Will."¹⁴⁶

CROSS-INFLUENCES

Throughout the Hutterite-Bruderhof relationship it has typically been the Bruderhof, not the Hutterites, who have initiated attempts to unify. But each group has influenced the other in a variety of ways. One sees the Bruderhof impact most in the progressive Schmiedeleut, where there is an increased use of English and different forms of worship.¹⁴⁷ Among the progressive Schmiedeleut there is also a more unified governance structure and greater attention to colony aesthetics. There are piano lessons and theatrical productions, an increased use of media and a loosening of clothing regulations.¹⁴⁸

In both Schmiedeleut groups there is a growing interest in secondary and college education, new teaching approaches, an increasing use of the media, various mission endeavors and the development of a variety of manufacturing enterprises. Although there are important exceptions, one

144. John Hostetler, correspondence with Christoph Arnold, Bruderhof Archives (December 2000).

145. Joe Keiderling, interview, January 2004. Leonard Gross, interviews, February and May 2004. Johann Christoph Arnold, interview, April 2004.

146. Christoph and Verena Arnold, correspondence with Jacob Kleinsasser, Samuel Waldner, Mike Wollman, Jakob Hofer and David Decker.

147. The latter has also been influenced by the Palmgrove relationship.—Tony Waldner, interview, May 2004.

148. *Fairholme Focus*, various articles (Portage La Prairie, Man.: Fairholme Colony, 2000). Interview with Tony Waldner (Forest River Colony, N.D.) from the traditionalist Schmiedeleut group, May 2004. Personal visits to, and interviews with members at, Starland Colony (Gibbon, Minn.), Altona Colony (Henderson, Minn.), both of which are progressive Schmiedeleut colonies, and at the excommunicated (formerly progressive Schmiedeleut) Elmendorf Colony (Mountain Lake, Minn.) in May 2004.

does not see the same level of change among the Dariusleut and the Lehrerleut.

The Hutterites, in turn, have had major influence on life in the Bruderhof communities. There is a continued observance, for example, of simple and relatively uniform clothing styles.¹⁴⁹ The head-covering is still worn by women and early Hutterite writings are honored, read and studied. At Woodcrest sixteenth-century Hutterianism is honored in the state-of-the-art historical museum.

But perhaps as important as anything else is the presence on every Hof of dozens of ethnic Hutterites who impact Bruderhof communities with their upfront manner of speech and colony styles of food preparation.¹⁵⁰ With regard to the 450 ethnic Hutterite residents among them, Christoph Arnold describes a “freshness of spirit” and compares this to the revitalization movement led by Quaker and Macedonia converts during the 1950s.¹⁵¹ There are now more Bruderhof residents with the Hutterite surname “Mendel” than any other last name.

There is also a greater sense of pragmatism, with regard to life in general and with reference to religious faith, the philosophical component of which is more important to the Bruderhof than to the Hutterites. Hundreds of ethnic Hutterite Bruderhof members grew up memorizing Bible verses and listening to the reading of the *Lehren* every day of the week. Most know a different form of Hutterian life; and even though most Hutterites in the west—along with many ex-Bruderhof members—believe that the ethnic Hutterites in the Bruderhof are having no foundational impact, the facts do not seem to bear out this assumption.

Many people, academics and non-academics, have taken sides in the Hutterite-Bruderhof conflict, the angst-ridden relationship between old order and twentieth-century Anabaptists. But Leonard Gross suggests that each society occupies an important niche in the Christian world.¹⁵² As Gross notes, the Hutterites show that it is possible for Christians to live successfully with a communal sense of *Gelassenheit*—the lifelong struggle to die to self. The Bruderhof, on the other hand, provides “a deep intellectual understanding of spirituality” that is highly unique in

149. A personal visit to the Woodcrest community (April 2004) confirmed secondary verbal and written impressions.

150. I asked at least ten people what they meant by “colony food” and was told, almost unanimously, that it meant “more meat” at the table.

151. Johann Christoph Arnold, interview, April 2004.

152. Leonard Gross, interview, February 2004.

the modern Christian community.¹⁵³ Future relationships between the two groups—old order and modern—are indeterminate. But both societies are important members of the communal Anabaptist family.

153. Leonard Gross, interviews, February and May 2004.