

and redefines “mission” as the kind of “good guestwork” that helps us to “hear and see Jesus in the vulnerable other” (53, ch. 5, “Noticing Jesus as the First Task”).

If Sensenig’s book defies easy categorization, it is because it is itself an effort to cross divides within the Western church. This is a nontraditional missionary story that is informed by recent biblical scholarship and mission theology and an up-to-date understanding of geopolitical context. It is grounded in a radical commitment to nonviolence while also being rooted in a commitment to spiritual renewal through an encounter with Jesus.

North American Mennonites wary of “mission” but committed to “peace” might find this book challenging; so will those committed to evangelizing Muslims by getting them to assent to Christian doctrines. But both need to hear and heed Sensenig’s plea to stop following “half gospels” that artificially separate mission from peace theology, or personal from social understandings of salvation, and to open ourselves to the radical renewal that comes from embracing a posture of vulnerability, exile, and friendship (82, ch. 7, “Why Pacifism Must Be Missional”). As we follow this call, we can begin to participate in “peace cells” together with our religious siblings, who “offer Christians . . . a chance to encounter Jesus like never before.” The stakes, according to Sensenig, are nothing less than the “spiritual vitality of the church” and “world peace” (3–4, “Introduction”)!

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**Kenny Wollmann, ed., *Navigating Tradition and Innovation: Essays Commemorating the Permanent Settlement of Hutterites in Manitoba*, Hutterian Brethren Book Center, MacGregor, MB, 2024. 401 pp. \$57.89. ISBN-13: 978-1-927913-86-4.**

In his helpful introduction to this edited volume, Kenny Wollmann sets the stage for the publication of this book as an (overdue) attempt to commemorate the centennial (2018) of Hutterites’ arrival in Manitoba. Wollmann describes the story of Hutterites in Manitoba as “a microcosm of the longer Hutterite story: a story of persecution, displacement, and intense internal struggle, all while attempting to live out a concrete vision of the kingdom of God” (i). The introduction signals that while there is much to be celebrated, this will not be a hagiographical history, as Wollman cites challenges associated with recent prosperity, oscillates (or vacillates) between “preserving tradition versus implementing

innovation” as well as “thoughtful reflection or outright lament” (iii). This project should be understood as recognizing the messiness of history, a messiness that is brought to view not only by non-Hutterite writers but also by Hutterites writing about their own history from within their own perspectives. While Wollmann includes several such Hutterite contributors in this collection, many of the essays are written by non-Hutterite researchers.

The first two essays provide reliable treatments of early Hutterite history. Astrid von Schlachta’s very good biographical essay offers a reliable introduction to the life and thought of Jacob Huter,<sup>2</sup> relying heavily on primary sources and judiciously not saying anything more than those sources indicate. James Stayer’s contribution offers an account of early Anabaptist history writing by focusing on the work of Kaspar Braitmichel, assessing the value of that historiography for the creation of *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*.

The third essay in the collection is notable for its sheer length at more than a hundred pages, including extensive appendices. This contribution by Bruce Wiebe analyzes Hutterite land transactions, the history of which has apparently been largely lost in Hutterite consciousness (viii). Wiebe’s rationale for this study is that he is attempting to “address the information gap in published works concerning the land purchases” (45), which he sees as important to more fully understand the story of the Schmiedeleuts’ immigration from South Dakota to Manitoba. The essay proceeds by way of minute details of transactions, including maps, pictures, tables, and extensive content footnotes, seemingly leaving no stone unturned in his investigation of this dimension of Hutterite life.

Another contribution by a non-Hutterite writer, Gerald Mast, provides a fascinating account of the Schmiedeleut struggles to come to grips with community use of smartphones. Mast convincingly shows that managing the internet question highlights distinct understandings of church polity and decision-making among Group I and Group II Schmiedeleut.

Simon Evans’s and Peter Peller’s co-authored essay seeks to understand adaptive strategies of Hutterite communities in “beating the squeeze”—that is, the practice of established Hutterite colonies saving for the establishment of daughter colonies, which, according to the authors, is becoming more difficult if based on agricultural enterprise only. The essay investigates various nonagricultural initiatives by colonies to realize profit necessary to maintain themselves while preparing for the establishment of the next colony.

Further, the collection includes an essay by medical researchers who have participated in genetic research with Hutterites, bringing to view the strong partnerships that have been forged between members of Hutterite communities and researchers and clinicians.

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2 von Schlachta uses the “Huter” spelling; “Hutter” is used in many sources.

The book also includes significant pieces from Hutterite writers. It is in these essays especially that Wollmann's own hope of hearing from writers within the Hutterite tradition comes to fruition. Leonard Gross's framing and excerpting of Samuel Kleinsasser's *Community and Ethics* brings to the reader "perhaps the sole in-depth and in-house theological, historical, and sociological interpretation of Schmiedeleut Hutterianism to have been written in the twentieth century" (158). Since Kleinsasser's book was informally self-published and meant for use in Hutterite communities, it has not been widely circulated; here, a wider readership is given the privilege of seeing the outworking of Hutterite theology from a voice internal to that community.

Relatedly, Ian Kleinsasser's essay provides an insider's account of the obviously painful 1992 Schmiedeleut schism. Kleinsasser offers a variety of disclaimers to show that his is not the final or even definitive account of the schism; however, he explores contributing factors that offer a good background for beginning to understand the events. He includes primary sources, describes the fall-out of the schism, and reveals that there have been at least some steps taken toward resolution; the essay is framed by the hope for redemption (197). Wollmann's description of Kleinsasser's essay is important: "This essay represents the first internal attempt to move beyond chronicling these events—often from a particular partisan perspective—to doing historical work that is subject to critique, revision, and sustained dialogue" (ix).

The final essay in the collection provides a strong theological voice that seeks to build capacity for communal conversation among Hutterites. Jesse Hofer first offers diagnostic work, pointing to a deficiency in a culture of discussion and communal discernment, but then moves beyond diagnosis to explore theological and biblical concepts along with descriptions of necessary skills to build the capacity for which he longs. Included here is also a call to repentance, an essential dimension of capacity-building.

*Navigating Tradition and Innovation* casts considerable light on the experience of Hutterites in Manitoba over the past century, helping the reader understand the historical genesis of the movement, including various dimensions of its development from a variety of perspectives provided by both non-Hutterite and Hutterite contributors. The essays written by non-Hutterite authors provide keen insights, whether that be from historical or geographical research, from medical science or economic perspectives. Essays such as Gerald Mast's, for example, which seek to take religious realities into account in their interpretations, are especially constructive contributions.

However, it seems to me that the essays by Hutterite writers offer the most unique contributions to a wider understanding of Hutterites. The internal account of the Schmiedeleut schism is one that comes from someone personally embedded in the happenings being described, which affords hard-won insights even while inviting dialogue about the very account being given. The articulation

of an ethical vision for Hutterites such as is presented by Samuel Kleinsasser offers a glimpse into the formation of colony life that goes beyond the economic dimensions of that life. Further, Jesse Hofer's call to build capacity gives the reader a strong sense of his cry of the heart for a communal life that can only be realized with theological vision that requires "much practice, patience, and perseverance" (345). That vision points to an understanding of Hutterite life that cannot be reduced to social forces; the vision includes a spiritual mission to live as faithful Christians, embracing the unity and reconciliation offered to the body of Christ by the work of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Publishing collections such as this that include Hutterite voices should be seen as part of building capacity for communal conversation. Perhaps future collections, which would be welcome, will include mostly—or only—Hutterite voices, exposing readers to the potentially "redemptive element" (vi) of these kinds of inquiries.

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