

Note:

As can be seen in the title page, this was a doctoral thesis by Michael Barnett on the relationship between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites, done with our support – primarily Dick Domer.

It was probably typed in WordPerfect format. As I am going through the files now and converting to the most recent Word format, I see that the following files were damaged (blank):

Appendix 1: Arnold's Letter of Incorporation

Appendix 4: Church Constitution

THE BRUDERHOF (SOCIETY OF BROTHERS) AND THE  
HUTTERITES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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An Abstract

of a Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Theology  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, Texas

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Department of Church History

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by

Michael Cole Barnett

September 1995

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To the Bruderhof, Ephesians 3:14-19.

## ABSTRACT

In 1930 a new group of communal Christians, the Bruderhof, officially joined the fellowship of the Hutterian Brethren (Hutterites) of North America. The Hutterites are descendants of a sixteenth-century group of Anabaptist believers of Moravia, who first used the term "Bruderhof," and took the name of their leader, Jakob Hutter. The Bruderhof began in Germany in 1920, as a community of seekers from the German Youth Movement under the leadership of Eberhard Arnold. Since the uniting of the two communities, they experienced periods of disharmony and a lack of clarity concerning their relationship. This study seeks to examine the history of the Bruderhof and analyze their relationship with the Hutterites.

A brief introduction establishes the background and basis of the study and includes a review of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement. The second chapter presents a survey of the Hutterites. The next three chapters focus on the Bruderhof, including the life and vision of their founder, their years of development and persecution, and the community today. The sixth chapter offers an analysis of the two communities and their current relationship. It suggests commonalities and contrasts and includes recent controversial developments. Secondary sources are primarily used for the survey of the Hutterites with primary sources (letters, lectures, memoirs, etc.) and personal interviews providing the basis for the balance of the study. Many of the primary sources have been published by the Bruderhof publisher--Plough Publishing House.

The author concludes that the two groups share significant aspects of faith, commitment, and community life, which explains their efforts in the past to unite and cooperate. In their zeal for unity, however, Bruderhof members minimized the importance of the distinctives of the two groups, and the Hutterites failed to grasp the life and vitality of the

Bruderhof. The most significant distinctions between the two are the Bruderhof's radical practice of community of property and their commitment to mission. Due to a break in the relationship, announced in January 1995, the future of both groups and their relationship is unsettled.

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## PREFACE

During a study of a sixteenth-century Anabaptist group known as the Hutterian Brethren, I was introduced to the Bruderhof (known earlier as the Society of Brothers). I was surprised to learn that the Bruderhof, a twentieth-century Christian community, was incorporated into the fellowship of the Hutterites in 1930. The motivation for this work came from my own frustration as I tried to discern the current relationship of the two groups. Behind each revelation concerning the identity of the Bruderhof there appeared a contradiction or difference of opinion. Literature about the two groups was confusing and inconsistent in its assertions. The smaller group, twentieth-century Bruderhof, seemed to be in the process of assimilation into the larger sixteenth-century Hutterians. As claimants to the heritage of the original Hutterites and focused on unification, the Bruderhof seemed reluctant to acknowledge their distinctives. Who was this group of modern, non-conformist, pacifists, Christian-seekers, living in community, and calling themselves Hutterites?

The more closely I examined the two groups, the more convinced I was that the story of the Bruderhof needed to be told, not as a purely sociological examination, nor simply through the eyes of Bruderhof members, but from the perspective of church history. With that in mind, this study examines the history of the people called "Bruderhof" with a view of their theology, church practice, and sense of mission, in order to gain a better understanding of them and their relationship with the Hutterites.

The task has proven meaningful and timely, as midway through the research and writing, a crisis resurfaced concerning the relationship of the two groups. It is my hope the people of the Bruderhof and their Hutterian brothers and sisters may benefit from this effort.

I wish to acknowledge the courteous and professional assistance of several archivists, scholars, and practitioners. I depended upon the following libraries for much of the research: The Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; E. Webb Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; and The Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. Archivist Dennis Stoesz of the Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, and Assistant Director, Robert L. Phillips of E. Webb Roberts Library, were most helpful in the early stages of research.

Perhaps my most valuable resource was the Bruderhof and Hutterite members with whom I visited, discussed, worked, and lived during those days. During the research and writing, I visited six Bruderhof communities. The archives and resources of the Bruderhof proved vital to the study. Bruderhof researcher Dick Domer and archivists Chris Zimmerman and Amy Hindley were especially helpful, as were the resources of Plough Publishing House, Rifton, New York.

I want to thank friends Tom Prevost, Dick Domer, Bonnie Jones, Gary Baldrige, and Linda Carlisle, without whom I would not have completed the task. I am also indebted to the counsel and encouragement of several professors throughout my studies. Thanks to John A. Hostetler for his assistance and perspective. Appreciation to Leon McBeth who listened patiently and offered advice as I narrowed my topic and began to prepare the prospectus and to Paul Gritz who assisted me in the final stages of the paper. Sincere thanks to W. R. Estep, Jr. who coached me along the way and who first instilled in me a desire to understand and apply the ideas and history of the Anabaptist movement to my life and work.

Finally to my best friends, Cindy, Cole and Michelle, thank you for supporting your husband and "Dad" as he journeyed through the trials, tribulations, and rewards of residency and the dissertation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In his work, Hutterite Society, John A. Hostetler described the Hutterites as a group of communal Christians of sixteenth-century European origin who "live in collective agricultural colonies, each of which is called a Bruderhof, meaning a dwelling place of the brothers."<sup>1</sup> In 1920, 392 years after the beginnings of the Hutterites, another group of European communal Christians was founded and soon began to refer to their community as the "Bruderhof." The mutual usage of the term "Bruderhof" was not a coincidence but an attempt by the twentieth-century group to identify with the spirit and purpose of the earlier community of Hutterians. Today the term "Bruderhof" is seldom used to refer to a community of lineal descendants of sixteenth-century Hutterites. The approximately 355 Hutterian communities and their 35,000 residents throughout the midwestern United States and central Canada are more commonly referred to as "colonies."<sup>2</sup> The current use of the term "Bruderhof" refers almost exclusively to the more recent twentieth-century group which

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Hostetler, Hutterite Society (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence C. Anderson, Hutterite Directory, 1991 (Mankato, MN: Department of Geography, Mankato State University, 1991). The number of colonies is based solely on Anderson's directory including eight of the nine Bruderhof communities which are the focus of this study. The number of Hutterian residents is based on Lawrence C. Anderson's, "Gelassenheit and the Hutterian Brethren," a paper presented at the Third Triennial Conference of International Communal Studies Association, Elizabethtown, PA, 25-28 July 1991 (copy available through The Young Center, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania). This author added recent figures on Bruderhof residents based on an interview with Brother Dick Domer, 1 January 1991, at Woodcrest, Rifton, New York.

has, since its founding, established a relationship with the older Hutterite colonies.<sup>3</sup> The history of the more recent Bruderhof movement and its relationship to the Hutterites is the topic of this study.

Shortly after the group assumed the name "Bruderhof," their founder, Eberhard Arnold, learned that the Hutterites had survived centuries of persecution and migration and still existed in North America. In 1929 he visited the Hutterian colonies of North America, and a year later Arnold's Bruderhof was accepted into the larger fellowship of Hutterian Brethren.

From its beginning the relationship of the two groups was fragile. Even today, confusion persists concerning the status of the relationship of the Hutterian Brethren and the Bruderhof. Some consider the Bruderhof community identical to that of the Hutterian Brethren, whereas others describe the twentieth-century group as merely "under the umbrella" of the Schmiedeleut family, one of the traditional branches of the sixteenth-century Hutterites.<sup>4</sup> Others describe the Bruderhof as "not recognized as brothers in faith" with the Hutterites and "anti-Hutterian" in their practices.<sup>5</sup> Irrespective of the opinions of others, people of the Bruderhof present themselves as a group united with the Hutterites and sharing in the vision and spirit of the early Hutterian church as reflected in the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century.

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<sup>3</sup>Throughout this work the author uses the word "Bruderhof" in the collective sense to refer to the people, church, or movement. When referring to one or more of the physical communities in general the singular "bruderhof" or anglicized plural "bruderhofs" will be applied as has been the practice of recent literature and the Bruderhof members themselves. When referring to a specific bruderhof, such as the Rhön Bruderhof, the proper noun usage will apply.

<sup>4</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., East-West Conference (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1991), 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 19.

### Rise of the Hutterites and Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism

The Hutterites are descendants of the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth-century Reformation. The term "Anabaptist" derives from the Greek meaning "rebaptizer" and was used by the Catholic church as early as the fourth century to refer to the rebaptism of those whose first baptism was deemed invalid because of the perceived "heresies" of those who performed the sacrament.<sup>6</sup> The imperial law code of Justinian (A.D. 529) established rebaptism and anti-Trinitarianism as the two most heinous heresies, punishable by death.<sup>7</sup> Since then, "rebaptism" has been seen as a repudiation of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Until the twentieth century, Anabaptism was commonly associated with such infamous opponents of the established churches as Thomas Müntzer, the "warrior-priest"<sup>8</sup> of the 1525 peasants' revolt at Mühlhausen, and the New Jerusalem of Münster, Germany, 1534-35.<sup>9</sup> By 1570 Heinrich Bullinger, successor of Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli, characterized

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<sup>6</sup>As schism within the church developed, controversy over the validity of sacraments performed by "heretics" ensued. So-called heretics, like the Donatists, rebaptized "Catholic" Christians who were associated with or had received the sacraments from traditores, or those who recanted their faith under pressure of persecution. Eventually, the Roman church ruled that the validity of the sacraments depended upon the worthiness of the recipient rather than the minister. The Orthodox churches of the East still practice rebaptism of "heretics." Justo L. González, The Story of Christianity, Volume I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1984), 1:151-57; Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 78-79.

<sup>7</sup>Cornelius Krahn, ed., The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement, (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955), 1:113.

<sup>8</sup>W. R. Estep, Jr., Renaissance and Reformation (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 144-45. For a summary of the Anabaptist movement, see "Chapter XII," 195-220.

<sup>9</sup>Estep called this apocalyptic attempt to recreate God's kingdom on earth, "the most serious aberration of sixteenth-century Anabaptism." W. R. Estep, Jr., The Anabaptist Story, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 1.

Anabaptists as radical, militant, religious fanatics, and though he originally acknowledged that the first Anabaptists were from Zürich rather than Saxony, he later wrote that Müntzer was the founder of Anabaptism.<sup>10</sup> As the Lutheran and Reformed branches of the Reformation grew in prominence and acceptance, they challenged all nonconformists who spoke out against perceived abuses of the church. Luther lumped these radicals, including the Anabaptists, into a group he called "Schwärmer"--enthusiasts, rebellious spirits, Satan, heavenly prophets, or murderous spirits.<sup>11</sup> Bullinger's inadequate categorization of the Anabaptists was indicative of the position of both the Catholic and Protestant churches, and for the next three centuries Anabaptists were wrongly perceived as exclusively related to the chaos of Mühlhausen and Münster.

The modern "Karlstadt-Münster-Zwickau axis theory," a twentieth-century expansion of Bullinger's thesis, has been effectively repudiated by those who hold that Anabaptism originated out of the Swiss Reformation.<sup>12</sup> There are many worthwhile summaries and interpretations of the Anabaptist movement. Roland H. Bainton used the term "left wing of the Reformation"<sup>13</sup> in reference to those formerly referred to as Anabaptists. George H. Williams developed the term "Radical Reformation" in contrast to the "Magisterial Reformation"<sup>14</sup> and divided the radicals into three distinct groups:

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>11</sup>Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Radicalism in the Early Reformation," in Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, vol. 9 of Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1988), 25.

<sup>12</sup>W. R. Estep, Jr., , ed., Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533): A Source Book (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1976), 1.

<sup>13</sup>Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 20.

Anabaptists, Spiritualists, and Rationalists.<sup>15</sup> W. R. Estep, Jr., further characterized the resulting Anabaptist groups as Swiss and South German Anabaptists, Hutterites of Moravia, and Mennonites of the Netherlands.<sup>16</sup> These radical reformers survived the persecutions of the sixteenth century and bequeathed many of their principles and doctrines to those known as the Free Churches of today.

The first Anabaptists of the sixteenth-century movement became known as the Swiss Brethren and were given the name Wiedertäufer by their former teacher, Ulrich Zwingli.<sup>17</sup> Zwingli planted the seeds of reformation in the minds of his students as he pursued a gradual reformation of what he considered to be the corrupt Roman Catholic Church and a return to the biblical principles of the first-century church. Zwingli's main challenge focused on the Catholic mass and called for a replacement of the doctrine of transubstantiation with a memorial celebration of the Lord's Supper. Overtaken with a sense of commitment to newfound truth, Zwingli's students pressed him to go further and faster with his protestations. They challenged him to repudiate the sacrament of infant baptism. Zwingli was reluctant to deal with the question of baptism, which had become such a powerful and unifying instrument of the State. His students, led by Conrad Grebel, Felix

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<sup>14</sup>Referring to the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican churches and their characteristic link with the magistrate or ruling body of the state. George H. Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), xix.

<sup>15</sup>Williams, The Radical Reformation, xxiv.

<sup>16</sup>Estep, Renaissance and Reformation, 187.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid , 195. The Anabaptists never used the term themselves, due to its disgraceful and criminal connotations. In their minds there was no "re" baptism, since their original infant baptism by the state-church was invalid.



Mantz, and a visiting priest, George Blaurock, began to meet and discuss matters of faith and conscience. One night

it came to pass that they were together until anxiety came upon them, yes, they were so pressed within their hearts. Thereupon they began to bow their knees to the Most High God in heaven and called upon him as the Informer of Hearts (Hertzenkundiger), and they prayed that he would give to them his divine will and that he would show his mercy unto them. For flesh and blood and human forwardness did not drive them, since they well knew what they would have to suffer on account of it.

After the prayer, George of the House of Jacob stood up and besought Conrad Grebel for God's sake to baptize him with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and confession. And when he knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work.<sup>18</sup>

Zwingli saw these new "Wiedertäufer" as a threat to the stability of his reform and led the established church to brand them heretics. In March 1526 the city council of Zürich decreed that rebaptism was a crime punishable by death,<sup>19</sup> in effect ratifying the imperial law of Justinian.<sup>20</sup> Hence, Anabaptists became fugitives throughout Europe as they suffered persecution not only at the hands of Catholic authorities but, after 1527, martyrdom at the hands of Protestants as well. By the end of the decade, most of the original leaders of the movement had perished as martyrs.

A diaspora of Anabaptists resulted from the first wave of persecutions. One of the more gifted surviving leaders, Balthasar Hubmaier, migrated eastward and settled in Nikolsburg, Moravia (modern-day Czechoslovakia), where his group increased and prospered until 1526, when a new issue arose concerning the use of the sword. Hubmaier's group was

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<sup>18</sup>Estep, ed., Anabaptist Beginnings, 2; also found in A. J. F. Zieglschmid, ed., Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder (Philadelphia: Carl Schurz Foundation, 1943), 47; and Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Vol. I, (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1987), 1:45, hereafter called The Chronicle.

<sup>19</sup>Estep, The Anabaptist Story, 29-30.

<sup>20</sup>Krahn, Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1:113.

thrust into controversy with the arrival of one Jacob Wiedemann, who taught absolute pacifism. Wiedemann's followers became known as Stäbler (staff bearers) and the followers of Hubmaier as Schwertler (sword bearers). Hubmaier was eventually imprisoned by Austrian authorities and executed on March 10, 1528. For two years the Stäbler met together in a separate but informal community until, in the same year of Hubmaier's death, Lord Leonard von Liechtenstein demanded that Wiedemann and his followers leave his lands because he considered them disruptive.<sup>21</sup> Destitute and without provisions, about two hundred adults and their children gathered outside of Nikolsburg to begin their journey. A new beginning was at hand.

They took counsel together in the Lord because of their immediate need and distress and appointed servants for temporal affairs . . . to help them.

These men then spread out a cloak in front of the people, and each one laid his possessions on it with a willing heart--without being forced--so that the needy might be supported in accordance with the teaching of the prophets and apostles (Isa. 23:18; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 5:1-11).<sup>22</sup>

From these events two distinct principles of Hutterian life emerged--*pacifism* and the practice of *community of goods*.

The new group settled first in Austerlitz, where under Wilhelm Reublin a further division took place, and then in Auspitz, where they were reorganized under Jakob Hutter and the movement stabilized.<sup>23</sup> In 1536 Hutter was burned at the stake as one of the first of thousands of Hutterian martyrs. Though his years of leadership were brief, he "left behind

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<sup>21</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:50.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 1:80-81.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 1:105.

him a people gathered and built up for the Lord."<sup>24</sup> For that reason the group became known as the Hutterites.

#### Eberhard Arnold and His Vision

Almost four centuries later in Germany, Eberhard Arnold and his wife Emmy were instrumental in founding what became known as the Bruderhof. They were both from highly educated and religious families of the developing bourgeois class of Germany. As a youth Arnold was distressed by the injustices of society and the suffering of the poor. He was impressed with the Christian love displayed by his "Uncle Ernst" and others active in the Salvation Army and Y.M.C.A. One night in his room he "experienced Christ" and committed himself to be a witness to the life and message of Jesus. He joined the German Student Christian Movement and began to write and speak on various Christian topics.

During his university years Eberhard met Emmy von Hollander, and after much prayer and agony they decided to break from the traditional state church of their families and receive baptism as adult believers. Eberhard received his Ph.D. in philosophy in November, 1909, and the next month he and Emmy were married, thus forming a ministry team which would persist throughout the difficult years of World War I and beyond. After the war they became actively involved in the German Youth Movement (Jugendbewegung), and Arnold became a familiar writer and lecturer on Christian and social subjects. In 1920 the young couple moved with a few others to the village of Sannerz and began a new experiment in Christian community. They came into contact with other communalists and Christian-socialists such as Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, son of Johann Christoph, who founded the community of Bad Boll in 1852. Arnold's vision was based on the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus in the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. This new way of Christian community would

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1:145-46.

be like that of the New Testament church and the church of the Swiss Brethren, the original Anabaptists, of the sixteenth century. Based on his own experiences and faith, Arnold sought a lifestyle which would replace the arrogance of higher education and the irrelevance of the state church with solutions to the injustices of the industrial revolution and the horrors of World War I.

After several years of communal experimentation, the final vision of Eberhard Arnold crystallized. Perhaps it is best expressed in his last letter to the Brethren of the Bruderhof, written from his hospital bed in Darmstadt, November 14, 1935, in which he exhorted the community to:

- 1) continue to include the ways of "genuine old Hutterianism,"
- 2) combine that with the example of faith of Johann Christoph Blumhardt and his son, Christoph Friedrich,
- 3) maintain the free spirit of the true German Youth Movement and,
- 4) avoid the "blend of Hutterianism with pietism."<sup>25</sup>

Eberhard believed that Anabaptist theology and the practices of the original Hutterites were necessary aspects of community life. Pacifism and community of goods based on the love of Christ offered hope for a society sick of war and poverty. The social activism and spiritual sensitivity of the Blumhardts guarded against intellectualism and a faith without works. The innocent and honest spirit of the Jugendbewegung provided joy and self-expression in community. Finally, his warning against the false piety of institutionalized religion emphasized a faith of inner devotion characterized by a life of service. Such was the vision of Eberhard Arnold.

### Bruderhof Identity Problem Examined

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<sup>25</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Darmstadt, Germany, to the Bruderhof community, Rhön Bruderhof, 14 November 1935, Eberhard Arnold Collection, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, NY.

As previously mentioned, Arnold's new community chose the Hutterian word Bruderhof (house of brothers) in an attempt to identify themselves with the original sixteenth-century Hutterian Anabaptists. In 1929, after Eberhard became aware of the surviving Hutterian Brethren, he visited their colonies throughout the midwestern states and Canada, and subsequently requested that he be accepted into the Hutterian brotherhood.<sup>26</sup> On the morning of December 9, 1930, Arnold was "incorporated into the Brethren called Hutterian" through "baptism of pouring over with laying on of hands."<sup>27</sup> Thus began the unique relationship between the sixteenth-century Anabaptists and their twentieth-century Bruderhof brethren.

Throughout the years a crisis of identity has plagued the Bruderhof movement. Only five years after their unification with the Hutterites, Arnold died and the Bruderhof and its members were forced out of their homeland by the Nazis. They fled first to Liechtenstein, then England, and for several years attempted to establish their community in Paraguay. Without a strong leader and under the pressures of a struggle for survival, some of the original goals and principles of the Bruderhof were compromised. Their relationship with the Hutterites became secondary and even a source of aggravation, until, in 1955, fellowship between the two was formally broken. Eventually the Bruderhof left Paraguay for the United States and in 1974 re-established their relationship with the Hutterites. Even during their best

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<sup>26</sup>The inclusion of words such as "brotherhood" or "brethren" in this paper is not intended to unnecessarily discriminate between genders but merely reflect the realities of historical and modern usage among both the Bruderhof and Hutterian Brethren.

<sup>27</sup>Hutterian Brethren, trans. and ed., Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhön Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church. Based on the Diary of his Journey to North America, 1930-31, and Letters Written Between 1928 and 1935 (Ulster Park, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1988), 182,185. Hereafter referred to as Brothers Unite.

years, there have been tensions between the two groups over differences of culture and methodology.

A review of the names used by the Bruderhof reveals that a kind of crisis of identity exists. Since their early days as the "Bruderhof," they have been known as: "Bruderhof Communities," "Arnoldleut," "Society of Brothers," "Hutterian Society of Brothers," "Hutterian Society of Brothers (Bruderhof)," "Hutterian Brethren of the East," "Hutterian Brethren," and so on. The latest issues of The Plough, a bimonthly publication of the Bruderhof,<sup>28</sup> reveal the crisis of identity. The front cover reads, "The Plough, [a] publication of the Bruderhof communities." The inside cover notes that The Plough is published by the "Hutterian Brethren." An uninformed reader might think the two terms, "Bruderhof communities" and "Hutterian Brethren," synonymous. The reality is that the Bruderhof movement has two identities. Some consider it a recent phenomenon, rich in its own history and tradition of early twentieth-century Germany. Others know it as a branch of the Hutterian Brethren of North America, descendants of the original sixteenth-century Hutterite Anabaptists.

Initially this study revealed the two groups were becoming one. During the 1980s there were several cooperative efforts which appeared to strengthen the bond between them. Plough Publishing House continued to publish Bruderhof and Hutterian manuscripts, including in 1987 the first English translation of several Hutterian chronicles passed down through the ages. The Chronicle is an account of the years 1523-1665,<sup>29</sup> and was

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<sup>28</sup>Plough Publishing House has operated from various locations throughout the years. In 1991 Plough Publishing House moved from the Pleasant View Bruderhof of Ulster Park, New York, to its current home at New Meadow Run Bruderhof of Farmington Pennsylvania.

<sup>29</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle begins with a "brief narrative of the beginning of the world" through the early events of the Reformation. "Part One" includes a register of the "general events" of the history followed by a listing of known martyrs. "Part Two" begins with the detailed account beginning in 1523.

"undertaken with all Hutterian Brethren in mind." For the first time, accounts of the early Hutterites were placed into the hands of predominantly English-speaking Bruderhof members.

In the same year, there was a historic meeting in Milltown, Manitoba, where for the first time since Arnold's acceptance into the fellowship in 1930, the three elders of the Hutterian colonies "of the west" (meaning the original Hutterites) met together with the elder of the Bruderhof "of the east." One of the western elders asked another, who was more familiar with the Bruderhof communities, if they followed the teachings and customs of the Hutterian Brethren and their sixteenth-century Confession of Faith, by Peter Riedemann. The other western elder replied, "they live more according to the teachings than western brothers and sisters."<sup>30</sup> This was accepted as evidence of the unity of the two groups.

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The historiography of the Hutterian chronicles is interesting and somewhat confusing. The following is a summary of Robert Friedmann's article, "Chronicles, Hutterite," in the Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1:589-91.

The earliest chronicle was inspired by Hutterite leader Peter Walpot and begun in 1565. Through the work of several editors, it covered the years up to 1665 and became known as the Geschichts-Buch und kurzer Durchgang von Anfang der Welt. It was also known as Unser Gemain Geschichts-Buch or the Great Chronicle. Only one master copy of the Great Chronicle is extant. From 1793-1802, Johannes Waldner took up where the Great Chronicle left off and recorded the history of the years 1665-1755. His chronicle became known as Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder and is still considered a masterpiece of great value. Many shorter chronicles called Denckbüchlein were handwritten by various Hutterian chroniclers. In 1883, Joseph Beck, produced a compilation of these shorter histories in Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Osterreich-Ungarn (Vienna: 1883). In 1908, through the assistance of American Mennonite scholar John Horsch, Rudolf Wolkan received a copy of the Great Chronicle and produced his edition of Geschichts-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder (Vienna: 1923). In 1943, A. J. F. Zieglschmid updated Wolkan's edition with Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder, (Philadelphia: Carl Schurz Foundation, 1943). Just four years later, Zieglschmid published a sequel, the Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder, same publisher, based on a previously undiscovered copy of Waldner's earlier work. Today, the works of Wolkan, Zieglschmid, and Beck are still considered the current German editions of the older Unser Gemain Geschichts-Buch (Great Chronicle), Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch, and the Die Geschichts-Bücher respectively.

In 1987, the first English translation of the Hutterian chronicles was translated and edited by the Hutterian Brethren and published by Plough Publishing House of the Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York. It covers the period of the Great Chronicle and relies on both the Wolkan and Zieglschmid edition. It is titled The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume I and will be followed by a second volume, which will cover the accounts of the Klein-Geschichtsbuch of Zieglschmid.

<sup>30</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., Brothers Unite, xiii, xiv.

Contact between the two groups continued to increase and a significant affinity developed between the Bruderhof and the Schmiedeleut family of Hutterites. As Bruderhof groups visited Schmiedeleut colonies for special celebrations and gatherings, young people established their own relationships and soon there were several weddings of young Bruderhof and Schmiedeleut members. As interaction increased, there developed a sharing of ideas and experiences concerning the challenges and rewards of community life. Some of the Schmiedeleut colonies started participating by teleconference calls<sup>31</sup> in certain meetings and holiday celebrations of the Bruderhof. Even the brochure describing the Bruderhof communities reflected a blending of the two groups. The 1985 printing of "The Bruderhof" was changed to "Hutterian Brethren: The Bruderhof, A Christian Community," and included a listing of some of the Schmiedeleut colonies along with the usual Bruderhof communities. It appeared that Arnold's dream of a united Bruderhof and Hutterian fellowship was becoming reality.

The substance of this work was based on the fact that an objective history of the Bruderhof movement was lacking. Though brief historical introductions to the Bruderhof had been included within sociological analyses, a comprehensive account of the Bruderhof movement from an historical perspective was needed. Plough Publishing House published historical monologues which included compilations of letters or lectures from the early years. These offered a glance inside the Bruderhof world; however, they understandably included an insider's bias and unfortunately seldom were documented or cross-referenced. As the blending of the two movements continued, the unique history of the Bruderhof seemed destined for obscurity. The story of the Bruderhof seemed worthy of documentation, not

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<sup>31</sup>The use of telecommunications technology to maintain a sense of unity among the various Bruderhof communities will be further discussed in chapter five.



simply for the sake of posterity, but in order to better understand the newly united Hutterians and their struggles for unity through life in community.

In addition, though important commonalities existed, the Bruderhof came from a different culture with a distinct concept of mission and a unique style of community life. If the two groups continued to unify, would there be problems concerning these differences? Could they overcome undercurrents of resistance and work through the challenges ahead, or were they bound for another cycle of conflict? These were the questions which motivated this study.

A new chapter in the relationship of the two movements was opened in December 1990, when apparently without warning or the usual discussion, a letter of expulsion was sent from "The Hutterian Brethren Church of the Darius and Lehrerleut Conference" to "The Society of Brothers who call themselves Hutterian Brethren."<sup>32</sup> In the letter, signed by the leadership of the Darius and Lehrerleut colonies, ten offenses or "Untugend" were cited, with the conclusion that "Arnold Congregation" members "are not recognized as Brothers in Faith, and . . . [are asked] to refrain, yes, stop using and tarnishing the Hutterite name and image with Anti-Hutterian deeds."<sup>33</sup> Suddenly, the question of the identity of the Bruderhof came to the forefront.

### Purpose of This Study

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<sup>32</sup>The families of Dariusleut and Lehrerleut, along with the previously mentioned Schmiedeleut, comprise the Hutterian Brethren of North America. The history of the three "leut" or "people" of Hutterians along with the complete text and analysis of the recent letter will be dealt with in chapters one and five, respectively.

<sup>33</sup>Hutterian Brethren Church to the Society of Brothers, 11 December 1990, from the Darius and Lehrerleut Conference, Bruderhof archives, Woodcrest, Rifton, NY.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the identity of the Bruderhof communities and their relationship with the Hutterian Brethren. The historical context of both groups is discussed, followed by an analysis of the current relationship and conclusions. What began as an attempt to clarify for "outsiders" the relationship of the two communities developed into a recognition of their controversy and observations as to its possible causes and potential redeeming elements.

For the overview of the history of the Hutterites put forth in the second chapter, works cited which focused primarily on the Hutterites of North America included: Robert Friedmann, Hutterite Studies (1961); Paul S. Gross, The Hutterite Way (1965); John W. Bennett, Hutterian Brethren (1967); Benjamin Zablocki, The Joyful Community (1971); John A. Hostetler, Hutterite Society (1974); David Flint, The Hutterites (1975); and, Karl A. Peter, The Dynamics of Hutterite Society (1987). In addition, various articles published in historical journals and periodicals such as the Mennonite Quarterly Review and The Plough proved valuable. For the most part, the above-mentioned works remain relevant and accurate. In light of continuous changes within the colonies, however, new research is needed to bring the western Hutterites of the 1990s into full view.

The history of the Bruderhof movement is divided into three chapters: "The New Bruderhof," "A Pilgrim People," and "The Bruderhof Today." Two methods are utilized for these historical chapters. First, a synthesis of the published and unpublished literature, letters, and lectures of the Bruderhof offers an accurate, chronological, and objective view of their history. In addition, the author conducted numerous personal interviews with Bruderhof members to capture the mind and culture of the movement today. The author visited seven of the eight existing Bruderhof communities and spent several days living and working alongside Bruderhof members. The author also witnessed special celebrations, including New Year gatherings and the wedding of a Bruderhof man and Schmiedeleut woman. The

author observed Bruderhof members participating in conferences outside their own community, and interviewed several visiting Hutterian Brethren, as well as a few "disenfranchised" Bruderhof members who were excluded from the community.

The sixth chapter analyses the current identity crisis of the Bruderhof based on the author's observations, the letter of controversy, and subsequent reactions. The conclusion summarizes the study and poses questions concerning the future of the Bruderhof.

It should be noted that the starting point for this study was the Bruderhof rather than the Hutterites. It is hoped that this study will provide a basis of understanding for outsiders as well as for Bruderhof and Hutterian members themselves as their future unfolds. Of course it should also result in a better awareness of the history and people of the Bruderhof movement and their relationship to the Hutterian Brethren.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE HUTTERITES, 1528-1991

In 1903 Rudolf Wolkan, professor of German literature at the University of Vienna, published a volume of hymns attributed to Anabaptists.<sup>1</sup> He concluded that the sixteenth-century Anabaptist group known as the Hutterites ceased to exist in 1855 with the death of their last elder and director, Jakob Walter. Wolkan later recalled his astonishment when some months after his book was published he discovered "that the Hutterites from Russia had migrated to North America and that they held firmly to their articles of faith!"<sup>2</sup> The dramatic story of the struggle and survival of the Hutterites is a prerequisite to an understanding of the people of the Bruderhof movement and their relationship to the Hutterian Brethren.

Though they are frequently confused with their American cousins, the Amish, or their historical neighbors, the Mennonites, the Hutterites are a distinct group.<sup>3</sup> Their

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Wolkan, Die Hutterer: Österreichische Wiedertäufer und Kommunisten in Amerika (Wien: Wiener Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft, 1918; reprint, Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1965), v (page reference is to reprint edition).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., v, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Though their appearance and religion are similar to the Amish, the Hutterites consider them "extremely backward" [John A. Baden, "The Management of Social Stability: A Political Ethnography of the Hutterites of North America" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1969), 17].

The Hutterites and Mennonites have cooperated with each other throughout their histories. As early as 1665, the Hutterites sent two members to Holland requesting financial assistance from Menno's followers due to their condition of "extreme poverty and misery" (The Chronicle, 1:792). In 1801, Russian Czar Alexander I decreed that the Hutterites be classified and granted the same rights and privileges as the Mennonites who migrated from Prussia [John Horsch, The Hutterian Brethren, 1528-1931: A Story of Martyrdom and Loyalty (Goshen College, Goshen, IN.: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1931), 113]. In America also they have been identified as Mennonites during various civil service programs for wartime conscientious objectors (Baden, 46).

anonymity is partially due to their decision to separate themselves from society, almost to the point of extinction, in order to be obedient to God.<sup>4</sup> Thus, they have remained relatively anonymous and misunderstood by many. This chapter summarizes the history of the Hutterites, with a view of their distinctive theology and way of life today. It seeks to establish a frame of reference for proceeding to the study of the Bruderhof and their relationship with the Hutterites.

### European Legacy Survival Through Persecution

Since their decision in Nikolsburg in 1528 to "pool their few belongings on a cloak laid on the ground,"<sup>5</sup> the Hutterites have experienced an oft-repeated cycle: a physical or spiritual crisis, followed by a cleansing or purification which usually included a change of leadership and/or location, and then a period of relative stability and prosperity.

### Beginnings

This cycle was evident from their beginnings in Nikolsburg and the years that followed in Austerlitz under Wilhelm Reublin. The church underwent an association with others and disputation from within which resulted in a cleansing "of those who were false and lukewarm."<sup>6</sup> Throughout this refining process, the Ordnung (order or discipline), adopted in

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<sup>4</sup>John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, with a Forward by George and Louise Spindler (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 57.

<sup>5</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:xiii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1:79.

1529, served as a guide for the faithful.<sup>7</sup> Basic Anabaptist doctrines on the Word of God, the voluntary church, and baptism were set forth in this concise statement of faith.

In 1531 Jakob Hutter<sup>8</sup> and his small delegation of Anabaptists from the Tyrol region of Austria traveled to Austerlitz to inquire about their Moravian counterparts. After finding "that both groups were of one heart and soul in serving and fearing God," they united their congregations. On October 12, 1533, after months of disappointment and struggle within the group<sup>9</sup>, Hutter became the new "shepherd" of the community which had since left Austerlitz and settled in Auspitz (between Nikolsburg and Austerlitz). Although challenges to his leadership and threats of persecution and poverty did not cease, Hutter strengthened and stabilized the community until the next major crisis in 1535.

Once again the group was forced to flee. After the catastrophe of Münster, non-conforming religious groups were suspect in the eyes of European rulers. At the same time, Hutter's group took a strong stance against any association or colabor with "false prophets" such as monks or priests of the Roman Catholic Church. Upon notification by Hutter's group that they would not be able to work the local vineyards alongside the monks, the abbess of the Queen's Cloister at Brünn ordered the entire community off her estate. The group moved to the nearby town of Schakwitz only to be cast out into the countryside a few days later.<sup>10</sup> Jakob Hutter appealed by letter to the local governor, but eventually was arrested and

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<sup>7</sup>For these articles of faith see Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:77-79.

<sup>8</sup>The word "Hutter" (also "Huter" or "Heuter") is derived from the word meaning "hat" or "hatter" which may imply his family's trade.

<sup>9</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:84,98-133. This period included various examples of corruption, deceit and immorality among the leaders.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 1:133-34.

imprisoned. Hutter's career as shepherd of the group at Auspitz was cut short by the executioner. The chronicler eulogized his ministry as follows:

Jakob Hutter had led the church for nearly three years and left behind him a people gathered and built up for the Lord. It is from this Jakob Hutter that the church inherited the name Hutterite, or Hutterian Brethren. To this day the church is not ashamed of this name. He stood joyfully for the truth unto death and gave his life for it. This has been the fate of all Christ's apostles.<sup>11</sup>

The years 1536-54 involved further development and stabilization of the community. Despite progress, persecutions and tribulations remained a daily reality. It was a time in which religious and social patterns were tried and established. The "purification" process from 1528-33 resolved basic questions of pacifism, community of goods, and integrity of leadership. Now the community began to develop its doctrinal statements and religious distinctives. In 1540 Peter Riedemann published his Confession of Faith, which remains the confessional statement of the Hutterites today. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the Hutterites were known as a viable church community in Moravia as they were continually "absorbing incoming persecuted refugees"<sup>12</sup> from throughout Europe.

### Golden Years

Whereas basic theological principles of the Hutterites were established during their early years in Moravia, socio-economic patterns and methods of community life developed during what have been called their "Golden Years." This period also had its important leaders or Vorsteheren. Peter Walpot, a textile worker of "unusual leadership skills,"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1:146.

<sup>12</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 26-27.

<sup>13</sup>Leonard Gross, The Golden Years of the Hutterites: The Witness and Thought of the Communal Moravian Anabaptists During the Walpot Era, 1565-1578, no. 23, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, with an Introduction by Roland H. Bainton (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 29.

served as Vorsteher from 1565 to 1578, but his leadership dominated the forties and fifties as well. Under Walpot a social system developed which sought to guarantee the preservation of basic religious principles put forth in the earlier Ordnung and Confessions of Faith. This system recognized at least five different offices within the community: apostles (Sendboten or missionaries); pastors or shepherds; helpers; stewards (ministers to temporal needs); and elders (served like trustees). A more general classification grouped leaders as either servants of the Word (Diener am Wort) or servants of temporal needs (Diener der Notdurft). The system was all-encompassing, even down to such specific positions as "manager of the vineyards" (Kellner) or "caretaker of the storage bins" (Kastner).<sup>14</sup> This system of political and managerial responsibilities was part of the genius of the golden years.

Such an efficient system of management during a time of relative political freedom and protection led to the development of a prosperous economy. As the group focused on Riedemann's theology of Gelassenheit--"the quality of yieldedness"<sup>15</sup> or "peaceful submission to God and to the believing group"<sup>16</sup>--its communal society flourished. Motivated by a spirit of cooperation and dedication to the development of the community, the Hutterites became known throughout the surrounding lands for their skilled craftsmen and artisans. As far away as Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia, carpenters and builders were employed by rulers and citizens outside of the colonies. All contracts and agreements were handled by elected representatives of the colony in behalf of the Brotherhood and provided a

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<sup>14</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 32-34.

<sup>15</sup>Gross, The Golden Years, 32.

<sup>16</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 31.



variety of services.<sup>17</sup> Apparently examples of jealousy or greed were rare during this golden era. Perhaps the prosperity of the group itself and the freedom they experienced were sufficient motivators for conformity to the system. The chronicler noted that everyone

worked for the common good to supply the needs of all to give help and support wherever it was needed. It was indeed a perfect body whose living, active members served one another. Think of the ingenious works of a clock, where one piece helps another to make it go, so that it serves its purpose. Or think of the bees, those useful little insects working together in their hive, some making wax, some honey, some fetching water, until their noble work of making sweet honey is done, not only for their own needs but enough to share with man. That is how it was among the brothers.<sup>18</sup>

It was also during this time that the educational practices of the Hutterites were developed. Under Walpot the office of schoolmaster became vital to the community. Conferences between communities were held and an "official school code" was developed with schedules and duties outlined for workers and students. The task of the school system was an extension of the overall task of the community. "The schoolmaster, with the entire Brotherhood, was to raise the children in the honor and fear of God, and to subdue any evil inclinations from the time of their youth."<sup>19</sup> In an age and region where illiteracy was the norm, the literacy of the Hutterites was remarkable. The resulting "high standards of penmanship, stylized writing and . . . attention given to memory work and a knowledge of the

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<sup>17</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:406. Occupations included: mason, scythesmith, blacksmith, coppersmith, locksmith, clockmaker, cutler, plumber, tanner, furrier, cobbler, saddler, harness maker, bag maker, wagon maker, cooper, joiner, turner, hatter, cloth maker, tailor, blanket maker, weaver, rope maker, sieve maker, glazier, potter, beer brewer, barber-surgeon, and physician.

<sup>18</sup>Gross, The Golden Years, 33.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 33-34.

Bible"<sup>20</sup> were instrumental in the survival of the faith and ideas of the brotherhood in the difficult times ahead.

Finally, the golden years of the Walpot era included a bold and active missionary spirit. The Hutterites saw their mission as identical to that of the New Testament church. They claimed the biblical mandate of Christ as those "chosen and appointed" to "go out and bear fruit." Thus "each year servants of the Gospel and their assistants were sent out into the lands where there was a call."<sup>21</sup> On one occasion in 1570, they sent missionaries (Sendboten) into four different areas of Europe: "Jörg Raber to Tirol, Hans Langenbach to the Rhine, Klaus Braidl to Württemberg, and Peter Hörich to Silesia."<sup>22</sup> These missionaries delivered their message in various ways. Evangelism was carried out in whatever barn, house, field, or forest was available at the time. Most meetings were held secretly, because Anabaptist groups were still suspect in Europe. The Sendboten also communicated by letters and tracts sent throughout Europe with the message of God's "redeemed Christian community"<sup>23</sup> and its place in the world. The seriousness of their commitment to missions is evidenced by the fact that most of the Sendboten were sent out knowing they might be martyred.<sup>24</sup> This period of missionary involvement is regarded by modern Hutterites as a

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<sup>20</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 54.

<sup>21</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:404.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 1:427; Leonard Gross, The Golden Years, 42-43.

<sup>23</sup>Gross, The Golden Years, 44. For a discussion of this mission movement, see chapter three.

<sup>24</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 57.

"sacred" time when "God's intervention in the world to re-establish community of goods"<sup>25</sup> was manifested. The results of this "intervention" speak for themselves.

By 1592 the Hutterites had grown from a handful of fragmented and struggling religious refugees to an established and well-known society of around fifty communities with a total population of about fifteen thousand. With the seventeenth century came the political struggles of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the end of the golden years of the Hutterites.

#### Devastation in Moravia and Recovery in Russia

The political situation in eastern Europe deteriorated as the Turkish Wars (1593-1606) devastated much of Moravia and Hungary, including the Hutterite communities. The Thirty Years' War with its web of alliances and counteralliances saw "Roman Catholic joining Protestant to oppose Roman Catholic, and Protestant opposing Protestant"<sup>26</sup> in a vicious cycle of death and destruction.

The Hutterites became easy prey for the beneficiaries of war. Their reputation as a pacifistic people of good means and provisions exposed them to pillage and plunder. Not only were their material losses great; the spiritual integrity of the Hutterites suffered. The ease of the golden years obscured lessons taught in the struggles and persecutions of the early years. The historical chronicles were yet to be published. The new generation of Hutterites were not as committed to the concept of Gelassenheit (yieldedness) as were their parents. In a sense, a spoiled generation rose to prominence at precisely the time that political changes

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>26</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:804.

demanded strong, unwavering leadership. A new cycle of persecution had begun; the road to recovery would be long and hard.

Andreas Ehrenpreis, Vorsteher from 1639 to 1662, was a key leader during this period. The Hutterites suffered extreme losses in people and property and were evicted from Moravia in 1622 according to the edict of Ferdinand. A remnant fled southeastward to Transylvania (Romania) and re-established themselves. Though the next years were not easy, they provided opportunity to recover spiritual principles. Under Ehrenpreis the Hutterites participated in their "last European missionary activity, strengthened internal discipline, and produced a rich manuscript literature."<sup>27</sup> The period's sermons or Lehren, shorter devotionals or Vorreden, and principles of Ehrenpreis for community discipline remain active and authoritative documents for the Hutterites today.<sup>28</sup>

Despite such efforts, the persecutions of the times were overwhelming and eventually brought the Hutterites to the brink of extinction. In 1686, first at Levar and then throughout Transylvania, the community abandoned its distinctive practice of community of goods. Although the chroniclers inferred this was a necessary step in view of the indigence and poverty of the group, more recent writings of the Brethren hint that the main cause of decline was an "inner, religious decline of the Brotherhood."<sup>29</sup> A Hutterian preacher reported:

It is very true . . . that this excellent practice of community of goods has brought forth many lazy people. Not a few of them have a way to make one believe that they

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<sup>27</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 68.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>John Horsch, The Hutterian Brethren, 1528-1931: A Story of Martyrdom and Loyalty (Goshen College, Goshen, IN: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1931),76.

are not able to work. They will hide themselves among the devout souls who through sickness and feebleness are disabled. And, what is worse, when they do some work, it is for their own benefit. In their supposed illness they become sleek and fat. It is, verily, not right before God and all men.<sup>30</sup>

For the next seventy years little is known about the struggle for survival of the Hutterites. It took the arrival in 1755 of a group of banished Lutherans from Carinthia (a province in Austria) to revitalize the fellowship. The Carinthian Lutherans arrived at Alvinz, in Transylvania, and came into contact with the tiny remnant of Hutterians. After reading their preserved literature and conversing with the group, the Carinthians decided to join together in re-establishing the practice of community of goods.<sup>31</sup> The revitalization from the Carinthians was timely, since a new persecution began in 1762 when Empress Maria Theresa commissioned the Jesuit Delphini to rid her lands of heretics. On October 3, 1767, the Hutterites of Transylvania packed their belongings and headed south to

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>31</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 75-76. Mennonite scholar Leonard Gross proposed that the Bruderhof movement "is a twentieth-century parallel to the eighteenth-century Carinthian Lutherans!" Hutterian Brethren, ed., Brothers Unite, xvi.

## Map 3. Bruderhofs in Romania, 1621-1779

Fig. 1. [Reprinted, by permission, from John A. Hostetler's, Hutterite Society, (Baltimore, 1974), 72.]

Wallachia (South Romania). The group of sixty-seven people included only sixteen from the original Hutterite communities.

What once had been a society of settlements with fifteen thousand members dwindled to a handful of faithful refugees.<sup>32</sup>

The last phase of the European legacy of the Hutterites ends in Russia. A combination of poor living conditions and the Russo-Turkish war made permanent settlement in Wallachia impossible. In 1770, at the invitation of Count Peter Alexandrovich Rumiantsev, the Hutterites settled on his estate at Vishenka about 120 miles north of Kiev.

The Hutterites remained in the Ukraine for a total of 104 years. This was a time of re-establishment of the faith and practices of the Moravian group of the sixteenth century. They experienced setbacks in 1819 when they abandoned the practice of community of goods once again. The causes for this abandonment were similar to those of the late seventeenth century. The establishment of two thriving colonies in Vishenka and Radichev brought about security and relative prosperity. As foremen and managers of the colonies came into contact with the outside world of commerce, "the spirit of private property and individualism . . .

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 77-79.

crept into [their] thinking."<sup>33</sup> As before, the lack of persecution from the outside world along with the success of the communal society appears to have contributed to their decline.<sup>34</sup>

In 1842, the Hutterites sought help from Johann Cornies, leader of the German Mennonites in Russia. Cornies helped them re-establish their community on productive lands to the south along the Molotschna River. The entire group, seventy-eight families, made the move and started a community called "Huttertal." Eventually several communities developed, and although they abandoned their practice of community of goods, they "again attained a degree of prosperity."<sup>35</sup>

With their rejuvenation and a renewed emphasis upon education and religious doctrine, the question of community of goods resurfaced. The importance of communal practice could not be ignored in their teaching and preaching. In 1853 a group of thirty-three families failed at an attempted restoration of the practice. In spite of their initial failure they persevered and eventually became known as the Lehrerleut or "teacher's people." In 1859 two new groups in the town of Hutterdorf succeeded at restoring the practice of community of goods. One group became known as the Schmiedeleut or "blacksmith's people" (named after leader Michael Waldner, a blacksmith) and the other was referred to as the Dariusleut or "Darius people" (named after leader Darius Walter).<sup>36</sup> These three groups or families still

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>34</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 117.

<sup>35</sup>Horsch, The Hutterian Brethren, 114.

<sup>36</sup>Elizabeth O'Brien, "Population Structure and Genetic Variability Among 44 Hutterite Colonies" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1986), 26.

practice community of goods and comprise the major branches of the Western Hutterites of North America today.

As the spirit of nationalism stirred throughout Russia an inevitable confrontation developed. When the Hutterites arrived in Russia the issue of pacifism was not a factor. In 1871, however, when compulsory military service was enacted they were again faced with the reality of seeking a new home. After a series of inquiries and visits, accompanied by several "visions and psychic experiences,"<sup>37</sup> the three groups began their migration to the United States of America to the territory of Dakota, which is now South Dakota.

As the first of three groups of Hutterites bound for America boarded the ship Harmonia on June 19, 1874, they took with them more than their family members and a few personal possessions. They took a European cultural and linguistic legacy which remains a vital part of their heritage and existence to this day.

### Hutterian Life Theology and Practice

If one includes the Bruderhof communities, there are currently an estimated 355 Hutterian colonies<sup>38</sup> of about 35,200 members in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Japan, and Nigeria.<sup>39</sup> They have enjoyed steady numerical and economic growth most of this century. Through the "branching out" process new colonies are founded and are

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<sup>37</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 112.

<sup>38</sup>The terms "western" Hutterites or simply "Hutterites" and "colonies" will be applied versus the term "Bruderhof" which will be used throughout the remaining chapters to refer to the "eastern" Hutterian Brethren.

<sup>39</sup>Lawrence C. Anderson, "Gelassenheit and the Hutterian Brethren." Additional data is available in Anderson's unpublished "Hutterite Directory, 1991." The above estimates include nine Bruderhof communities of about two thousand members.



"basically alike in their social organization and expansion characteristics."<sup>40</sup> Today, all but ten of the approximately 350 colonies stem from one of the three groups that left Russia: Schmiedeleut, Dariusleut, or Lehrerleut. Of the other ten, nine are part of the Bruderhof movement of Eberhard Arnold and the other is the Owa Colony about 150 miles north of Tokyo, Japan.<sup>41</sup> The steady growth and development of the Hutterites in this century has been without parallel among modern communal groups. A closer look at their characteristics and distinctives may reveal the basis of their success.

#### Historical/Theological Foundation

The Hutterian Brethren of today adhere to the Anabaptist theology of their ancestors, with the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha as their authoritative Scriptures and the preserved Hutterian sermons and chronicles as their guide to faith and practice. Like their European predecessors, the Hutterites value doctrines such as voluntary church membership, believers baptism, pacifism, and separation of church and state.

The priority of worship in community is central to their faith. As the workday draws to a close, all activities focus on the evening church service.<sup>42</sup> Adults and children follow the preacher to the schoolhouse where worship services are held. Though the specific day or place of worship is not emphasized, the method and content of the service itself are

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<sup>40</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 44.

<sup>41</sup>In a similar fashion to that of Eberhard Arnold, in the mid-1950s Rev. Isomi Izeke led a group of eleven Japanese Christians in their search for the kind of community described in the second chapter of Acts. After reading of the Hutterites and visiting the Albertan colonies they were united with the Hutterian Brethren. In May, 1977, Izeke was appointed servant of the Word by the Hutterite elders (Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:809). For an interesting account, see Hiroshi Tanaka's article, "Albertan Gift to Asia: Hutterites in Japan," Canadian Geographic (Canada) 98(2) (1979):70-73.

<sup>42</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 33, suggests that the colonies have daily services, whereas David Flint, The Hutterites: A Study in Prejudice (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 10, 56; mentions Sunday and Wednesday services only and refers to "four weekly services."

specific and predictable.<sup>43</sup> The service focuses on prayers, hymns, Scripture, and sermons read from the ancient documents of the Hutterites in the traditional "High German" of their ancestors.<sup>44</sup> This peculiar practice of repeating the scriptural expositions of their forefathers might seem to invite boredom, but it is seen as necessary preventative maintenance against any new or radical theology. When a preacher is elected by the community "his first duty" is to make his own copy "written in excellent penmanship" of the entire sermon library of the colony. Most colonies have a collection of at least thirty to sixty of the sermon books, many of which date back to the previously discussed Lehren and Vorreden of Andreas Ehrenpreis. For some, the "conservative biblicistic" approach to these sermon expositions renders them rather dull and "more hortatory than edificatory."<sup>45</sup>

Singing plays a vital role in the worship services. Hostetler contends that "of all communal groups in existence, the Hutterites are probably the most vigorous singers." It becomes a kind of subconscious "outlet for emotional expression." Everyone memorizes the hymns and melodies of the past centuries, some including more than one hundred stanzas. The "shrill, overly loud nasal" sound serves as a distinguishing mark of Hutterian culture. These religious hymns "contain the drama of their lives and their world view--paraphrases of great Bible stories, songs of the martyrs, and touching experiences of the faithful."<sup>46</sup>

Today the Hutterites still base their faith on religious and historical documents passed down through generations. The principle document of faith is Rechenschaft unserer

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<sup>43</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 166.

<sup>44</sup>Flint, Prejudice, 56.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Friedmann, Hutterite Studies: Essays by Robert Friedmann, ed. and Preface by Harold S. Bender (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1961), 185.

<sup>46</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 169-70.

Religion, Leer und Glaubens Von den Brüdern so man die Hutterischen nennt aussgangen, written in 1540-44 by Peter Riedemann.<sup>47</sup> The first half of the Rechenschaft or Confession applies a systematic approach to theology, beginning with the doctrine of God and ending with the principles of the Christian life. It includes a section on the practice of community of goods whereby "the communion of saints itself must show itself not only in spiritual (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37) but also in temporal things." The Christian's relationship with the authorities of government is discussed, with the exhortation to "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake . . . [until] the government presumeth to lay hands upon the conscience and to control the faith of man." In that case the government "is robbing God of what is his. Therefore, it is wrong to obey it in this." Another important doctrine in this

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<sup>47</sup>This Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith Given by Peter Riedeman of the Brothers Whom Men Call Hutterians, has an interesting history. The original German edition of 1545 has been hand copied throughout the history of the Hutterites. A copy of the second German edition, 1565, remains in the British Museum, London, No. 3908a8, and was the text used by the confession's first English translator, Kathleen E. Hasenberg, in 1950. The second printing, 1974, of the Hasenberg translation (published by Plough Publishing House) may soon be replaced by a more modern joint venture between the Bruderhof and Herald Press.

This account should not be confused with an earlier devotional confession, Rechenschaft unseres Glaubens geschrieben zu Gmunden im Land ob der Enns im Gefencknus, 1527-29, written by Riedemann before he joined the Hutterites and during his three-year imprisonment in Gmunden for practicing the Anabaptist faith. Bruderhof archivist, Chris Zimmerman, claims that "This so-called Erste Rechenschaft or Gmundener Rechenschaft has not yet been translated into English and is available in print (as far as this author knows) only in Robert Friedmann and Lydia Müller's (eds.) Glaubenszeugnisse Oberdeutscher Taufgesinnte Vol. II, Gutersloh: Verlag Gerd Mohn, 1967." This first account is not considered a Hutterian confession of faith but a more general reflection of Anabaptist attitudes and beliefs.

The second Rechenschaft remains the basic confession of the Hutterites and has been frequently printed and distributed in German for the use of the Hutterian colonies. This increases the chance of minor scribal errors and allows for interesting bibliography. For example, during a visit to the Bruderhof of Michaelshof, Germany, I picked up a German edition. This edition was published by the Twilight Hutterian Brethren in Falher, Alberta, Canada, 1988, and apparently was unknown to Zimmerman. Some minor discrepancies between the Twilight edition and the original 1545 confession are indicative of the divergent bibliographical pathway of the Rechenschaft. Only recently, primarily through the efforts of Bruderhof publishers and archivists, has the academic integrity of Hutterian scholarship become a concern.

For more information on the origins, development and content of the Rechenschaft, see Robert Friedmann's, Hutterite Studies, 224-28, 265 and W. R. Estep, Jr.'s, The Anabaptist Story, 97-98, 107, n15.

first part of the Confession is "Concerning the Making of Swords." Riedemann instructed his brethren: "Christians should beat their swords into ploughshares and take up arms no more."<sup>48</sup>

The second half of the book treats specifically the issue of God wanting his people separated or isolated from the world. God's plan is that "his people not mingle with the heathen" (Gen. 12:1-3) or be like "the supposed Christians of today . . . who continually profess to love and serve God and yet will not leave abominations of sin and vice" but, rather, that "the believing be separated from the unbelieving . . . [and] in all things follow Christ."<sup>49</sup> Ideas of community of goods, pacifism, and separation from the world are included in Riedemann's theology.

A glance at the religious and historical perspective of the Hutterites today would be incomplete without commenting on their reverence for their history of martyrdom. Throughout the colonies the TABLE OF MARTYRS is still read. The process of learning hymns and stories of the past begins in the crib and persists until death. Lessons from the past are cherished and the commitment to preserve them endures. The Hutterites "regard as inevitable the atrocities they have suffered throughout their history as well as the misunderstandings with the outside world in modern time."<sup>50</sup>

Though they have produced few martyrs since migrating to America, they make a special effort to remember specific examples of modern persecution. When World War I

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<sup>48</sup>Peter Riedeman, Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith, trans. Kathleen E. Hasenberg (Bungay, Suffolk: Hodder and Stoughton in conjunction with the Plough Publishing House, 1950), 88, 102-3, 111.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 143, 151, 165.

<sup>50</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 1.

broke out, many of the colonies relocated to Canada to avoid harassment from American "patriots." Raids upon innocent colonies, as well as the torture of four young men at Camp Lewis<sup>51</sup> are reminiscent of the tactics of the Klu Klux Klan in the 1950s. The Camp Lewis event, which eventually led to the deaths of two, has been added to the list of persecutions and martyrdom.

### Political System

The system of leadership and community decision-making is based on that of the golden years of the sixteenth century. The largest political organization is the colony itself--all residents living within the community. The church or Gemein [Gemeinde] is made up of all baptized men and women. Although women are considered a part of the church, they do not have a vote in the affairs of the church. The men of the church vote on major colony policies and select colony leaders.<sup>52</sup>

The council is elected by the church and serves as a governing board. This council usually includes men with other key leadership positions (i.e. preacher, second preacher, steward, field manager).<sup>53</sup> Management decisions concerning jobs and departmental organization and decisions concerning church discipline or other judicial issues are determined by the council. In a sense the council is the Executive Branch, Congress, and Supreme Court of the colony all in one body. Frequently, an "informal subcouncil" will meet (usually after breakfast) and discuss the "day's work and assignments to the various jobs."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>See *Ibid.*, 9-10 for a complete account.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>53</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 162.

<sup>54</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 30.

The preacher or elder is fully ordained only after years of experience and tested leadership. He is ordained by fellow preachers from other colonies with the approval of his church. The preacher must "keep his hive in order"<sup>55</sup> as his responsibilities include more than the spiritual welfare of the colony. Sometimes several "ministers and elders" will be chosen to assist the preacher in spiritual leadership. This group of Aufseheren (overseers) plays an important role in the affairs of the colony.<sup>56</sup>

The last official position of leadership is the colony steward, otherwise known as the Diener der Notdurft, Haushalter (householder) or just "boss."<sup>57</sup> His responsibilities involve the economic affairs of the colony. He represents the colony in dealing and negotiating with business and political contacts of the outside world. This political system of colony, church, council, preacher, and steward has proven to be an efficient structure for Hutterian government.

Another informal system of authority should be mentioned. Though women "are believed to be inferior to men, intellectually and physically," they hold an important place in the decision-making system. Not having an official vote in colony decisions does not limit their participation in such matters. If anything, it may increase their input since they have "little to lose by complaining." Hutterian women express their opinions freely and often represent the colony as a whole. As one preacher put it, "Our colony troubles would amount

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<sup>55</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 164.

<sup>56</sup>Paul S. Gross, The Hutterite Way: The Inside Story of the Life, Customs, Religion, and Traditions of the Hutterites, with a Preface by Walter B. Hoover, Introduction by Robert Friedmann (Saskatoon, Canada: Freeman Publishing Company, Limited, 1965), 43.

<sup>57</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 165 and Gross, The Hutterite Way, 43.

to very little if it were not for the women."<sup>58</sup> Thus, an informal balance of power between the sexes is inherent within the political patterns of the Hutterian colony.

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<sup>58</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 165-66.

### Educational System

A major challenge for the Hutterites concerns their system of education. Struggles between the Hutterites and the state over compulsory education have resulted in compromise. While continuing an emphasis on religious and historical instruction through their German school, the Hutterites added a compulsory English school curriculum. The challenge for the Hutterites is how to keep English school "in its place"<sup>59</sup> without disrupting colony life.

The educational process begins at birth. All children under two years of age are considered house children. Religious training begins as soon as the baby starts eating solid food, sometimes as early as the first month. Social graces, such as toilet training and sitting alone without supervision, are taught in the early months. The babies of the colony are given special attention by everyone. Children will "vie for the privilege of holding or playing with" a baby. Some infants are even seen in the informal business meetings (often closed to women and older children) on the lap of a caring adult. This kind of attention from colony members results in the child's acceptance of the group as an extension of its immediate family.<sup>60</sup>

Usually by the third year a house child is ready to enter kindergarten or Klein-Schul [Klein Schule]. This experience is more like preschool or nursery school rather than the kindergarten of American public education. It involves a serious transition as the house child moves from the highest position of status (perhaps with the exception of the aged) to the lowest. Attention given during the first months is replaced with isolation or exclusion from the rest of the colony. Kindergarten children are considered unworthy of being included in

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 260.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 208-10.



the affairs of older members. Priority is given to strict discipline and training as they learn to behave and be quiet around others. Whereas the house-child years serve to identify the child with the group at large, the kindergarten years create a close and lasting identity between the children and their peers. Usually the oldest working women supervise the kindergarten.<sup>61</sup>

From age six to fifteen the Hutterites attend three different schools simultaneously. German School or Gross Schul [Gross Schule] "is one of the most vital organs on the Bruderhof."<sup>62</sup> The schoolmaster is chosen by the elders, and often his wife serves as schoolmother. His responsibility is to teach obedience concerning religious beliefs and practices of the colony, while she supervises such things as meals and behavioral manners. Reading, writing, prayers, and hymn singing are all conducted in German with a strong emphasis on discipline. The schoolmaster does not spare the rod and German school is seen as a source of group identification and cooperation.<sup>63</sup> It is perhaps the most vital step in preparing the Hutterite for adulthood. German school meets before and after English school.

English school is compulsory according to local and state laws. Usually the colony furnishes the schoolhouse, supplies, utilities, and maintenance while the local school board or state furnishes the teacher. Frequently, the teacher will be provided accommodations and will live within the colony. Beyond the compulsory basics, the Hutterites have a dim view of worldly education. German school is considered more important than English school and is given higher priority in matters of scheduling.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 210-14.

<sup>62</sup>Gross, The Hutterite Way, 62.

<sup>63</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 215-17.

The third school attended by the children is Sunday school. Sunday school is held every Sunday afternoon and on religious holidays. It is basically "an extension of the German school" which continues "the process of teaching the young people the verbal content of their religion."<sup>64</sup> Everyone attends until they are baptized (19-20 years for girls, 20-26 years for boys).<sup>65</sup> The primary activities of Sunday school are singing, praying, and reciting and studying the sermon given that morning.

The education process focuses more on social behavior and learning than academic instruction. Indeed some might consider it primarily indoctrination rather than education. From the early years of being a house child until leaving English school at age fifteen, the child is taught how to obey leaders. Equal attention is given to cooperation among peers. Education for its own sake is considered unnecessary and ill-advised.<sup>66</sup>

### Economic Structure

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of life in the colony is the economic system of community of goods. Even a cursory glance at the layout of a Hutterian colony will reveal the priority of economy of goods. Although the reputation of economic success (which is characteristic of the colonies today) is reminiscent of the golden years in Moravia, there is one distinct difference. Whereas the Moravians were skilled in various economic activities, the western Hutterites are basically agrarian.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 218-19.

<sup>65</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 81.

<sup>66</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 220.

The successes of the Hutterites in farming and agriculture are well-recognized and often controversial. Local farmers have protested that the Hutterites are taking over the arable acreage. These complaints have been answered with revealing facts of efficient use and protection of farmland. The average colony of one hundred people subsists on the same amount of land as that required by two "single family farms." This ratio of "population to actual land use is admirable." In addition, the Hutterites "often buy marginal land and then farm it effectively."<sup>67</sup>

The primary goal of self-sufficiency coupled with an extremely high birth rate (8.97 children per married woman)<sup>68</sup> has resulted in a unique system of "branching out."<sup>69</sup> Through the years the Hutterites learned that a colony can manage a 6,000-10,000 acre farm most efficiently with about seventy-five people. A colony with fewer people must struggle with an insufficient work force. One with more people must deal with the demands of production on a limited number of acres. Although the figures vary, most Hutterite leaders agree that the maximum population of a colony should be about 150 persons. Planning for a new branch or colony usually begins when the population reaches 130 persons.<sup>70</sup> The average colony begins a cycle of reproducing itself about every seventeen years. A new colony spends its early years paying back half the original start-up expenses contributed by the sponsoring colony. At peak production the sponsored colony begins saving the necessary

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<sup>67</sup>Peter H. Stephenson, "A Dying of the Old Man and A Putting on of the New: The Cybernetics of Ritual Metanoia in the Life of the Hutterian Commune" (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1978), viii-ix.

<sup>68</sup>Hartmut Lang and Ruth Göhlen, "Completed Fertility of the Hutterites: A Revision," Current Anthropology: A World Journal of the Sciences of Man, 26 (June 1985):395.

<sup>69</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 185.

<sup>70</sup>John W. Bennett, Hutterian Brethren: The Agricultural Economy and Social Organization of a Communal People (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), 180.

start-up gift to duplicate the branching process with a sponsored colony of its own.<sup>71</sup> This plan of multiplication of colonies not only insures the survival of the original colony but has resulted in producing almost 350 separate colonies in North America over the last century.<sup>72</sup>

When a colony is faced with a division, a careful process is followed. The leaders of the colony divide the group into two separate bodies. Individual families are not divided. A few volunteers are accepted, although some feel this practice is dangerous. The goal of the leaders is to pick two separate but equal groups with neither group having an advantage over the other. Age, sex, job responsibilities, and leadership qualifications are all considered during the division process.

A leader for the newly created group is also chosen (usually an assistant preacher). The two groups are listed on the blackboard for all to see. All the members of the colony pack their belongings as if their group will be the one chosen to start the new colony. With the women and children remaining at home, the men gather after the evening meal and the two preachers draw lots to decide which group will go and which will stay. The decision is announced, and the next morning those chosen to leave load up the trucks and depart. Those to remain unpack their belongings and begin the branching cycle over again.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 185-86.

<sup>72</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:809.

<sup>73</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 189-90.

This system of branching existing colonies has proven to be highly successful economically. For example, one Dariusleut colony<sup>74</sup> revealed that in its twelfth year it had annual expenditures of \$190,000 with an income of over \$230,000. By using the bulk of its farm production to support livestock, the colony made its "greatest profit . . . from raising and fattening cattle and from the sale of whole milk, pigs, eggs, grain, honey, geese, turkeys, and sheep in that order."<sup>75</sup>

Though most of the income of the colonies is based on agricultural production, the Hutterites also have developed skills and trades necessary for self-maintenance. They use the most modern technology in the way of tools and machinery in order to provide items such as housing, clothing, and food. Responsibilities are classified according to degrees of specialty, and skills are learned from youth. Great care is taken to encourage a healthy attitude concerning work. Work is not viewed as punishment nor is it looked upon as competitive. There "is no competition to see who can pick the most (cucumbers) or the fastest,"<sup>76</sup> but all are encouraged to work together for the common good of the colony.<sup>77</sup>

### Social Patterns

A discussion of life on the Hutterian colony must include mention of social patterns. Perhaps the best example of social purpose and harmony is expressed in the treatment and reverence for the elderly. In an aging America where talk of a collapsing Social Security

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<sup>74</sup>Hostetler gives this example but does not identify the specific colony, probably to maintain confidentiality (359-66).

<sup>75</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 178-79.

<sup>76</sup>Flint, Prejudice, 10.

<sup>77</sup>For a thorough analysis of the management principles and agricultural techniques of the Hutterites, see Bennett, Hutterian Brethren.

system is common, the social security system of the Hutterites looks utopian. From the early years of kindergarten, children are made aware of the benefits of age. With age come both privilege and responsibility. As the Hutterite reaches an age when productivity begins to decrease, the social status of retirement is gradually acquired. The entire community respects and cares for the elderly in a way that supersedes even the rural farm pattern of family care quickly becoming extinct throughout America today. To be an elderly Hutterite is truly honorable.<sup>78</sup>

A final observation on the social patterns of the colony concerns studies on the mental health of the Hutterites. In 1955 Eaton and Weil concluded that "the Hutterite lifetime risk of all types of mental disorders is as low as or lower than that of any contemporary Euro-American group."<sup>79</sup> Later studies confirmed these conclusions although various types of mental illness found in the general population are also evident within the colonies. One of the typical types of mental illness found among the Hutterites seems connected to the concept of Anfectung [Anfechtung] or "temptation by the devil."<sup>80</sup> One preacher described this experience of Anfectung (a part of the European legacy) as "when a person feels himself guilty, that he has committed some crime or sin and can't get rid of it."<sup>81</sup> The way in which the Hutterites treat the mentally ill is worth mentioning. Studies conclude the colonies are "therapeutic communities" where the mentally ill are "treated as 'ill' rather

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<sup>78</sup>Hostetler and Huntington, The Hutterites in North America, 87.

<sup>79</sup>Joseph W. Eaton and Robert J. Weil, Culture and Mental Disorders: A Comparative Study of the Hutterites and Other Populations, with a Preface by Karl Menninger (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1955), 210.

<sup>80</sup>Bert Kaplan and Thomas F. A. Plaut, Personality in a Communal Society: An Analysis of the Mental Health of the Hutterites (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Publications, 1956), 65.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 68.

than 'crazy.'"<sup>82</sup> Therefore the negative consequences of mental illness seen so often in society in general are usually minimized in the Hutterian colonies.

In summary, today's Hutterites generally have succeeded in applying their Anabaptist theology and theory of community of goods to their way of life. Their foundation rests upon the authoritative teachings and historical testimonies passed to them from their forefathers from Europe. Hutterite society focuses on the sharing of purpose, property, and labor. Their political system includes a delicate balance between an authoritarian and democratic approach. Their educational approach emphasizes a shared system of religious beliefs and practices with minimum effort concerning secular subjects. There seems to be "economic stability from the cradle to the grave for all members," with almost no class distinctions. Social relationships remain confined to a relatively small peer group. In most cases an absence of concern for personal wealth or property along with a genuine concern for moderate consumption prevails.<sup>83</sup> Isolation from the philosophies and economies of the outside world seems central to the survival strategy of the Hutterites.

Though difficulties and challenges exists, some of which will be discussed later, the Hutterites remain the oldest surviving communal society in the western world, a fact reminiscent of the golden years past.

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<sup>82</sup>Eaton, Culture, 211-21.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### **THE NEW BRUDERHOF**

In the summer of 1920, Eberhard and Emmy Arnold led a small group of Christians from Berlin to the mountain village of Sannerz to begin a new way of life. Like others of their time, they were seeking answers to the horrors of World War I and the injustices of the industrial society of Europe. Yet they sought more than redemption and justice from the corrupt system which culminated in the global embarrassment and devastation of Europe. They sought a lifestyle taught by Jesus Christ--the kingdom of God on earth. Eberhard's vision for a radical new way of living in community evolved from his own faith and experience. Though he never claimed credit for founding the Bruderhof--citing God's Spirit as the one responsible--his role as founder and visionary was vital. His writings and teachings still provide the major philosophical framework for the Bruderhof communities. An understanding of the vision of Eberhard Arnold will provide a foundation for understanding the new Bruderhof.

#### Eberhard Arnold Founder and Visionary

Eberhard Arnold was born 26 July 1883, in Königsberg, East Prussia, the son of a Professor of Theology and Church



Fig. 3. [Reprinted, by permission, from Plough Publishing House's, Eberhard Arnold, (Rifton, NY, 1973), ii.

History.<sup>1</sup> His family background was steeped in traditions of higher education and devout religious service ranging from the social circles of the bourgeois classes of Europe to the unreached mission fields of Africa and the frontiers of America.<sup>2</sup> Eberhard's father, Carl Franklin Arnold, was born 10 March 1853, in Williamsfield, Ohio, son of former missionaries to Africa, Franklin and Maria Arnold.<sup>3</sup> In ill health and fearful her children<sup>4</sup> would become orphaned in America, Eberhard's grandmother moved her children to Bremen, Germany to live with a family by the name of Gildemeister. The Gildemeisters were of the "upper class" and were known for their "intellectual and material wealth." Years later, Eberhard seemed to blame this environment for what he felt was his father's failure to experience the real essence of the life and purpose of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Carl Arnold

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<sup>1</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together: The Beginnings and Early Years of the Bruderhof Communities, 2d ed., trans. Hutterian Society of Brothers (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1971), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., Eberhard Arnold: A Testimony of Church Community from His Life and Writings, (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1973), 1. For further accounts on the family background of Eberhard Arnold, see Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, trans. and ed. Hutterian Society of Brothers and John Howard Yoder (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 9. Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking for the Kingdom of God: Origins of the Bruderhof Communities, ed. Heini and Annemarie Arnold (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1974), 6. Gertrud Hüsey, A Joyful Pilgrimage: Emmy Arnold, 1884-1980 (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1980), 4-5.

There seems to be some confusion concerning exact chronology and certain details of the family history of Eberhard Arnold. For example, one account claims that Eberhard was the "third son" of his parents (Eberhard Arnold, 1). In fact, he was the third of four children and the second of two sons. Another example cites Arnold's paternal grandparents as both being sent to the mission fields of Africa through the influence of Charles Finney (Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 9). His grandfather was sent from the Finney school of America, but his grandmother was influenced by Gottfried Mencken and left her home in Oldenburg, Germany to join her married sister Elisabeth Bultmann in Sierra Leone [from the same family as Professor Rudolf Bultmann of Marburg], where she met her future husband (Hüsey, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 5).

<sup>3</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 2; Eberhard's father's name is also found in the more Germanic spelling of "Karl."

<sup>4</sup>Evidently she was pregnant with Carl's younger brother, Gottfried Hermann. Dick Domer, interview by author, 27 August 1991, confirmed by letter, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

<sup>5</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 7-8. Eberhard writes of his father's frustration with being the son of missionaries while living a life of intellectual and materialistic indulgence. He also mentions that his

met his future wife, Elisabeth Voigt, during his last days of university studies in Breslau. Elisabeth was the daughter of one of Carl's professors,<sup>6</sup> and like his grandmother, came from a family of traditional scholars and pastors.<sup>7</sup> Carl rose through the ranks as a secondary teacher in Königsberg and soon became Professor of Theology and Church History at the University of Breslau in Silesia.<sup>8</sup> Eberhard was about five years of age when his family moved to Breslau.

### Eberhard's Youth

In many respects the childhood years of Eberhard were typical. His father was immersed in academia, having established himself as a successful professor. His mother respected her husband's academic achievements but encouraged him to use his profession to advance the social and economic fortunes of the family as well. Religion was a regular topic around the household, but it seemed to be discussed out of a sense of duty rather than spiritual commitment.<sup>9</sup> The young Arnold was not interested in the academic and social pursuits of his parents and found himself searching for meaning in life elsewhere.

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father took no pride in the "bourgeois dependence and servility to the princes" which so characterized the family of his mother Maria and his foster parents.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup>Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together*, 2; Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, *Seeking*, 8. Eberhard's maternal great-grandfather Julius [Julius Müller (1801-78)] and his brother came from "an old Lutheran pastor family from the southeast of the German world."

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Emmy cites Carl as a "grammar school" teacher, whereas, elsewhere he is mentioned as a "high school" teacher (*Eberhard Arnold*, 1). Both terms may have been used for what is today known as the "Gymnasium."

<sup>9</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, *Seeking*, 14. Arnold wrote that his family's regular church attendance resulted in "an anti-Church influence" in him because his parents would quarrel throughout the morning and then "sit very solemnly in the foremost Church pews."

Eberhard spent the summer of 1899 with his uncle Ernst and Aunt Elizabeth in Lichtenrade near Berlin. Ernst Ferdinand Klein was a Lutheran pastor in the midst of a political struggle with the established leaders in behalf of the poor, underpaid weavers in the area.<sup>10</sup> Eberhard was impressed by his uncle's strong stand for what seemed right and good against the pressures of society and the Church. The more he observed Ernst, the more it seemed that his uncle had the right kind of "living, joyful, and courageous Christianity . . . and a love to Jesus and to the poor."<sup>11</sup> He began reading the New Testament and found a copy of The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis in the desk in his room. He returned home in September and continued an inner struggle not uncommon to many sixteen-year-olds discovering the passions and temptations of adolescence on the verge of adulthood. On 2 October 1899, Eberhard sought the counsel of a young pastor in the city who had been working among the youth. He confronted the pastor, "Why do I hear so little from you about the Holy Spirit? I long for the working of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The pastor replied, "But my dear young friend . . . that is just such a working of the Holy Spirit that you have come now to speak with me."<sup>12</sup> That night, alone in his room, Eberhard "experienced Christ."<sup>13</sup> Fearful he would never be able to overcome the powers and temptations of the world, he realized his only alternative was to make a public confession of Jesus Christ and a commitment to fight everything opposed to the teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 21-22.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 22-24.

<sup>13</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 3.

So there came over Eberhard, who was still the same foolish half-grown youth, the stream of the love of God. It flowed over his heart as unspeakable joy. The finger of the Holy Spirit touched him. The voice of Jesus spoke to him, "I accept you. I come to you. Your sins are forgiven you. Go and witness to my truth."<sup>14</sup>

#### Eberhard the Student Witness

Soon after his conversion experience Eberhard began to take every opportunity to share his new-found faith with others. His parents and teachers did not know how to handle this new Eberhard.<sup>15</sup> One teacher even accused him of using his new identity to play a joke on the class and sent him out of the room as a prankster.<sup>16</sup> But the new Eberhard was genuine. Soon he was leading a group of students in Bible study and prayer. They began studying the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and soon as many as fifty boys were meeting together under Eberhard's leadership.<sup>17</sup> Eberhard's youngest sister, Hannah, later associated his leadership of this group with that of the YMCA in Breslau.<sup>18</sup>

Eberhard's desire to help the poor was often a source of aggravation between him and his parents. His first "collision" with his father over the needs of the poor concerned the elaborate parties which his parents usually gave twice a year. One evening he boldly entered his father's study and confronted him with the fact that the cost of refreshments for one of

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<sup>14</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 25-26.

<sup>15</sup>Just weeks after his conversion, he was asked at the family New Year's Eve gathering to propose a toast. He stood up and shared about his meeting with Jesus and wished that everyone might have "the same good fortune to experience a new birth into a new life." The response of those attending made it clear to Eberhard that his wish "was nothing for which anyone would empty his glass." He proceeded quietly to his room where he renewed his vows and prayed for the spiritual condition of his family members (Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 26-27).

<sup>16</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 3.

<sup>17</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 29-30.

<sup>18</sup>Eberhard Arnold, 75.

these parties could better be used to feed and clothe the "poor innocent families of the east end of the city."<sup>19</sup> Eberhard's challenge was ill-received and he was severely scolded and confined to his room for several days. Though Eberhard never officially joined the Salvation Army, his love and respect for these Christians lasted throughout his life. He attended their meetings regularly and "visited some of the darkest taverns of Breslau" in order to save those who were lost and in desperate need.<sup>20</sup> These activities were also a source of anxiety at home. On one occasion his parents read large advertisement signs posted throughout Breslau announcing, "Attention! Salvation Army. Tonight missionary Eberhard Arnold will speak in a big meeting." His father was furious and complained that Eberhard's active association with the Salvation Army was an embarrassment to the family. In addition, it was against the law for a student of his age to speak in such meetings. Professor Arnold was convinced that someday he would lose his position at the university because of Eberhard's unconventional activities.<sup>21</sup>

It was during these days that Eberhard first learned of the more radical "baptizer circles" of the Reformation. He enlisted his father, the scholar, to assist him in locating books and articles on the scarcely known Anabaptists. Though Carl Arnold did not want to encourage his son along such radical lines, he did refer Eberhard to the writings of Johann Loserth, and commended him as "one of the most trustworthy scholars" of the day.<sup>22</sup> He

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<sup>19</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 27-28.

<sup>20</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 31. Loserth was a historian of the Anabaptist movement in Moravia. One of his best known books is Der Anabaptismus in Tirol, (Vienna) 1892.

even conceded that Loserth was right to characterize the Anabaptist brothers "as good, loyal, and morally pure men with a rigorous love for Jesus." He hastened to add, however, that the Anabaptists virtually had been exterminated by the authorities of church and state, and, since "world history is world judgment," God evidently had not considered them as worthy as they considered themselves.<sup>23</sup>

After some difficulty, Eberhard passed his final exams<sup>24</sup> and began university studies of theology, philosophy, and education at Breslau, Halle, and Erlangen.<sup>25</sup> During his university years, he became involved in the German Student Christian Movement (SCM).<sup>26</sup> Around the summer term of 1906, Eberhard assumed the leadership of the Halle SCM group and set a clear example of the life of discipleship among the students.<sup>27</sup> During this time the lectures of Ludwig von Gerdtell became the stimulus for a broad revival in Halle. As a student of Gerdtell, Eberhard undoubtedly was impressed as people from the "so-called, better circles" of Halle began to meet in private homes to discuss the challenging questions

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 4. Emmy recalls how Eberhard's parents had to send him from Breslau to Jauer to get him away from his activism in Breslau. Even in the short time he was in Jauer "a small group of students gathered around him" for Bible study. He was able to concentrate enough on his studies, however, to pass the exams. Throughout his life, the tension between academic endeavors and practical ministry or service remained.

<sup>25</sup>Eberhard Arnold, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 4. This movement was a part of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) started in 1896, largely through the influence of John R. Mott, a key figure in the ecumenical missionary movement of the early twentieth century and the first honorary president of the World Council of Churches [Kenneth Scott Latourette, Twentieth Century Outside Europe, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962), 256, 504-5. John Howard Yoder points out that the SCM fit well into the "non-church" foundation laid by the YMCA. The SCM, with its focus on social issues and ministry, was not perceived as a threat and was at the same time able "to avoid both antagonizing the established churches and being roped in by them (Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 13)."

<sup>27</sup>Eberhard Arnold, 77.

posed by the lecturer. Can modern man still believe in the resurrection of Christ? What about the atonement of Christ? These were the questions of the day. Indeed, "[a]ll of Halle [was] standing on its head." The familiar call rang out, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."<sup>28</sup> These days as a student and witness for Christ were formative for Eberhard as he began to envision a new way of Christian community.

#### Eberhard and Emmy Time for Commitment

During his university and young adult years, Eberhard was faced with several life-changing decisions. It was at one of those small meetings in Halle that he met his future wife and partner in Christian service, Emmy von Hollander.<sup>29</sup> Emmy was born in Riga, Latvia, on Christmas Day, 1884, the second child of five girls and two boys. When she was five years old her family immigrated to Germany due to the increasing influence of Russia in the affairs of Latvia. She described herself as "quite a wild little girl," constantly into trouble with little interest in learning.<sup>30</sup> After the deaths of her nine-month-old brother Gustav<sup>31</sup> and, later, her fourteen-year-old sister Margarethe and through the counsel of her best friend, Lisa Franke, Emmy made the decision "to give a meaning to [her] life rather than to spend it empty and meaningless." First she entered the Deaconess Home in Halle as a helper and later she became a full-time "probationer nurse." She was quite satisfied with her new position of

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<sup>28</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 4; Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 8.

<sup>30</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 5-6.

<sup>31</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 174.



service when she returned home for a few weeks of vacation. She arrived in the Halle area during the previously mentioned season of revival sparked by the lectures of Gerdtehl. During a lecture on 4 March 1907, she first heard Eberhard speak.<sup>32</sup> Their friendship began as a courtship, and it was a short twenty-five days later, on Good Friday, when Eberhard proposed marriage. Emmy's parents reluctantly gave their permission. Their engagement lasted thirty-one months, during which time they bonded both as friends and spiritual partners.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the greatest decision for the young couple during those years did not concern the covenant of marriage but the question of baptism and membership in the state church. To accept baptism as an adult believer would be perceived as disclaiming the faith of friends, family, church, and even country. The struggle for Arnold started in September 1907, while he was studying in Breslau and Emmy remained in Halle. He wrote Emmy that he had come to a "serious" and "momentous" decision that "baptism of believers alone is justified."<sup>34</sup> He rightfully acknowledged that this decision would result in much "suffering" in their lives. As the days passed, and the two agonized over their options, the implications of such a step became clearer. Such rebellion would crush their families, both of which were established in the religious and social circles of the day. Would baptism necessarily mean forsaking the state church or could that decision wait?<sup>35</sup> What about Eberhard's doctoral

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<sup>32</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 6-8.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 9-10. For an intimate look into the developing relationship of Eberhard and Emmy, see Chapter II of Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 35-210.

<sup>34</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 157-58.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 165.

studies in theology? Would he have to change his degree to philosophy since the theology faculty would never grant such a degree to someone who had forsaken the established church? This would undoubtedly limit Eberhard's opportunities for career assignments after graduation. With what would they replace the state church? Perhaps they could "get to know the German Baptist Churches" since "their confession (and to a lesser extent their life) is very much in keeping with [the] ideal."<sup>36</sup> No, the Baptists also would fit the "atmosphere" of "pious religiosity" rather than true Christianity.<sup>37</sup> In spite of these uncertainties both Eberhard and Emmy felt certain that infant baptism was not backed by Scripture, but was simply another "religious lie of the nations with their 'formal' Christianity."<sup>38</sup> Eberhard considered the church's deception concerning the salvational effects of infant baptism as "Satan's most dangerous weapon and the most treacherous foe of apostolic Christianity."<sup>39</sup> In 1908, after much Bible study, prayer, agonizing, and postponement (at the request of their parents), Eberhard and Emmy (along with Emmy's sister Else) left the state church and were baptized.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 175-76. Eberhard considered the "ideal" to be "Church communities (Gemeinden) of believing, baptized children of God, with Church discipline and the Lord's Supper."

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 171. This term "atmosphere" is used regularly and must have been a familiar term of the day. Later, the struggle of the atmospheres of good versus evil and God versus Satan, becomes a familiar part of the experience of the Bruderhof.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 210.

Eberhard received his Ph.D. from Erlangen University<sup>41</sup> on 30 November 1909.<sup>42</sup> He and Emmy were married less than a month later on December 20. Things happened so fast that Emmy acquired from her friends the nickname, "The Flying Dutchman," referring to her maiden name, von Hollander.<sup>43</sup> They soon moved to Leipzig where Eberhard supported them from his lectures and the free-will offerings of supporters.<sup>44</sup> A review of Eberhard's lecture topics reveals the direction of his thought at this juncture of his life: "Jesus in Opposition to the Church," "The Suffering and Enslavement of the Masses," "Jesus as He Really Was," "Following Christ," and "The Future of God." This was a time of witnessing and renewal for the Arnolds as they saw God's Spirit at work in the lives of many.<sup>45</sup>

Much to their joy and delight, their first two children were born--Emi-Margret, 10 March 1911, and young Eberhard, 18 August 1912. During his speaking tour in Halle, in the Spring of 1913, Eberhard contracted tuberculosis of the larynx and throat and was unable to continue. Upon doctor's recommendation, the Arnolds moved to "a little Alpine hut in the

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<sup>41</sup>His dissertation was Eberhard Arnold, "Urchristliches und Antichristliches im Werdegang Friedrich Nietzsches," (Ph.D. diss., Eilenberg, 1910). Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, eds., The Mennonite Encyclopedia, I., 162.

<sup>42</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 11, dates the degree "on or about" November 29. A telegram dated 30 November from Eberhard to Emmy, announces, "SUMMA CUM LAUDE DOCTOR PHIL. EBBO." Eberhard Arnold to Emmy von Hollander, 30 November 1909, copy of telegram, Eberhard Arnold Collection, Woodcrest Archives, Rifton, New York.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Eberhard and Emmy committed themselves to the simple life. They had no regular source of income but relied upon gifts which came from supporters. They resolved to "not gather riches!" or even plan for their children's future, but to trust God. Each year on 31 December they set aside just enough from the bank account to cover the next month's needs. Anything remaining was given to the poor and needy. Though they did not realize it, they were establishing a pattern which would become normative for the practice of community of goods of the Bruderhof (Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 7).

<sup>45</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 12-13.

mountains of South Tyrol," where on December 23, their second son Heinrich was born, and Emmy's nursing skills were challenged with the care of a sick husband and three young children. According to Emmy, it was then they asked her older sister Else to come and help. From then until her death in 1932, Else was their dedicated helper, serving as Eberhard's secretary and helping manage the family. The doctors did not expect Eberhard to recover from his illness.<sup>46</sup> The quiet and rest of the Alps had healing effects, however, and later Emmy recalled these days as "a real gift never to be forgotten." The last two children were born during the war years, Hans-Hermann, 1915, and Monika, 1918. Family was and still is a central part of the legacy of the Arnolds and the Bruderhof.

#### Eberhard's Vision

By now Eberhard and Emmy were consciously searching for a radically different way of life. They knew that the "ideal" church of Jesus Christ could not resemble the "World Church" of the day, and they were prepared to sacrifice the pursuit and gain of worldly possessions and recognition in order to find the true church, yet Eberhard's ideas were still developing.

#### Realities of War

The events of World War I helped crystallize Eberhard's vision for a Christian community. On the evening of 1 August 1914, Eberhard received a telegram. He was to report to his army reserve unit immediately. Emmy and the children rushed to return to Halle by train, leaving all but the bare necessities behind. The trip which normally took one night by express train took six full days. Upon their arrival in Halle they were grateful to hear that

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 14. He had seven infected spots on his lungs and endured two operations on his larynx.

Eberhard had been discharged due to his illness and would be arriving the same day.<sup>47</sup> Eberhard continued with his speaking and writing<sup>48</sup> until, in the spring of 1915, he was asked to move to Berlin and assume the position of Secretary to the German Christian Student Union (DCSV) and work in the literature department of the newly formed Furche Publishing House.<sup>49</sup> He worked with the Assistance Committee for Prisoners of War, as editor of the DCSV's monthly magazine, Die Furche ("The Furrow"), where he contributed to the publishing of books, pamphlets, and art reproductions for the prisoners, many of whom were hospitalized.<sup>50</sup> Despite the difficulties of the war, the years in Berlin were productive ones and provided a secure living for the young Arnold family.<sup>51</sup>

In the first days of the war, a euphoric optimism swept over the land as everyone spoke of the noble cause of fighting for the Fatherland. Eberhard and Emmy were amazed that the hate against England was especially strong among their friends and associates who "had experienced Christ."<sup>52</sup> The sights, sounds and smells of the war, even from the relative safety of Berlin, made quite an impact on Eberhard and Emmy. Hunger was a daily reality in the streets of Berlin. The staple of the diet was turnips for most, although "well-to-do

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>49</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 8. Deutsche Christliche Studentenvereinigung, hereafter referred to as DCSV.

<sup>50</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 18. Two of Eberhard's published articles included "The Martyrs of the Sixteenth Century," and "The History of Christian Hymns: 1. Old Christian Church Songs: 2. The Oldest Songs of the Anabaptist Church" (Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 8).

<sup>51</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 8.

<sup>52</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 18. The publications of the Furche press also had a nationalistic emphasis, evidenced in the title of one pamphlet--"Der Heiland" or "The German Savior."

'Christian' families" were able to "keep a cow and have milk" throughout the worst times.

Eberhard shared a memorable moment.

In 1917 I saw a horse fall in the street; the driver was knocked aside by the starving people who rushed in to cut pieces of meat from the still warm body so that they would have something to bring home to their wives and children.<sup>53</sup>

The inequalities of war were hard to understand. While some were literally dying of starvation others were quite comfortable. Within the same household the owners might be living well while their caretaker would scarcely have enough to feed his children. It was no better on the war front, where officers were reported to be living in luxury while the common soldier suffered.<sup>54</sup>

So now the question of war became paramount for the Arnold family. Was war justifiable? Could a Christian take part in war and be true to the call of Christ? The answer became clearer to Eberhard as he studied the relationship of "material wealth, social problems, and war." Through his lectures, articles, and personal contacts he began to voice his doubts. The Arnolds began to open their home to working class families in need. On some evenings they would have as many as eighty to a hundred people gathered.<sup>55</sup> Increasingly, Eberhard began to see that the way of Jesus "was a practical one" with concern for more than just the souls of mankind.

Clearly the first Christian community in Jerusalem had more than historical significance. It was there that "the Sermon on the Mount came to life."<sup>56</sup> In this way of life

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<sup>53</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 236.

<sup>54</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 19.

<sup>55</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 9. The landlord began to complain that he had rented the house as a family residence, not a public meeting hall.

<sup>56</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 238.

there was no room for war. The seeds of pacifism and the practice of community of goods had taken root in the vision of Eberhard Arnold.

#### Influence of Blumhardts

The Blumhardt story begins 31 July 1838, when Johann Christoph Blumhardt was called as minister in Möttlingen, a small town at the edge of the Black Forest. A spiritual battle or "Kampf" ensued in the community and centered around Gottliebin Dittus, a young orphan woman who lived in Möttlingen with her three sisters and two brothers.<sup>57</sup> Gottliebin appeared to be demon-possessed and the inexperienced pastor was stretched to his limits in regular counseling encounters. The struggle ensued throughout the autumn months and involved several confrontations with demons and many bizarre events. The Kampf came to an end during a counseling session around two o'clock on the morning of December 28, when, from Gottliebin,

Satan's angel bellowed with a voice that one would hardly think could come out of a human throat forcing the head and upper-body of the girl to bow over the back of the chair. The words were: "Jesus is the Victor!--Jesus is the Victor!"<sup>58</sup>

Blumhardt reflected on the unimaginable events:

It was gruesome to me, to observe everything that up until that time had been reckoned as the most ridiculous folk superstitions march out of the world of fairy tales into reality.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>William George Bodamer, Jr., "The Life and Work of Johann Christoph Blumhardt: A Study in the Relationship Between Theology and Experience" (Th.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1966), 14, 19.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 25-26. This is from Bodamer's translation of Johann Christoph Blumhardt's own account, Die Krankheitsgeschichte der Gottliebin Dittus, 6 anfl. (Hamburg: Ludwig Appel Verlag, 1950), 52.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. In his introduction to Karl Barth, Action in Waiting, including "Joy in the Lord," by Christoph Blumhardt (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1969) 3. [This is a translation of Barth's article,

Johann Christoph Blumhardt was eventually asked to relinquish his title and position as pastor and spent the remainder of his life and ministry establishing a "pastoral care" community called Bad Boll ("Bad" meaning "spa").<sup>60</sup> In 1852 the Blumhardts renovated an abandoned spa guest house at Bad Boll, and the community was eventually recognized as a parish in Württemberg. People came from around the world to receive the Seelsorge [soul care] of Bad Boll.

Johann's son Christoph continued the work of his father until his own death in 1919. He was responsible for most of the writings which reflect the thinking of his ministry and that of his father. The Blumhardts gave new meaning to Christian eschatology. Their watchword was "Warten und eilen! (wait and hasten!)" and became the theme for Barth.<sup>61</sup> The message was to *wait* for the Kingdom and power of God to break in and *hasten* in the meantime to minister to the needs of a world in need of that power. Perhaps it was Blumhardt's ability to

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"Auf das Reich Gottes warten," published in Der Freie Schweizer Arbeiter, 49, (15 September 1916)], Bruderhof editor, Arthur Wisser, points out that

No informed person believes such a story any more. The four Gospels, the whole New Testament is full of such stories, but people have deleted them away with glib psychological or scientific explanations. Even those who believe them feel, "But that happened only when Jesus was alive on the earth."

Wisser's point is that such events can and do happen today.

<sup>60</sup>Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 15. R. Lejeune, Christoph Blumhardt and His Message (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1963), 6.

<sup>61</sup>Karl Barth, Action in Waiting, 12-13. Wisser draws from James Smart's, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology for several of his observations.

Exactly where the Blumhardts fit into the history of theology and the church is a difficult question. In the introduction to Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, John Howard Yoder lumps the Blumhardts with the "Religious Social Movement" of Germany. He points out that this movement represented a "most unique synthesis" of two components, "pietism and social concern." That is, it realized and affirmed the validity of spiritual encounter with God in "prayer, guidance, and miracle" rather than considering it something to be "outgrown" as the church and community develops. Yoder notes the successors of the Blumhardts as the "social-religious" theologians of Switzerland including Leonard Ragaz (1868-1945), Hermann Kutter (1863-1931), and Karl Barth (1886-1968). Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 14-15.



realize the power of God as a simple child and avoid the systematization of faith that most impressed Eberhard Arnold. The Blumhardt example of ministry became a vital part of Eberhard's vision for the Bruderhof.

### Jugendbewegung

With the end of the first World War came new opportunities for social and spiritual awakening. The Jugendbewegung or German Youth Movement was at the forefront of this awakening. At its peak around 1927, the Jugendbewegung included about four million members in ninety-six different organizations.<sup>62</sup> Stanley High, a contemporary of the times, classified the Jugendbewegung as a "religious movement" and a reaction against "conventional Christianity."<sup>63</sup> Eberhard and Emmy became most involved in a branch of the movement known as Wandervogel ("Birds of Passage" or "Ramblers"), after their practice of hiking or "trekking" in groups through the countryside. High recalled an encounter with the Wandervogel:

In a German village they were first pointed out to me--a group of hatless, sunburned youths, their tunics open at the throat, knees bare and feet in sandals, swinging out into the country in the early morning. Led by a battered assortment of guitars they sang as they swung along, marching with the rhythm of an old folk song. In the evening, swinging still, they returned, the boys and the girls too, wearing wreaths of wild flowers and the old guitars gay with blossoms.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Friedrich Heer, Revolutions of Our Time: Challenge of Youth (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 63. For more on the Jugendbewegung see Lewis S. Feuer, The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1969), 54; Stanley High, The Revolt of Youth (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1923), 62-79; Peter D. Stachura, The German Youth Movement, 1900-1945: An Interpretive and Documentary History (London: 1981), 2.

<sup>63</sup>Stanley High, The Revolt of Youth, 73.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 54.

For Eberhard the Youth Movement provided a forum for synthesizing new ideas concerning God, man, and society. Its focus on nature set the contrast between the natural plan of God and the artificial creation of the industrial age of humanity. Eberhard became a popular speaker at Jugendbewegung gatherings and conferences. At the DCSV conference on the Frauenberg (a mountain near Marburg) at Whitsun, 1919, Eberhard's topic was the Sermon on the Mount. At another conference in August of the same year Eberhard spoke on the following questions: "What is the attitude of a Christian to war and revolution? Can a Christian be a soldier?"<sup>65</sup> His radical stance for separation of church and state and pacifism caused quite a controversy and became a regular topic of debate for ensuing conferences.

The question for Eberhard was no longer whether a new way of life was forthcoming but how this new Sermon-on-the-Mount life would manifest itself. Many possibilities were discussed: folk schools, cooperatives, land settlements. Eberhard even thought of buying several "gypsy trailer[s]" and traveling from town to town teaching the way of Christ. One of Eberhard's articles, "The Fellowship of Families and Settlement Life," included information on 1) farming and gardening, 2) school and education, 3) publishing and outreach, 4) a children's home for war orphans, and 5) craft work.<sup>66</sup>

Eberhard began working with the Freunde des neuen Werkes ("friends of the New Work") in the area of Schlüchtern. This group began their own community in an attempt at the "original Church" and served as an encouragement for the Arnolds. He later became the head of the Neuwerk-Verlag, which published Das neue Werk twice a month and featured

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<sup>65</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 26.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 29, 33.

many of his writings which seemed to flow regularly from his pen.<sup>67</sup> Eberhard's Salt and Light, a devotional commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, and Inner Land, a deep witness and challenge concerning the Kingdom of God, both found their beginnings during these days. The influence of the Jugendbewegung on the development of Eberhard's vision cannot be overemphasized. He and Emmy captured the spirit of the Wandervogel, which in many ways provided the final impetus for the founding of the new Bruderhof.

Some fifteen years later, on 14 November 1935, from a hospital bed in Darmstadt, Germany, Eberhard wrote a letter to the then established but struggling Brethren of the Bruderhof. He had a feeling this might be his last letter to the struggling community,<sup>68</sup> so he outlined some of his concerns for the future and in so doing summarized the major elements of his vision for the Bruderhof.

I hold firmly to the inward and outward uniting of genuine old Hutterianism [echten Althuttertums] with the attitude of faith of the two Blumhardts and the attitude to life of the true Youth Movement [Jugendbewegung] as a real and wonderful providence for your future; whereas I regard a blend of Hutterianism with modern pietism as a misfortune. The Baptist Church ought to be sufficient warning to us.<sup>69</sup>

In other words, hold to the Hutterian (Anabaptist) doctrines of pacifism and community of goods, since these are necessary expressions of the love of Christ as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount. For faith, use the Blumhardts as a model, always living for the return of the

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<sup>67</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 11.

<sup>68</sup>He died eight days later when he failed to recover from an operation on his leg. See chapter four.

<sup>69</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Darmstadt, Germany, to the Bruderhof community, Rhön Bruderhof, 14 November 1935, Eberhard Arnold Collection, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York. Taken from copies of the handwritten letter and the translation provided by Bruderhof researcher Dick Domer of the Woodcrest Bruderhof, January 11, 1991. See also, Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled: The Bruderhof's Struggle for Renewal (Ulster Park, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1990), 109; and Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 257.

Lord, yet hastening to serve the suffering world and relying upon the power of God's Spirit. For living, enjoy the honest and pure spirit of the Jugendbewegung. Finally, beware the dangers of modern pietism which credits mankind rather than God for any spiritual gains or improvements and loses sight of the humility of humanity. Maintain a balance of all of these and the future of the Bruderhof should be brighter. Such was the counsel to the new Bruderhof from its founder and visionary--Eberhard Arnold.

### Vision Meets Reality

An understanding of the events which led to the final development of Arnold's vision, as expressed in his letter of 1935, is essential. By the summer of 1920, the basic vision was in place. The next fifteen years would test the ideals of the vision. The Arnolds were prepared for the challenge. Their search for social justice in the wake of World War I, combined with their involvement in the German Youth Movement, convinced them that neither society nor the conventional church held the answers. A new way of Christian community was needed.

This became clearer and clearer to us at that time. We became part of the Youth Movement, and wherever we sensed any urge toward living together in community, we were glad. There we felt a spark of God. . . .<sup>70</sup>

Eberhard and Emmy were ready to take that spark and build a fire of new life in community. The time had come for the vision to meet reality.

### The Sannerz Experiment

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<sup>70</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 244.

Meanwhile, Eberhard's work with the Furche Publishing House was in jeopardy. His articles and manuscripts increasingly reflected the new thinking of the Jugendbewegung and challenged the traditional thinking of those in control of the publishing arm of the German Christian Student Union.<sup>71</sup> Eberhard and Emmy faced another difficult decision. Should they compromise their convictions and ignore the "need of the hour" by remaining within the secure environment of employment with Furche, or should they strike out on their own in order to fulfill their new vision? Suddenly, an opportunity presented itself. Their new friends from Schlüchtern contacted Eberhard and invited him to join them in developing the Neuwerk Verlag (New Work Publishing House). Though the idea was promising, there were insufficient funds for the new publishing house and Eberhard and Emmy also lacked funds for the move. How could they consider leaving an established, secure position for such a risky proposition? Emmy recalled: "Our well-meaning friends shook their heads; what an act of rash irresponsibility for a father of five little children to go into complete nothingness, just like that!" One of Emmy's neighbors, Frau Michaelis, the wife of the former Chancellor of the Reich, called her and offered to rescue her and the children in case Eberhard actually went ahead with such an ill-advised decision. After talking to Emmy, Frau Michaelis concluded, "She [Emmy] is even more fanatical than he is. Nothing can be done!"<sup>72</sup>

The final impetus for the move came when two-year-old Monika became seriously ill. Both she and her four-year-old brother, Hans Hermann, suffered from the lean years of war. Monika was so ill that the pediatrician advised that she be taken immediately to the countryside, where she could benefit from the fresh foods and surroundings. Thus, on 21 June 1920, Eberhard, Emmy, and Monika left Berlin for the small village of Sannerz. A few

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<sup>71</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 38.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

weeks after their arrival in Sannerz, the Arnolds negotiated a lease for a red brick house and property which they had visited during a previous Jugendbewegung trek. The ten-year rental contract included farm equipment, furniture and existing livestock. The rest of their family and five other friends soon joined them at Sannerz.<sup>73</sup> Eberhard and Emmy combined their entire savings and life insurance policy, along with gifts from various friends and encouragers, for the lease of the farm in Sannerz. Emmy remembered, "We were determined to burn our bridges behind us and put our trust entirely in God, like the birds in the sky and the flowers in the field."<sup>74</sup> For them there was no turning back. The Sannerz experiment had begun.

Much of the early work at Sannerz focused on drawing in young people or students and providing for their physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs. This emphasis on reaching out to those who were seeking God was more than a necessary function of growth and survival. It was the essence of the "mission" of the community. Time after time the group's willingness to receive seekers jeopardized the well-being of the community. Years later Eberhard spoke of the urgency of this mission of reaching out.

The colossal need facing humankind in this hour of history makes it urgent to show a new way. The time is here for the communal Church to be a light on the lampstand, a city on a hill [sic] (Matt. 5:14-15). The reality of the God-given life among us must affect many and finally all people. The time is here when the message of God's unity, justice, and brotherhood in His Kingdom must be spread abroad.<sup>75</sup>

From the beginning, the new community was one of outreach rather than isolation.

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 39-41. In addition to Eberhard and Emmy, the original seven included Else von Hollander, Otto Salomon, Eva Öhlke, Suse Hungar, and Gertrud Cordes (63).

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>75</sup>Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 99

Of course there was more to life in community than learning about God and his Kingdom. There was much work to be done. The house was in a constant state of repair and improvement, along with the usual chores required to keep such a household in order. Some gardening was undertaken, but the primary sources of income were still the publishing and lectures of Eberhard.<sup>76</sup> Along with the sharing of work responsibilities, the daily taking of meals became an important aspect of community life. Meals were considered "consecrated festivals of community" at which the physical and spiritual fruits of communal labor were shared "in reverence."<sup>77</sup> A good sense of humor was a welcomed tonic for frequent times of unexpected guests, limited table fare and a lack of experience in the kitchen:

Cook, what's for supper tonight?  
Noodles, oh thunder and blight!  
Burned were they by the flame;  
Cook, is this not a shame?  
Noodles all burned so black,  
Fit neither for dog nor cat.<sup>78</sup>

The importance of family and marriage was also emphasized. The first marriage at Sannerz took place when one of the original seven members, Gertrud Cordes, married a

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<sup>76</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 41.

<sup>77</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders of Sannerz and the Rhön Bruderhof, Section I (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1976), 22. On 22 August 1929, Arnold and Rhön Bruderhof members sent this statement to Elias Walter, Elder of the Stand-Off Colony of the Hutterian Brethren in North America in order to further communicate their identity and desire to unite. The careful reader should realize that this document seems to imply a more systematic development of thought and practice than reality represents. In this case, looking back on the struggles and growth (both physically and spiritually) of the Bruderhof allowed Arnold and company to explain in a systematic way what seems to have developed spontaneously and through much travail. One must also remember the context of the drafting of the document. Its purpose was to positively represent the similarities of the new Bruderhof and the old Hutterites. Still, this little pamphlet is most revealing concerning the basic beliefs and practices of the new Bruderhof.

<sup>78</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 62-63.

young physician, Hermann Thoböll. The wedding was conducted in the style of the Jugendbewegung with Hermann dressed "in a grass-green tunic and shorts, Gertrud in a simple white dress with a garland of red clover blossoms in her hair." The ceremony took place outdoors with everyone seated in a circle in a meadow. Eberhard conducted the ceremony, and his message emphasized "love, faithfulness in marriage and the true Church."<sup>79</sup>

It was a time of expectancy, celebration, rigorous hardship, personal trial, and questioning. For many, the Sannerz experience was a kind of experiment of moving from the impulsive bravado of the Jugendbewegung to the resolute physical and spiritual commitment of the eventual Bruderhof. It was a time of learning and testing of ideals and convictions of previous years. Eberhard himself admitted:

Nobody was thinking of starting a community with a new philosophy of life; we only wanted to put into practice, together with all who wanted to come and help, the things that had become clear to us.<sup>80</sup>

Putting into practice that which had become clear proved more difficult than some anticipated.

The spirit of nonconformity within the Jugendbewegung began to erode in the early 1920s. Ministers of the established churches attempted to redirect those who had been energized through the German Youth Movement. Their appeal was, "People with the new vision should now turn back to the old conditions of life, to be a small light there." Their

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>80</sup>Eberhard Arnold, 12.



"back to the old" movement challenged the fledgling community at Sannerz, as it enticed those less radical in their commitment to forego the hardships of establishing a new life.<sup>81</sup>

As young people realized the seriousness of a commitment to break with society and culture, they questioned the practicality of their thinking. The idealism of youth gave way to future concerns of careers, families, and security; doubt crept in where dreams once resided. Hope of the "recovering" (if not "Roaring") twenties was tempting. The call to be "a small light" in the old society offered a legitimate and respectable alternative to picking potatoes on the rocky side of a hill on a farm in Sannerz. The loss by many of Eberhard's vision for a new way of life brought the small group to its first major crisis.

Debates were pursued on the validity of the new "back to the old" movement. In accordance with the times, lectures as well as literary debates were commonplace. Eberhard became known as a defender of the search for a new and better way of church and community expression while others championed a return to the old system. The neighboring community of Habertshof, under the leadership of former Swiss pastor Emil Blum, took the approach of reforming the old, and became an example of the new direction.<sup>82</sup> The community went through a period of "many long evening discussions" and "exciting talks" with visitors as well as members of Sannerz taking one side or the other.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 69.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 69, 70.

In July 1922, in the midst of this turmoil, the Arnolds were invited to visit their good friends Kees and Betty Boeke and their "radical," pacifistic community in Holland.<sup>84</sup> This provided an opportunity to share experiences and concepts of community life, as well as some respite for the Arnolds, who were in need of rest and recuperation after the hard years of the war and the beginnings of Sannerz. The community agreed that Eberhard and Emmy should accept the invitation and travel to Bilthoven. Though there was the pending issue of the "back to the old" movement, the Arnolds left for Holland, "trusting in the good Spirit to overcome all difficulties and differences, as He had done again and again."<sup>85</sup>

During their four-week absence, the situation at Sannerz worsened. Financial pressures came to bear as inflation ate into the assets of the group and diminished the value of gifts and contributions from friends. Debts related to the publishing activities of Sannerz were suddenly called and panic ensued. First, a call came for the Arnolds to return. Eberhard wrote the community and promised to return within a couple of weeks with financial relief which he planned to raise from friends in Holland or elsewhere. One thing led to another and a letter was sent from those in charge at Sannerz to the leadership of Bilthoven where Eberhard and Emmy were visiting, asking them not to give money to the Arnolds but to please send it directly to Sannerz.<sup>86</sup> The unity of the little group disintegrated and a spirit of mistrust and uncertainty pervaded the community.

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<sup>84</sup>Kees Boeke visited Sannerz during the winter of 1920-21 with a delegation known as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which came to encourage and discuss the "new life." Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 61.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 70, 71.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 72-74.

The Arnolds finished their time in Holland, raised the necessary funds to pay off the debt and headed back to Sannerz. Upon their return, they were met by "an icy-cold reception, and watery soup." A meeting was held and the following decisions were shared:

Above all it was said that we should change our whole direction. No longer: "Get out of the old conditions!" but rather: "Go right back into them!" The people with new eyes must go right back into the old bourgeois life. Further, we were told that faith and economic matters never belong together, whereas we had represented that faith should penetrate and master everything, including financial matters. "The transcendent must enter the immanent."<sup>87</sup>

Of the approximately fifty adults present, all but seven chose to leave the new community and return to the old system.

It was an unfortunate and ugly time during the life of the new group. Accusations and hostilities abounded. Property was liquidated, produce and farm animals sold off or distributed among the members over a period of several weeks. It was as though the Sannerz group was experiencing a divorce. There were disagreements concerning property settlements and remaining responsibilities, and numerous accusations of fraud and deceit from all sides.<sup>88</sup>

By October 1922 only the seven who chose to continue remained at Sannerz. In a sense the Sannerz experiment had ended. Many lessons had been learned by those who remained. Commitment to communal life would be taken more seriously in the future. In the years that followed, great care was taken to write down the lessons of Sannerz. The development of the Bruderhof Foundation and Orders owes much to these early experiences of Sannerz. Perhaps the best example of lessons learned through this crisis is reflected in "The First Law in Sannerz," also published as "Straight Talking in Love."

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 74, 75.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 77.

There is no law but that of love (2 John 5-6). Love means having joy in others. Then what does being annoyed with them mean?

Words of love convey the joy we have in the presence of brothers and sisters. By the same token it is out of the question to speak about a Brotherhood member in a spirit of irritation or vexation. There must never be talk, either in open remarks or by insinuation, against a brother or a sister, against their individual characteristics--under no circumstances behind the person's back. Talking in one's own family is no exception.

Without this rule of silence there can be no loyalty, no community. Direct address is the only way possible: it is the spontaneous brotherly service we owe anyone whose weaknesses cause a negative reaction in us. An open word spoken directly to the other person deepens friendship and is not resented. Only when two people do not come to an agreement quickly in this direct manner is it necessary to talk it over with a third person who can be trusted to help solve the difficulty and bring about a uniting on the highest and deepest levels (Matt. 18:15-16).<sup>89</sup>

The first law of Sannerz was to never "talk, either in open remarks or by insinuation, against a brother or a sister, against their individual characteristics--under no circumstances behind the person's back," but to take any problem with another directly to them and work it out in Christian love. To this day it is not uncommon to see a copy of "The First Law of Sannerz" hanging on the wall of a bruderhof household.

### Rhn Bruderhof

In the aftermath of crisis, the remaining seven began again to establish a new life of community. The publishing house was renamed, "Eberhard Arnold Publishing House," and the number of publications increased significantly. Visitors came from various backgrounds and with various interests. Emmy recalled that "[p]eople came and went" as the door

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<sup>89</sup>"The First Law of Sannerz" is found in, Foundation and Orders, Section I, 48-49. "Straight Talking in Love" is a modern translation of "The First Law of Sannerz" and is found in Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 130-31. It is also included in the 1989 printing of the brochure, "Hutterian Brethren: The Bruderhof, A Christian Community," which is available upon request from Plough Publishing House, c/o New Meadow Run, Farmington, PA 15437, USA.

remained "open for entering and leaving." Many "brothers of the road" or "tramps" stayed with the group as they were "forced to the road" in the aftermath of war and revolution.<sup>90</sup> By 1926 the group outgrew the farmhouse of Sannerz and began looking for an additional site. In their search for additional land to support the growing movement, they learned of a nearby farm called the Sparhof. This was a large complex comprising seven smaller farmsteads in the very poor highlands of the Rhön mountains.<sup>91</sup> The area was inhabited by the "very poorest of peasants" and must have been considered somewhat undesirable. Emmy recalled that they were not intimidated by the living conditions or the reputation of the community, since "it was a time of much wandering and [they] were looking for the poor." They became interested in the largest farm of Sparhof, called Hansehof, which consisted of about seventy-five acres.<sup>92</sup> In spite of the dilapidated condition of the farm buildings and certain "strings attached"<sup>93</sup> to the contract, the group purchased the farm and celebrated their new community on 5 December 1926. On that occasion the group chose to change their name from Sannerz to the Rhön Bruderhof, taking the name "Bruderhof," used by the original Hutterites of the sixteenth century.<sup>94</sup> For the next

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<sup>90</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 102-3.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. Gertrud Hüsey indicates 135 acres in A Joyful Pilgrimage, 16.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid. One couple already living on the farmstead was given guaranteed rights to remain indefinitely.

<sup>94</sup>Foundation and Orders, Section I, 33, 51-52. From the German, "Bruderhof" means home or place of the brothers or simply, "a place where brothers live" (Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 43, n. 2). Arnold's group became known as the Bruderhof early in its development. Curious about the etymology of the term, this author questioned Bruderhof researchers.

## THE RHÖN BRUDERHOF IN GERMANY

Fig. 4. [Reprinted, by permission, from Plough Publishing House's, Eberhard Arnold, (Rifton, NY, 1973), vi.]

ten years the Rhön Bruderhof served as the primary home of the movement.

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By personal interview Bruderhof researcher, Dick Domer, confirmed the original Hutterites used the term as early as the 1760s during the time of their move from Hungary to Russia. He cited several references to "Bruderhof" in Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch, 2:234, 239, 241, 250.

Eileen Robertshaw, Bruderhof member and primary translator and editor of The Chronicle, points out that the term "Bruderhof" occasionally appears in the first five parts of the Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch, after which it is frequently used. Apparently, the first author of the Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch, Johannes Waldner (Vorsteher 1794-1824), used the term as he compiled source materials covering the period of 1665 (the last events included in Die Älteste Chronik) to 1793 when he resumed the story. Waldner was the chronicler through the events of 1802. Whether or not Waldner was the first to use the term to describe Hutterian communities remains uncertain. Robertshaw and others continue to work on the translation of Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch which should appear for the first time in English as Volume II of The Chronicle. Today the term "Bruderhof" is seldom used by Hutterians from the west who prefer the word "Colony."

A system of communal work developed through the years in order to insure both the physical and spiritual well-being of the Rhön Bruderhof. Individuals were assigned to work based on their skills or gifts and the needs of the community. Community work included:<sup>95</sup>

1) *Publishing, selling books, lecturing, and writing*: Eberhard's background of lecturing, editing, and publishing continued to serve as his main vocation and ministry. Some of the books published included: Tolstoi, Religiöse Briefe; Joan Mary Fry, Das Sakrament des Lebens; Goldschmidt, Die Rassenfrage; Zinnzendorf, Über Glauben und Leben; Blumhardt, Das Reich Gottes and Die Nachfolge Christi; Yunge Saat, Lebensbuch einer Jugendbewegung; and several other pamphlets and articles including the monthly magazine Das Neue Werk.<sup>96</sup>

2) *The children's community and school*: In addition to teaching their own children, the community offered refuge to orphans and children in need. By 1928 a children's home was established which housed fifteen to twenty children, teachers, and helpers and included an accredited school.<sup>97</sup>

3) *Farming and gardening*: Most members of the community were raised in the cities, which did not "make for much confidence in [their] farming methods." For example, upon arrival, one of their "farmers" promptly arranged for the removal of the dung heap in the front yard "because it was such an eyesore!" He did not realize that the dung heap was vital to farming in spite of its looks and smells.<sup>98</sup> Evidently some success in farming was

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<sup>95</sup>The following "branches" or areas of work are listed in Eberhard Arnold, Foundations and Orders, Section I, 21-22.

<sup>96</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 51.

<sup>97</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 18.

<sup>98</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 65.

achieved. Crops included grain, potatoes, cabbage, beets, other vegetables, berries, and fruits.<sup>99</sup>

4) *Work with young people and guests*: The Bruderhof provided a place where young people (many from the Jugendbewegung) could share in common work, discussions, inner gatherings, and personal friendships, with the overarching goal of providing a "witness to the way of Christ" to the youth.<sup>100</sup> Friends and visitors came from many places to visit the new Bruderhof. The list of visitors included the disinherited and poor as well as the famous and affluent. The workload in providing hospitality for visitors was considerable. During these years the following saying became familiar: "Ten were invited, but twenty people came; put water in the soup and welcome them all the same!"<sup>101</sup>

5) *Workshops*: In 1925 workshops were developed and included a carpentry shop, smithy, turnery, saddlery, and sewing shop. They primarily supported the maintenance and growth of the physical plant of the community; some products however were manufactured for resale.<sup>102</sup>

6) *Housework*: As the community grew in numbers, housework became a major branch of communal work. It included general cleaning, cooking, baking, and laundry.

The pattern for communal work and community of goods was established firmly at the Rhön Bruderhof.

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<sup>99</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 18.

<sup>100</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders, Section I, 14.

<sup>101</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 62.

<sup>102</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders, Section I, 21.



"Brothers Unite" From the book, *Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhn Bruderhof with the Hutte*

Shortly after the move to the Rhön location, Eberhard's attention turned to the Hutterian Brethren of North America. As early as 1921, Arnold was aware of the surviving Hutterian colonies in America. He and Emmy were fascinated with the heritage of the Hutterites and the Anabaptist movement in general, and a growing personal affinity developed.

Just at this particular time, in the year 1928, we experienced a great deal, for we became absorbed in the history of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. We were especially enthusiastic about the early beginnings of the Hutterian Brothers because it corresponded in so many ways to our own beginning. We read about the beginnings of their common life, their methods of education, their economy and the accounts of their martyrs. We were deeply moved by all this because we felt strongly that here was the same Spirit who had called us to the same witness and life in our own age.<sup>104</sup>

Emmy remembered, at a meeting in the upstairs office of the publishing house, a member asking, "What exactly is hindering us from uniting with the Hutterian Brothers?"<sup>105</sup>

Eberhard began to correspond with Mennonite historians John Horsch<sup>106</sup> and Robert Friedmann,<sup>107</sup> who put him into contact with Elias Walter, Servant of the Word at the Standoff Colony, Alberta, Canada, of the Dariusleut family.<sup>108</sup> Walter sent Arnold copies of

<sup>103</sup>From the book, *Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhön Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church*, trans. and ed. Hutterian Brethren (Ulster Park, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1988). This book is a collection of diary excerpts and letters to and from Eberhard Arnold 1928-35.

<sup>104</sup>Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together*, 115.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., *Brothers Unite*, 2.

<sup>107</sup>Hüssy, *A Joyful Pilgrimage*, 16.

<sup>108</sup>Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together*, 115; and *Brothers Unite*, 1-2. Elias Walter is incorrectly designated as "Elder of the Hutterian Brethren in North America," in Hüssy's, *A Joyful Pilgrimage*, 16.

important Hutterian documents, and the two entered a dialogue through correspondence. They discussed doctrinal issues such as the meaning and form of baptism, pacifism, the millennium, appropriate dress, community life, and mission.<sup>109</sup> Gradually, it became apparent to Arnold that a uniting of the Bruderhof with the Hutterian Brethren was necessary. In August 1928 the Bruderhof decided to request acceptance into the Hutterian fellowship. Two recurring reasons prevail in Eberhard's letters concerning a proposed union: 1) the common experience and similarity of faith and community, and 2) the dire need of the Bruderhof for spiritual and financial assistance from the older, more established Hutterians. On 6, 1928 November Arnold wrote to Elias Walter:

We thank you especially for your loving, thorough answer to our letters of August 22, 1928, in which we declared with final, decisive determination our resolute will, which shall never be withdrawn, to be really united with you and your communities. We want to be completely incorporated for our spiritual as well as our material care.<sup>110</sup>

Walter felt that such a union seemed unlikely but Eberhard persisted.<sup>111</sup> He began to expand his letter writing to other Hutterian leaders, evidently upon the suggestion of Walter and others.

His persistence finally was rewarded when he was invited by the Hutterites to come to America and visit the colonies. On 30 May 1930, Eberhard Arnold boarded the vessel Karlsruhe from Bremerhaven to New York to begin a year-long visitation of all thirty-four Hutterian colonies of North America.<sup>112</sup> Throughout his journey he wrote regularly to Emmy

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<sup>109</sup>Brothers Unite, 6-10.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>112</sup>Brothers Unite, 61-62, 346-49.

and the Brotherhood and shared his experiences. He was received well throughout the colonies and seems to have been an instrument of revival among some of the Hutterites. More than one Hutterian leader remarked that in many ways the Bruderhof community more accurately reflected the spirit of the original Hutterites. Throughout his travels Eberhard was impressed with the apparent wealth of the agrarian Hutterian colonies which offered quite a contrast to that of the Rhön Bruderhof.

In September 1930 he again submitted his request that the Bruderhof in Germany: 1) be united with all American bruderhofs, "as an expression of its complete incorporation into the church of God," 2) be provided with the service of the Word, through Eberhard himself and, 3) be a mission outpost "supported in both spiritual and temporal matters." After four months of visits, discussions, and meetings, the Schmiedeleut leaders decided that Eberhard agreed with their beliefs and saw "no obstacle to the union."<sup>113</sup> They sent a letter to that effect ahead of him as he traveled from Manitoba to Alberta. Eberhard could not hide his pleasure in a letter to Emmy, 19 September 1930. He shared that all seemed pleased at the common faith and purpose of the two groups, although he acknowledged "the obstacles that present-day Hutterianism puts in the way of our cultural work and task should not be overlooked."<sup>114</sup> Upon arriving in Alberta, Arnold was re-examined by the Dariusleut leaders, including Elder Christian Waldner, who, according to Eberhard, "displayed the well-known Hutterian sharp thinking, objectivity, clearmindedness, thoroughness, and caution, caution, and once more caution."<sup>115</sup> Finally, on 9 December 1930, Eberhard Arnold was

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 133, 135.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 128. Arnold identified these obstacles as primarily stemming from the differences of their own twentieth-century culture and education to that of the "quite unique Hutterian culture" (129).

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 158.

"incorporated" into the Hutterian Brethren through baptism by pouring,<sup>116</sup> and ten days later confirmed as a Servant of the Word through the laying on of hands.<sup>117</sup>

Eberhard was given the important task of establishing a Hutterian bruderhof in Germany according to the "best order" of the Brethren. Each debt-free American colony would provide \$1000, with those in partial debt furnishing \$500 for the new "mission" effort. About ten of the colonies were exempted from this financial commitment. In addition, thirty work horses and fifteen milk cows would be shipped to Germany for service and to be sold by the Rhön Bruderhof.<sup>118</sup>

Eberhard returned to Bremerhaven 10 May 1931, on the ship, Berlin, almost a full year after his departure.<sup>119</sup> The next thirty months were characterized by an "undisturbed building up" of the Rhön Bruderhof.<sup>120</sup> New members were added and the work of the community continued to grow. Eberhard was eager to maintain contact with the new Brethren of America, as he realized the great advantages of the Hutterian colonies, but he also felt compelled to point out certain dangers that existed. In a confidential letter to his

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 181-82. This was Eberhard's third baptism. The first, as an infant in the "State Church," he would claim as invalid with respect to faith in Jesus Christ. The second was during college in Halle when he broke with the tradition of the state church and was immersed as an adult believer in the sense of an "incorporation into the body of Christ . . . and of sharing in the death of Jesus." This third baptism did not invalidate the second but served "as supplementary to" the earlier baptism by immersion. Eberhard was unwilling to let the form or timing of this issue stand in the way of unity.

<sup>117</sup>For a complete copy of the letter of "incorporation" see appendix 1.

<sup>118</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 149; Hutterian Brethren, ed., Brothers Unite, 183.

<sup>119</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 155.

<sup>120</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 19.

good friend, Elias Walter, he outlined ten points of weakness which he prayed could be overcome by the strength of God. These points are paraphrased as follows:

- 1) Leadership through the Word should be represented better by service of the Word.
- 2) Colony leaders must act according to the unity, will, and for the benefit of all the Brethren.
- 3) This is only possible through honest, loving communication which comes from God's Spirit, and which should be a strong characteristic of all leaders.
- 4) Every trace of personal property and money must be abolished, and everything held truly in common.
- 5) The practice of allowing small communities made up primarily of the same biological extended family should cease.
- 6) Then, all "evil gossip" can be fought and abolished.
- 7) All colonies should unite in obedience and unanimity under the leadership of one Elder, according to the way of the original Hutterites.
- 8) These seven items represent the one goal of Christian love based on pure faith, true teaching, and discipline.
- 9) Someday all colonies will share in the stewardship of all material things, a true community of goods, a common purse.
- 10) May God provide the Brethren a good leader, Elder (like Andreas Ehrenpreis of the seventeenth century), who will bring about true unity.<sup>121</sup>

Eberhard believed a supernatural sense of unity should pervade the church of the Sermon on the Mount. Uniting with the Hutterites was a major step forward in becoming the kind of church community Christ intended. The uniting provided for the physical and spiritual needs of the Bruderhof. The Rhön community saw its numbers double and experienced "an intensive time of inner strengthening and deepening."<sup>122</sup>

#### Persecution of the Third Reich

Such a life in community means a struggle against man's selfish nature. This cannot be carried on in comfortable, self-satisfied tranquility. Consistent conduct always calls for

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<sup>121</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., Brothers Unite, 260-62.

<sup>122</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking for the Kingdom of God, 273.

a fighting, conquering, steadfast attitude. And so what this life demands is full concentration and a readiness for sacrifice, privation, need, and even for martyrdom. The Bruderhof people choose to go the way of sacrifice. It is a way fraught with great responsibility, just as Christ died on the Cross in order to rise to life again. His death did not relieve us of the necessity of going the same way. He lived this way as an example for us to follow.<sup>123</sup>

These were the words of Annemarie Arnold née Wächter, as a young novice at Rhön in 1932.<sup>124</sup> Her words were prophetic as the "way of sacrifice" would take on new meaning for the Bruderhof with the rise of Nazi Germany.

Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the German Reich, 30 January 1933. The immediate goal of the Nazi movement was Gleichschaltung or the "equalization" or "forced conformity" of all people of Germany.<sup>125</sup> How could the Bruderhof, which was based on radical non-conformity and separation from the State, survive in a climate of Gleichschaltung? Eberhard saw through the false promises of Nazism early in its development. His decision was not whether to conform to the new policies and teachings of Hitler, but how to oppose them. Later, Emmy recalled the dilemma in the early 1930s.

In many a brotherhood meeting the question was to what extent we should give an opposite witness. We wished to act openly at all times. We could not say "Heil Hitler," nor would we be "equalized," that is, accept all the decrees, etc. Very often Eberhard went to the authorities to explain our position--that the discipleship of Christ as we understood it could not go together with the demands of National Socialism. Also that

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<sup>123</sup>Annemarie Arnold, Youth Movement to Bruderhof: Letters and Diaries of Annemarie Arnold née Wächter, 1926-1932, ed. Hutterian Brethren, Woodcrest Bruderhof, with a Forward by Ann Mow (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1986), 169.

<sup>124</sup>She was later to become Annemarie Arnold, wife of Heini Arnold.

<sup>125</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 181.

we could not say "Heil Hitler," since we did not believe that the *Heil* (salvation) came from Hitler! This often got us into trouble on the street or at business.<sup>126</sup>

Soon the crisis moved beyond a theological or philosophical point of contention. Emmy remembered how, without much publicity, modern schools began to be closed. There were rumors of people being sent to concentration camps. Church leaders and media were censored; when a group or institution was shut down, there would simply be short notices, such as, "Another Communist nest discovered!"<sup>127</sup>

Eberhard's position against Nazism was nurtured by his Anabaptist view of the relationship between Church and State. In a meeting with guests in 1934, he discussed his reasons for refusing to follow the edicts of the National Socialist State. He acknowledged that for some there was a way of compromise. For example, the Confessing Church Synods, representing a movement of resistance to the nazification of German Protestantism, sought to protest Nazism while remaining in the State Church, ruled by Nazism. Their slogan was, "No withdrawing from the Church!" Yet, for Eberhard, the root of the problem was the State Church itself. The Confessing Church, with its "limp attitude," was simply following the erroneous pattern of State and Church relationships which for centuries had persecuted Christians. Eberhard argued,

What good is it if, from within the Churches, they protest about isolated incidents that lead to suppression of the freedom of speech, brutal murder, and all the horrors, while they support the overall application of this evil system? The failure of the Churches of the Reformation to take the radical, early-Christian position in regard to the

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<sup>126</sup>Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together*, 182-83. On 7 November 1933, Eberhard wrote to Hitler's Advisor for Church Affairs and closed his letter, "All our best wishes to Adolf Hitler; all salvation (Heil) through Christ." "Confrontation: Adolf Hitler/Bruderhof," *The Plough* 21 (April/May 1989): 7.

<sup>127</sup>Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together*, 183. In a 6 December 1933, letter to the Gestapo, Eberhard objected to such accusations and rumors that Bruderhof members were *Edelbolschewisten*, or idealistic bolshevists who reject the militancy of Bolshevism but adhere to its basic philosophy. "Confrontation: Adolf Hitler/Bruderhof," *The Plough* 21 (April/May 1989): 16.

State and society is taking its toll. We are paying for the historical sins of the Peasant's War: the bondage to the princes' rule and the outrages committed against the popular Anabaptist movement. We are reminded of the way Christianity in England sold out to the State.<sup>128</sup>

Eberhard's interpretation of Romans 13 and the biblical intent of the relationship of government and Christians set himself and the Bruderhof on a collision course with the ever stronger Third Reich.

Yet, as in times past, along with hardship came commitment and growth. The Rhön community decided, in the face of government oppression, to continue to build and augment their community. During the summer of 1933, eighteen new members were baptized into the community. Many other guests visited and participated in the life of the community during these days. As pressures from the government increased many of the visitors left the Rhön Bruderhof and returned to their homes. These were affectionately referred to as "summer novices."<sup>129</sup> Parents and relatives of many of the members and novices discouraged those at Rhön from persisting with this radical approach in the face of persecution from the Nazis. Despite the challenges facing them, by the autumn of 1933 there were 130 persons residing at Rhön.<sup>130</sup>

In November, Hitler called for a plebiscite to project an image of overwhelming support of his government. The Rhön community agreed they should not simply cast a "No" vote without some explanation. So each wrote on a piece of paper that they would support a government which was "appointed by God," but their mission was "to live according to the

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<sup>128</sup>Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 188.

<sup>129</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 183-84.

<sup>130</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 19.



way and example of Christ, as a corrective for this world."<sup>131</sup> On the day of the plebiscite, the group walked to Veitsteinbach, their district voting poll, and cast their votes. Evidently the local poll workers felt this explanation warranted a "Yes" interpretation, as the newspapers announced everyone had voted to affirm Hitler's Nazi government.<sup>132</sup>

The Gestapo must have felt otherwise concerning the votes of the Bruderhof members. Four days after the plebiscite, on November 16, about 140 Gestapo Storm Troops (Sturmabteilung) and local police surrounded the Bruderhof and proceeded to search the premises and intimidate the occupants.

No one was allowed to leave his room or place of work, and at every door stood one of these men. Then they pushed their way into the rooms and searched everything. Books, letters, even personal letters of engaged and married couples were read and sometimes made fun of. Particular attention was paid to letters from other countries, [since] [i]nformation of this kind from outside was called "horror propaganda" against Germany, and this was subject to severe punishment as treason.<sup>133</sup>

The soldiers searched Eberhard's room and confiscated many of his books and records. Some speculated that they intended to take Eberhard with them to a concentration camp, but he was bed-ridden, recovering from a recent severely broken leg.

From this point the Bruderhof was more closely watched, and officials in the area who once had been friendly encouragers of the community gradually seemed to turn against them. Other local leaders who would not compromise their positions were replaced. The local school superintendent came to the hof to test the children to insure that they were receiving proper "patriotic" instruction. The community was notified that all children

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<sup>131</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 185.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 185-86.

residing at Rhön without their parents must leave the Bruderhof. In addition, the State would provide its own teachers to instruct the children. The Rhön school was to be discontinued.<sup>134</sup> The young people must join the Hitler Youth and learn to be patriots of Nazism and loyal to Hitler. Passports and travel papers were forbidden to be issued to members of the community, visitors were restricted to day visits only, and only those committed to stay for six months or longer could reside at the Bruderhof. Next, the government called the twenty-year mortgage on the farm and gave Arnold and his friends fourteen days to pay the outstanding balance of 15,000 marks. They were forbidden to sell many of their products in order to raise the funds necessary to pay these debts. Finally, the threat of conscription for military service was rumored, a development which undoubtedly would bring the pacifistic community at odds with the government. Persecutions persisted, and yet the group grew to 180 residents in 1934.<sup>135</sup>

The community was on the brink of dissolution. Rumors abounded that the Bruderhof would be dissolved within months and its members would have to emigrate. This talk severely disrupted the business activities of the community, as vendors became reluctant to extend credit or process orders for such a volatile client. The seriousness of the situation is reflected in a letter dated 6 December 1933, from the Bruderhof (penned and signed by Eberhard) to the Prussian Secret Police in Berlin, copied to certain local officials. Arnold outlined the areas in which the Bruderhof was bound to offer its "special love and respect" for the government: (1) common good before self interest, (2) the goal of unity among the German people, (3) ridding the public of evil (e.g. bolshevism, corruption,

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<sup>134</sup>The community temporarily sent all school-aged children to Marie Schmidt's home for children in Switzerland. When the Nazi school teacher showed up there were no students left to teach! Ibid., 189-90.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 188-91; Hüsey, *A Joyful Pilgrimage*, 19.

immorality), and (4) fighting unemployment. He followed these with "misgivings" about the direction of the government, namely: (1) primacy of state over church, (2) potential loss of religious freedom, (3) loss of freedom of speech and education, (4) placing of man and state above God and his Word, above Christ and his Spirit.<sup>136</sup> From today's perspective of Nazism and the atrocities of World War II, Eberhard's attempt to convince the Gestapo in favor of the Bruderhof seems pitifully naive and futile. Yet, one must admire the simple honest and sincere faith which emanated from this tiny band of Christians.

In the face of Nazism the future of the Bruderhof was uncertain. Just as the forefathers of their newfound friends, the Hutterites had been a refugee people fleeing from persecution, so the people of the Bruderhof were about to experience their own diaspora.

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<sup>136</sup>"Confrontation: Adolf Hitler/Bruderhof," The Plough 21 (April/May 1989): 12-17. Also, Hutterian Society of Brothers, ed., The Dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof in Retrospect, (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1979).

## CHAPTER 4

### A PILGRIM PEOPLE

In the spring of 1934, the disruption of education for the children and pending military conscription of the men forced the Rhön Bruderhof to search for an alternative site. Eberhard had a vision that the tiny country of Liechtenstein would offer refuge. He and Emmy traveled to this tiny mountain country to begin their search. They stayed in the little village of Schaan with the intent of getting to know the language and culture of the people of Liechtenstein. They avoided the topic of politics and their troubles in Germany and mentioned they would like to start a home for children in the area. Someone suggested the summer hotel at Silum, 1,500 meters high in the mountains and vacant since the previous summer. After some difficulty, Eberhard and Emmy made it to the hotel by sleigh, met the owner, and negotiated an annual lease of 1,500 francs for the main hotel and adjoining cottages which could accommodate up to one hundred people. Half the annual amount was due immediately in order to hold the rooms for the group. This was quite a sum for the struggling Rhön Bruderhof during such difficult times. Emmy was discouraged and held little hope in raising such a sum.

Before returning to Germany, Eberhard and Emmy went separately to visit friends.<sup>1</sup> Emmy visited Julia Lerchy, a previous visitor and friend of the Bruderhof, in the hospital. Julia was shocked to hear of recent developments concerning the Bruderhof and encouraged

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<sup>1</sup>Eberhard was unable to travel everywhere with Emmy because his leg was still in a cast.

Emmy to persevere in spite of the situation. As Emmy prepared to return to Germany, Julia asked her to come again with Eberhard before they departed. That afternoon Julia shared with both of them that she wished to join the Bruderhof permanently. As they prepared to depart, Emmy was surprised when Julia pressed an envelope into their hands which included a gift of 8,000 francs. This was more than enough for the entire annual lease on the new site as well as provisions and payment of debt for the Rhön hof.<sup>2</sup> A new community was born-- the "Alm" Bruderhof.<sup>3</sup>

#### Alm Bruderhof, Liechtenstein

The Alm Bruderhof had positive beginnings. The school children who were temporarily exiled from Germany at a private school in Switzerland<sup>4</sup> immediately moved to Liechtenstein. Several young families also were moved as the threat of military conscription in Germany grew. Eberhard and Emmy joined the small group with their son, Hans-Hermann, who suffered from tuberculosis. Emmy recalled the spirit of the first days at the Alm Bruderhof:

Wonderful days followed of reunion with our children and with some of the other young people, who arrived there little by little. What a welcoming that was! Escaped from the snares of the Nazis!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 190-93.

<sup>3</sup>Richard E. Domer, Winifred Hildel, and John Hinde, May They All Be One: The Life of Heini Arnold (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1992), 67. "Alm" meaning alpine pasture.

<sup>4</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 190.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 194.

Hardi Arnold, who had been studying in England<sup>6</sup>, joined the group to continue his studies in Zürich, and brought with him some English friends interested in joining the Bruderhof movement. It was the first time people from England visited the Bruderhof, and despite the obvious language barrier regular "deep-going talks" ensued.<sup>7</sup>

The joys and hopes of the springtime beginnings of the Alm hof quickly wilted with the coming realities of a dry and harsh spiritual summer. What resulted during the months of June and July can be described as a practical and spiritual crisis. Practically speaking, the task of establishing a healthy community under such circumstances was a challenge. There was immediate pressure to become a productive community, especially since the Rhön hof was no longer able to receive guests or conduct business under increased persecution from the Nazis.

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<sup>6</sup>Hardy was forced to move his studies from Germany when he refused to sign certain documents imposed upon students by the Nazis. Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 70.

<sup>7</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 190.

## THE ALM BRUDERHOF IN LIECHTENSTEIN

Fig. 5. [Reprinted, by permission, from Plough Publishing House's, Eberhard Arnold, (Rifton, NY, 1973), vi.]

The publishing arm of the Bruderhof, its primary source of income, was crippled, and the Alm hof was expected to compensate for this deficit. Added to the urgency of the task was the "unnatural" composition of the membership of the Alm Bruderhof. There were an inappropriate number of children who required much attention and instruction, complicated by the lack of more experienced leaders. Many young families had been relocated to the Alm. The three chosen as Servants of the Word and "witness brothers" mishandled the situation and what began as a practical crisis of circumstances developed into a spiritual crisis threatening the survival of both communities.<sup>8</sup>

This spiritual crisis was characterized by what Eberhard termed a "guilt-consciousness" that "circles around itself."<sup>9</sup> It seems pressure to succeed in work overshadowed the spiritual basis for the community itself. As Hardy Arnold later put it,

a spirit of moralism and later of cold officialdom and work efficiency, coming from a strong urge for power over brothers and sisters, developed on the Alm Bruderhof among the leading brothers.<sup>10</sup>

In a Sendbrief for both communities Eberhard attempted to "clear" the issues. He suggested that in the face of human failure, the Christian must admit his frailties to God's Spirit, ask for forgiveness, and, as Hutterianism teaches, "know that we have it." Then one must get on with the Christian life and not "wallow around in [their] own dirt."<sup>11</sup> At this point the

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<sup>8</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 68-69.

<sup>9</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Sendbrief from the Alm Bruderhof to the Rhön Bruderhof (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1974), 20.

<sup>10</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 274.

importance of the overall "mission" of the community must be foremost. Eberhard felt that in its own isolation in the mountains of Liechtenstein the Alm community lost sight of the needs of the outside world. Eberhard posed the questions:

What is happening to God's Kingdom? What is going to happen to the injustice of the world situation, which cries out to heaven? What is going to happen to Hitler Germany, to Soviet Russia, to the love of most people?<sup>12</sup>

He exhorted them to consider these issues, rather than fall into a self-centered preoccupation with their own moral failures. When the church has a "mission" it moves forward. The Alm hof lost sight of its mission and the great needs of others. It was a vicious cycle of self-attention that undermined the community. To summarize Eberhard's letter: Physical challenge and hardship result in failure if allowed to preoccupy themselves, and breed guilt, which results in the loss of "mission" vision or purpose, which when aggravated by inadequate leadership results in the loss of unity and leadership of God's Spirit; this eventually leads to unbelief in Christ himself, and such a loss finally will ruin the community--indeed the church. Eberhard felt that the Alm community had fallen into this cycle of unbelief, to the point that everywhere, an "emotional and spiritual exhaustion" found some members unable or even unwilling to "pray and hear God's Word."<sup>13</sup> Eberhard's basic challenge to all was to start anew, with a childlike spirit and "believe in Jesus Christ!"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Sendbrief, 23.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 54.



Disaster at the Alm Bruderhof was averted, though the remnants of this spiritual crisis would haunt the Bruderhof for decades.<sup>15</sup> New members were received along with financial gifts from many such as the Quakers who offered funds for construction of a greenhouse--a necessity for growing vegetables at such an altitude. Farmland was leased at a lower altitude and a successful garden was planted.<sup>16</sup> As the group received new members and new direction, a spirit of community life returned to the Alm Bruderhof.

### The Dissolution of Rhn

Meanwhile, the situation at the Rhön Bruderhof worsened. By March 1935 the military draft became law in Germany;<sup>17</sup> all but a few were evacuated to Liechtenstein.

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<sup>15</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 276-77. Hans Zumpe was chosen Servant of the Word for the Alm community (Brothers Unite, 333.), and it was during these days tensions between Zumpe and Eberhard concerning the philosophical direction of the Bruderhof began to develop. In spite of their differences, shortly before his death, in 1935, Eberhard recommended Zumpe as his successor as Servant of the Word. Unfortunately, conflict between Zumpe and the Arnold family persisted over the next twenty years. At its core the conflict was one of philosophy or theology and was closely related to Eberhard's vision for the Bruderhof.

Though the conflict of leadership between Zumpe and the Arnolds is a major issue in the history of the Bruderhof, it has been a deep source of pain for the communities and has only recently been publicized and openly discussed among members as well as outsiders. Merrill Mow's book, Torches Rekindled (1989), and Richard E. Domer, Winifred Hildel, and John Hinde's book, May They All Be One (1992), both go a long way toward recognition by the communities of the frailties of the middle years of their history. This author senses that the Bruderhof's willingness to face the errors of the past has not been intended to place personal blame on individuals, but to learn from the mistakes of the past, and, as Eberhard would put it, to experience a "clearing" of guilt and receiving of forgiveness in order to move forward toward the Kingdom of God.

With this in mind, the author will not focus on the personalities of the conflicts of the "Pilgrim People" years, but of the general dynamics of the struggles for leadership and direction and their impact on the Bruderhof and its relationship with the Hutterites.

<sup>16</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 199. A pioneering spirit resided in those such as brother Fritz Kleiner, who regularly took a shortcut to the leased field and scaled straight down the side of the mountain. One day another brother questioned his good judgment, "Surely you don't want to go down by that steep, rocky mountainside?" Whereupon he replied, "Well, we don't want to go the way the whole world goes!" And he continued on his way.

<sup>17</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., "Confrontation: Adolf Hitler/Bruderhof," The Plough 21 (April/May 1989): 17.

Those remaining soon found themselves in the midst of a spiritual struggle as well. First, there was the same spirit of unbelief experienced at the Alm hof. In retrospect this "resistance to the Spirit of love and unity" was described as "demonic in character" and manifested itself in "an outright rejection" of Eberhard and Emmy, and the "way of discipleship of Jesus."

Several attempts to fight for a breakthrough of the true Spirit of discipleship against this evil were of no avail. The arrogant communitarianism based on human principles and human power prevailed right through the late thirties to the forties and fifties. The switch points were set wrongly, and the train was rushing in the wrong direction toward the abyss.<sup>18</sup>

To complicate matters, some began to contend for a more strict following of "modern hutterianism" with its strict services and offices, to the point that they only wanted to hear Hutterian readings and teachings. Still others reacted by arguing only for the readings and teachings of "what the Spirit was saying and speaking to men today."<sup>19</sup> The later reaction was as damaging as the former cause. The situation was described as a

slushy, muddy emotionalism. It is a fact that instead of the clear, pure leading of the Spirit, the human, much too human, has gained a foothold. The extremes have changed places. At first everything was killed by doctrinaire moralism: to a certain degree, a democratic humanitarian ideal state was before their eyes.

Now it has changed. All spirits were admitted, and an utterly false concept of freedom entered that made room for the emotional, the too human. It allowed all kinds of spirits to grow. Worst of all, spirits that were truly evil and that brought destruction were cultivated, hiding behind a soft, "understanding" love.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 276-77.

<sup>19</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 199-200.

<sup>20</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 91-92. Taken from a letter from Annemarie Wächter to Heini Arnold, 5 September 1935.

Amidst the challenges for physical survival under the persecution of the Nazis, a crisis of leadership and overall purpose consumed the Rhön Bruderhof as a sense of practical and spiritual balance was lost. The imposition of one way of thinking and acting resulted in a radical reaction from the opposite way. The history of the church is replete with examples of action and reaction. The Bruderhof was not immune.

From the spring of 1934 to the autumn of 1935 Eberhard and Emmy attempted to lead the two communities through their times of trial and fragility. They traveled regularly under difficult circumstances at risk of being arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Eberhard's poorly healed broken leg became more aggravating as he and Emmy continued their visits to various groups and individuals still interested in joining the Bruderhof.<sup>21</sup> In September 1935, Eberhard unknowingly made his last trip to the Alm Bruderhof. He came to speak before the government of Liechtenstein to defend the Alm community against a group of Nazi citizens who were circulating a petition for their expulsion. During this visit he spoke to a hostile crowd which gathered after the morning service outside a local Catholic church. As he stood "with his broken leg and two walking canes," he ably defended the rights of the Alm hof and succeeded in averting the deportation of the community.<sup>22</sup> In early October, he and Emmy returned to Germany and the struggling Rhön community.<sup>23</sup>

On 11 November 1935, in a state of disunity, the Rhön brotherhood decided to disband for a time of repentance until the Advent season. In spite of the efforts of many to bring harmony, they were unable to overcome their differences concerning the direction of

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<sup>21</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 203.

<sup>22</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 93-94.

<sup>23</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 202.

the Rhön community. Some felt that what was lacking was a unity of God's spirit. As one member put it, "Human good will is not sufficient to bring unity, the basis of community."<sup>24</sup> They placed themselves under the discipline of the Alm brotherhood who sent some of their leaders to the Rhön hof to assist during this time of regrouping.

The next day, Eberhard departed the Rhön hof for Darmstadt where he was scheduled for an examination of his deteriorating leg. After the initial examination, the doctor advised that an operation was unavoidable and surgery was scheduled for November 16. It seems the original break never healed sufficiently and was at great risk of further damage. The day before the operation Emmy arrived at the hospital to find Eberhard in "a third-class ward," in bed wearing "a striped hospital gown, very busily writing a letter to Hans [Zumpe]."<sup>25</sup> On 16 November surgery revealed amputation of the leg would be necessary and should be performed the following week. Though amputation was not expected to be life-threatening, Eberhard's letter to Zumpe had a note of urgency and finality to it which seemed to reveal that he knew he would not survive the operation.<sup>26</sup> On 22 November 1935, after a more difficult operation than anticipated, Eberhard failed to regain consciousness. Emmy, her sister Moni, their daughter Emy-Margret, and her husband Hans Zumpe<sup>27</sup> gathered around Eberhard's bed and sang hymns.

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<sup>24</sup>Hans Meier, Hans Meier Tells His Story to a Friend (Ulster Park, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1988) 4.

<sup>25</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 204. This was the same letter in which Eberhard advised the Brotherhood concerning his vision and warnings for the future (82).

<sup>26</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 96-98.

<sup>27</sup>Hans and Emy-Margret were summoned by Emmy, for family support, but evidently also at Eberhard's request to speak with Hans concerning his role in leading the Bruderhof. Hans received the 15 November letter from Eberhard and failed to inform Eberhard's three sons of the situation of their father. Though this failure to communicate with the Arnold sons in Zürich might have been justified based on Emmy's

[W]e felt very strongly that when we sang to him such songs as "Thee will I love, my strength, my tower," "Jesus is victorious King," and "Yield now, sin and evil deed," he was somehow with us, and we saw how the tears ran down his face. However, he did not speak any more. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon of November 22, 1935, he passed away peacefully. His task, his mission for this period of time, was finished. Incomprehensible!<sup>28</sup>

Incomprehensible indeed, that in the midst of Nazi persecution and the spiritual crises of the Rhön and Alm communities, their founder and leader would be taken.

With Eberhard's death came a void in leadership. The community generally agreed to follow the principles outlined in Eberhard's final letter and chose Hans Zumpe as their new leader. The transition was not a smooth one. Emmy shared her concerns about the new direction of the community with her sons who had, since September 1934, set up a small household in Zürich where they were involved in various levels of education. At this little "outpost" in Zürich, Hardi, Heini, and Hans-Hermann stayed in close contact with the Alm and Rhön hofs and developed as a kind of "third element" after the other two.<sup>29</sup> During this time of transition of leadership, the Zürich circle became increasingly critical of those chosen to lead the two communities. Disagreements developed into personal affronts and regretful behavior resulted from both sides. Heini was excluded from the community for a time, as what later became known as the Zürich Handel (Zürich Affair) sowed seeds of mistrust between the Arnolds and Hans Zumpe in particular.<sup>30</sup>

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desire not unnecessarily to alarm the family and to prevent the boys from taking the dangerous journey into Nazi Germany, it was a source of much ill-feeling and guilt in the years that followed. In some ways the three sons, Hardi, Heini, and Hans-Hermann, never overcame their sense of loss at not being able to be with their father in his final moments.

<sup>28</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 206.

<sup>29</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 72-73.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 100-101.

Though the Rhön community persisted for more than two years after the death of Eberhard, it was a struggle for survival. The end came suddenly as the community at Rhön was formally dissolved 14 April 1937, based on an earlier government decree which protected the "State and the German People" from disobedient groups and factions.<sup>31</sup> Though the community was originally charged with being communist and thus a threat to Nazism, in the end they were charged with a "strong suspicion of fraud" or "criminal bankruptcy,"<sup>32</sup> apparently on the basis of a local creditor induced by the government to file a charge.<sup>33</sup> In effect, the Gestapo confiscated all capital holdings of the community, preventing them from servicing their debt and, therefore, leading to the induced charges. It was a frequently used tactic of the government and in the words of Hans Meier was "figuratively speaking, as though one kicked away the last crutch of a man whom one has intentionally lamed, so as to be able to accuse him afterward of being unable to walk!"<sup>34</sup>

On 14 April 1937, the Gestapo descended upon what remained of the Rhön Bruderhof and ordered the evacuation of all residents. Although three of the brothers--Hans Meier, Hannes Boller, and Karl Keiderling--were imprisoned for about three months, everyone eventually found their way to a refuge outside Germany and were reunited with the community. In retrospect, Bruderhof members credit the presence of two brothers from the

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<sup>31</sup>Hans Meier, The Dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof in Retrospect (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1979), 8.

<sup>32</sup>Marjorie Hindley, "Unerwünscht": One of the Lesser Known Confrontations with the National Socialist State 1933-37," German History (The German History Society) 11, (2) (1993): 220.

<sup>33</sup>Hans Meier, The Dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof, 10.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 13.

Hutterian communities of America, David Hofer and Michael Waldner, for preventing the deportation of all Rhön members to a concentration camp.<sup>35</sup> The Hutterites sent the two to encourage

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<sup>35</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 110.

Fig. 6. [Reprinted, by permission, from Hans Meier's, The Dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof in Retrospect, (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1979), iv.]

and assist the Rhön community in their time of need. To this day their presence is seen as a miracle of protection for every member of the Rhön Bruderhof.

Shortly after the confiscation of the Rhön Bruderhof by the Nazis, the family of Eberhard Arnold was able to purchase the burial grounds where their son's remains lay.<sup>36</sup> Today the Bruderhof community retains possession of the grave site of Eberhard--all that remains of the physical hof. Yet, a visit to one of the Bruderhof communities today or a quick perusal through some of their literature reveals that the memory of the Rhön Bruderhof continues to influence the community.

#### Cotswold Bruderhof, England

Prior to the dissolution of the Rhön community, the need for an alternative site became evident. In the spring of 1936 the Liechtenstein government discreetly informed the Alm hof that Germany would soon pressure Liechtenstein to extradite all German men of military age.<sup>37</sup> Potential for such pressure, along with the fact that five Alm members were from England with many friends and supporters on the British Isles, made England the logical choice for an alternative site. With the help of three British members of the Bruderhof<sup>38</sup>, Hans Zumpe found a suitable farm near Cirencester in the western county of

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<sup>36</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 20.

<sup>37</sup>Hans Meier, Hans Meier Tells His Story, 11-12.

<sup>38</sup>Arnold, Gladys Mason, and Winifred Bridgewater.



Wiltshire, England. As with the beginning of the Alm hof, money had to be raised to provide the deposit for the purchase of the farm.<sup>39</sup> Various British friends lent support and by the summer of 1936 a new hof was formed on the Ashton Fields Farm in the area of the Cotswold Hills.<sup>40</sup>

Gradually the members of the Rhön and Alm Bruderhofs migrated to England. Most escaped Germany without the benefit of valid papers and many encountered dangers along the way. The consequences of capture by the Gestapo could end in indefinite imprisonment or concentration camps. It was a time when, through the tyranny of Nazism, the worst aspects of human nature brought out the best in those who regularly assisted refugees trying to escape. As individuals and families arrived one at a time from the continent, each had their own suspenseful story of how they slipped through the border checks as they traveled by train, cart, or foot over the rivers, mountains, and through the cities of Europe to reach England--their new refuge.<sup>41</sup>

One typical example involved Heini and Annemarie Arnold who had been married in March 1936 and were to travel to the new Cotswold community. The brothers of the Alm hof instructed them not to wear their simple Hutterian dress with Annemarie's head covering, but to travel in ordinary clothing so as not to be conspicuous. Their plan was to travel from Zürich to England through France, but the French consulate would not grant a visa since Heini's passport expired in May and he was of military service age.

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<sup>39</sup>Emmy Arnold, Torches Together, 216-17.

<sup>40</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 101-2.

<sup>41</sup>See Torches Together, the last chapter, "The Fight Goes On," and Hans Meier Tells His Story to a Friend, for some of these escape stories.

The newly married couple sat in a café in Zürich drinking coffee, discussing what to do. The situation seemed hopeless. Suddenly Annemarie took Heini's passport and walked into the German consulate, a very dangerous act. She told the official that they were on their honeymoon; she had the marriage certificate to prove it. Would he renew it? He said it was not allowed, but for a honeymoon he would do it.<sup>42</sup>

Upon arriving in England, Heini and Annemarie were amazed at the natural beauty and potential of the newly purchased Cotswold hof. Heini later recalled though most of the farm buildings were in disrepair, "[i]f you look at the hof from a distance, you can see a complex of buildings and can imagine it all as a real Bruderhof already, just as we could wish."<sup>43</sup>

By June 1936 six families of thirty-two people in all settled at the Cotswold hof. In September the purchase of the two-hundred-acre farm was finalized, and the community was formally registered as the Cotswold Bruderhof Society. A herd of fifty milk cows was purchased, a building program begun, and a print shop made operational.<sup>44</sup> With the closing of the Rhön hof the numbers grew to 170 residents. An adjoining field of 103 acres was leased and the Ministry of Agriculture approved an aggressive five-to-seven-year crop rotation plan focusing on the Hosier open-air system of dairy farming. A cattle herd of about twenty to thirty head was purchased along with sixty sheep. Crops common to the Cotswolds, such as wheat, barley, rye, and potatoes, were successfully grown and used to feed the community.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the Cotswold Bruderhof focused more on agricultural produce than either of the previous hofs.

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<sup>42</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 103.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 108.

<sup>45</sup>E. C. H. Arnold, "The Cotswold Bruderhof," The Plough 1, (1) (March 1938): 33-34. The Hosier system provided milk bales and foldable seats, thereby eliminating the need for a milking building.

Though agriculture played a more vital role in England, other industries of the Bruderhof continued and indeed flourished as well. In March 1938 the first edition of The Plough was published. This periodical provided information about the Bruderhof movement and about their concerns to the outside world. To this day, The Plough serves as a vital resource for practical and spiritual insights into the community. It is, in effect, an instrument of the mission of the Bruderhof--to exemplify to others the way of Jesus Christ. Two publishing arms of the Bruderhof were established in England--the Plough Publishing Company, Limited, and The Hutterian Brethren Publishing House. The task of the former was to publish and edit selected books and periodicals in English, while the latter was to focus on the editing and publishing of the historical literature of the Hutterian Brethren of North America. The first two projects of the Hutterian publishing arm included Peter Riedeman's Rechenschaft, British Museum edition 1565, and a first edition of Klein-Geschichtsbuch of the Hutterites. In addition to the publishing house, the manufacturing and marketing of handicrafts continued in England as it had developed in Germany and Liechtenstein.<sup>46</sup> Though the group lived a meager lifestyle, some degree of material stability was achieved during the Cotswold years.

Life within the spiritual sphere was not as settled as that of the physical. The struggle for direction of leadership which had begun with Eberhard's death and the Zürich Handel had yet to be resolved. Before their return to America, the two Hutterian Brethren visitors sensed the lack of "an open spirit of love" and "childlike trust" which existed earlier among Bruderhof members. They insisted Hardy Arnold and Georg Barth be confirmed as Servants of the Word to assist Hans Zumpe in the leadership of the group. Zumpe was opposed to this and hid his intentions from Hofer and Waldner. Though Hardy and Georg

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid, 35.

were confirmed for services, the damage had been done. The Hutterites returned to America offended by Zumpe and with great concern for the future of the Bruderhof community. After their departure, Zumpe's true spirit was revealed and he was removed from leadership by the Cotswold community. Later, a letter from Hutterian Elder Joseph Kleinsasser was received demanding that some changes in the organizational and practical management of the community be effected. This led to further tensions as the paramount issue of the community became their relationship to the Hutterites. Kleinsasser also recommended Zumpe be accepted back into the community only after serious repentance and he never be allowed a position of leadership again.<sup>47</sup> For a time it seemed the spiritual struggle was over, but as would be seen time and time again the respite was short-lived.

Meanwhile, on the continent, it became increasingly apparent that the Alm community would not be allowed to continue. The Third Reich was on the march and they would surely impose their control upon the tiny country of Liechtenstein. Through the help of British friends in Birmingham, on 13 March 1938, the Alm Bruderhof closed and its remaining residents moved to the Cotswold hof in England. This brought the membership of the community to 208 people and precipitated a celebration with a rare treat--blueberry pancakes.<sup>48</sup>

Though they escaped Germany, the terrors of Nazism soon crossed the English Channel. On 3 September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. Until then the Wiltshire neighbors of the Cotswold Bruderhof had been friendly and unresistant towards the community. Hans Meier later remembered,

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<sup>47</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 114-18.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 118.

[o]n the day Chamberlain made his declaration of war, a Quaker friend visited us. On his way to the Bruderhof he stopped for a snack in a bar in Ashton Keynes, and he overheard some half drunk people say they were going to burn down the Bruderhof that same night.<sup>49</sup>

Fortunately the Quaker friend notified the police and a disaster was prevented, but it became clear that a group of German-speaking refugees would not be welcomed in the heartland of Britain when the threat of a German invasion was imminent.<sup>50</sup> Meier recalled:

[n]ot unlike the experience of the Japanese Americans on the West coast after Pearl Harbor . . . we experienced the mass psychosis of fear and mistrust toward any foreigner. . . . The sale of produce from our garden, dairy, poultry, and bakery was stopped. There were some nasty incidents when brothers were harassed by the Home Guard during their inspections of the place. Two brothers once were ambushed in the night . . . and saved themselves only by hiding underneath a haystack in the fields. Big concrete blocks were put in our fields to "prevent German parachutists or gliders from landing." When neighbors saw an accidental light in the direction of the Bruderhof during a blackout, we were accused of sending light signals to the German bombing airplanes. Neighbors who in earlier times had greeted us and even invited us for a cup of tea now withdrew and shut their doors when we passed.<sup>51</sup>

After much effort to remain in England, the community finally requested the British government assist them in emigrating. The Home Office in London was glad to assist them by providing emigration visas and shipping allowances as soon as they determined a destination.

The Cotswold Bruderhof served as a necessary refuge for displaced members during this time of diaspora. Though they lived in England for just four years, the period affected a permanent change upon the culture of the Bruderhof movement. No longer was the group

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<sup>49</sup>Hans Meier, Hans Meier Tells His Story, 20.

<sup>50</sup>The group assumed the name "Society of Brothers" at least in part for the purpose of divesting themselves from the German identity of the name "Bruderhof" or "Hutterian Brethren." "Society of Brothers" was their "official" name from 1939-78. Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 30.

<sup>51</sup>Hans Meier, Hans Meier Tells His Story, 20-21.

exclusively German in culture and language. They moved beyond the borders of their twentieth-century heritage and were quickly becoming international in focus and scope. This expansion of world view and perspective served them well in the years to come. In the Summer 1940, issue of The Plough, the community renewed its pledge to "be loyal to the call of Christ," and to continue through "the common life" of "community in all spiritual and material things" to be a witness of the good tidings of Christ Jesus and the coming kingdom.

As pilgrims we stand ready, with our boots on our feet and our staffs in our hands, not tied to any earthly possessions or any particular geographical place, with no loyalty than that to God and his Kingdom.<sup>52</sup>

On 25 November 1940, members of the Bruderhof left England for Buenos Aires in search of a new home for the community. Once more due to conditions beyond their control they became a pilgrim people.

#### Primavera Bruderhofs, Paraguay

Hans Meier summarized the ethos of the Bruderhof during its twenty years in Paraguay by recollecting a dream Eberhard Arnold had in 1935 which turned out to be prophetic:

In the New Testament the Church is compared to a lampstand with seven lights. In his dream the center light was Jesus Christ, and the other lights correspond to the different characteristics of the Church such as love, unity, community, justice, etc. Eberhard saw how the lights were shifted around by a dark hand, which put community in the center and took Christ from the center, where he belongs. This is what actually happened in our life more and more, and it brought division and disunity among ourselves and with our Hutterian Brothers.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Brotherhood of the Bruderhof Communities, "Our Pledge," The Plough 3, (2) (Summer 1940): 33.

<sup>53</sup>Hans Meier, Hans Meier Tells His Story, 36.

The practical imperatives of living and surviving in the jungles of Paraguay allowed for the gradual shift of the lights on the lamp stand.

Paraguay was by no means the first choice for the future home of the Bruderhof community--it was the only choice. Much effort was expended in order to gain entry into the United States.<sup>54</sup> The Hutterian Brethren in South Dakota provided affidavits of support, but these were ironically rejected. The U.S. government was only accustomed to dealing with individual guarantors with financial credentials, and the Hutterian community was by definition a legal society. When their friend, Orie O. Miller of the Mennonite Central Committee, heard of the U.S. rejection, he contacted the Paraguayan Ambassador, who then secured an invitation for the Bruderhof from the Paraguayan President Estigarribia, based on his favorable opinion of the Mennonite settlements in his country.<sup>55</sup>

On 25 November 1940, the liner, Andalucia Star, sailed from Liverpool, England, bound for South America. Amidst a convoy of ships with an escort of destroyers, the ship carried the first group of eighty-three immigrants from the Cotswold Bruderhof destined for the jungles of Paraguay. This was the first of nine voyages which eventually brought 340 Bruderhof residents safely to Paraguay.<sup>56</sup> The threat of submarine attack required that each voyage depart under cover of night with all lights blacked out. That none of the nine voyages

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 28. Bruderhof members made several trips and held numerous interviews in an attempt to enter the U.S. They even met with Eleanor Roosevelt who acknowledged the need in America for a witness such as theirs and offered her support in their quest for visas. Regrettably, as she put it, "she was not the President and had not his power."

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 29. The Bruderhof were admitted into Paraguay under the same law as Mennonite immigrants, with guarantees of: freedom to organize colonies according to their conviction, freedom in the use of language and education for their children, and freedom from military service for them and their descendants.

<sup>56</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 161.

carrying members of the Bruderhof suffered attack was remarkable, especially in view of the fact each of the liners involved was later sunk by the Germans.<sup>57</sup>

After an initial search, the group purchased a 20,000-acre ranch called Primavera (springtime) and set about the now familiar task of building up a community. Though the tasks and challenges were familiar, the surroundings were not; and the harsh realities of life in a primitive sub-tropical "virgin forest populated by monkeys, snakes, parrots, ostriches, pumas, and many insects," including "malaria-bearing mosquitos," were soon manifested. During the first year, five of the children died of disease.

The group was ill-prepared for the severe climate of scorching days followed by frosty nights and torrential rains succeeded by weeks of drought and even sandstorms. Food and shelter were insufficient, with twelve to fifteen families living under one roof, where sheets and blankets served as room dividers and "bits and pieces of sacking adorn[ed] the outside of the building and act[ed] as walls." Set against the threat of disease and malnutrition, fears of wild animals and poisonous insects became less significant. One member recalled,

[w]e sometimes hear the roaring of wild animals at night. A large snake was in one sister's bed. It caused great alarm and excitement when it swallowed whole one of our young roosters! We find spiders as large as my hand. In the interest of building up our new place, you forget to worry about these unpleasant animals until you find one in your shoe.<sup>58</sup>

How helpless and responsible the parents and adult members of the community must have felt in the midst of the suffering and death of innocent children. The now-grown children of those early months of Primavera recall how Emmy would gather them together for

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 146, 137.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 150, 152, 153, 154.



Morgenstunden at school and would point them "again and again to Him who suffered death on the Cross" for all their sakes.<sup>59</sup> As was the case throughout the history of the Hutterites and the Bruderhof, with the practical challenges of the physical realm came spiritual battles which threatened the existence of the community.

Tension grew within the community reminiscent of the struggles of the Rhön, Alm, and the Cotswold communities. For one reason or another the brotherhood removed all from service of the Word except for Heini Arnold. Kate Streatfield, one of the newer members who joined just prior to the departure from England, remembered the struggle.

Night after night, there were angry brotherhood meetings with a great deal of shouting. I did not understand any German and so understood nothing but felt very clearly the angry and critical attitudes.<sup>60</sup>

Almost as if on queue, Heini was stricken with a life-threatening kidney problem. Heini and others felt the illness was connected to the spiritual chaos within the community. He appealed to the brethren to put behind them their differences and return their focus to Christ and the Kingdom of God.

In a letter to the brotherhood dated 29 September 1941, Heini reminded the group that Eberhard Arnold attached a greater importance to "itinerant apostolic community" than to "community of work" as it was now posing itself at Primavera. Once again a self-centeredness pervaded the community. Heini pleaded, as had his father, for repentance and a seeking of the true mission of Christ. Heini exhorted the struggling community, "Cry out for mission when you have found repentance." Critically ill and under the constant influence of drugs and medicines, he sought to lead the group out of its spiritual crisis. Remembering his

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<sup>59</sup>Hüssy, A Joyful Pilgrimage, 22.

<sup>60</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 155.

father's call on his own death bed, for Hans Zumpfe to work together with Georg Barth and his brother Hardy, Heini proposed that Hans, Georg, and Hardy be reinstated to the service of the Word.<sup>61</sup> What at first appeared a "triumph of the powers of love and forgiveness" was later remembered by Heini as

what may have been the greatest mistake of my life. Very quickly I felt deceived, probably within days, by Georg and Hans whose service I had fought for. I felt something cold came from them, not only toward me but toward the brotherhood.<sup>62</sup>

Heini survived his kidney disease but not before his credibility as a leader was severely damaged by the effects of the illness. In October 1941, at the height of the illness, Heini began to "act strangely and have terrible dreams and hallucinations." Though one of the Bruderhof doctors eventually recognized Heini's "emotional" problems as the result of bromism--the toxic side effects of about four months of intensive doses of potassium bromide, the same doctor let stand the diagnosis of "obsessional neurosis." The authors of May They All Be One, clearly implicate the leadership of the hof in orchestrating the conclusion that Heini suffered a Verdunklung or darkening of the mind, and should be allowed "no spiritual work" within the community. On 22 December, Heini was released by his doctor in Asuncion and given a clean bill of health. Unfortunately for him and the leadership crisis of Primavera, the damage had been done.<sup>63</sup> He was removed from the service of the Word and would not be reinstated for such service until nine years later.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 118-19.

<sup>62</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 156, 158. Taken from the "Brotherhood Report" (1968).

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 159, 160.

<sup>64</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 124. Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 182.

The next years were ones of intense work and striving to make the community a success in practical terms. Three separate hofs were developed (Loma Hoby, Isla Margarita, Ibaté) all within two miles of each other.<sup>65</sup> Immediately, a hospital was developed to meet the needs of community members as well as the local Paraguayans. The Primavera Bruderhofs were naturally more agrarian than their predecessors in Europe. In addition to growing food crops, cattle and poultry, they developed a successful dairy and became known throughout the country for their yields and methodological advances.<sup>66</sup> The usual crafts--wood crafts, carpentry, metal-working--were developed primarily to serve community needs. With the need to concentrate on survival in the Paraguayan wilderness, the publishing activities of the Bruderhof suffered. The Plough went unpublished for about ten years, and was finally reinstated in 1950 along with several new pamphlets and the first English translation of Riedeman's Rechenschaft.<sup>67</sup> Of course, the education of the children remained a priority for each of the three hofs. Other than this intense focus on agriculture and the sub-tropical environment of Primavera, the external life of the bruderhofs appeared similar to that of the previous European communities.

Yet the inner struggle within the communities persisted and continually disrupted the development of the hofs. Some of the community became so dedicated to the business of material success that they lost sight of the cause of Christ and his mission or purpose for the communal way of living. As Merrill Mow recounted:

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<sup>65</sup>Bob and Shirley Wagoner, Community in Paraguay: A Visit to the Bruderhof (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1991), 54.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 74-76.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 97.

[t]he communal form of the first church was there, and the harsh physical conditions ensured the poverty it avowed. But these do not guarantee dependence upon God if everything is based on human strength without the love to Jesus.

Brotherhood meetings became closed to those members who might not understand the struggle. Clandestine meetings were held in the woods or along the roads between the hofs as opportunity allowed. An environment of mistrust and doubt pervaded the inner life of the Bruderhof. "Democratic consensus" threatened to usurp the concept of true unity and the tone of the day became cold and official rather than Spirit-led and loving.<sup>68</sup>

A bureaucratic approach to community life has gained control, a humanistic approach centered not on God but on the brotherhood, not on the united church but on the "will of the people," and not on the leadership of Jesus but on that of Hans Zumpe.<sup>69</sup>

In 1942, Heini and several others (Fritz Kleiner, Hardy and Emmy Arnold, and Hans Meier) were excluded from the brotherhood and the household, a serious form of community discipline. They were eventually reaccepted by the community only to be excluded again in 1944 under the "Great Ban" with another twelve community members. Heini, Hardy, and Fritz were sent away from the community. They had to shave their beards and were prohibited from wearing Hutterian clothing. Each was given the equivalent of a day's wages for a Paraguayan worker with which to fend for oneself. Heini ended up working at a leper colony in southern Paraguay for almost two years before being readmitted into the community.<sup>70</sup>

Though the community in Paraguay survived for over twenty years, the early pattern developed in the 1940s characterized its entire existence. It was faced with the continuous

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<sup>68</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 162.

<sup>69</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 121-22.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 120-22. Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 162.

struggle for physical survival and economic success. It was run as a practical business looking to the bottom line rather than to spiritual growth as a sign of success. Though there was continuous growth and signs of encouragement along the way,<sup>71</sup> the Primavera community was never able to overcome its struggle with leadership and spiritual identity.<sup>72</sup> By the mid-fifties the post-war boom offered hope in new lands in Europe and the United States. Isolation in the jungles of South America was no longer necessary.<sup>73</sup> A gradual shift in direction of energy and activity began to take place. As the "mother" community of the growth and expansion of the 1950s, Primavera served in name alone. On 8 March 1961, the decision finally was made to close the Primavera hofs, sell the property, and relocate everyone to other existing Bruderhofs in the United States or Europe.<sup>74</sup> The previous months resulted in a community-wide time of confession and repentance for the wrongs of the past. A new age in the history of the Bruderhof was dawning, one in which the question of overall leadership and direction would be settled. Paraguay served as a refuge from the persecutions

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<sup>71</sup>By 1950 it is estimated that the Primavera hofs included more than six hundred residents. There was also growth abroad. For example, the remnant of Bruderhof members in England survived and formed the new Wheathill Bruderhof in 1942. What began as a small networking point in Asuncion soon became a functioning community. Seven communities were established in the 1950s, including: El Arado--Uruguay, Woodcrest--New York, Forest River--North Dakota, Sinntal--Germany, Oak Lake--Pennsylvania, Bulstrode--England, and Evergreen--Connecticut. Ulrich Eggers, Community for Life (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 115, 196.

<sup>72</sup>In February 1961, at a meeting at Primavera, two long-standing but previously unspoken issues surfaced. One brother stood and "confessed with anguish that the central conflict in his life was his opposition to Eberhard Arnold (whom he had never met) and the Hutterians." After much discussion a deep division within the group emerged with the basic issue being "Eberhard's witness of love to Christ." Many on both sides of the division had born these burdens for years, even going back to the mid-thirties prior to Eberhard's death. Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 220-21.

<sup>73</sup>Ulrich Eggers, Community for Life, 157.

<sup>74</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 167. Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 224.

of the Nazis and World War II. The pilgrim people survived the jungles of South America, though their Primavera bruderhofs did not.

#### Woodcrest Bruderhof, United States

On 26 September 1951, after a gradual return to respectability and a leadership role, Heini Arnold was reappointed to the service of the Word at the Ibaté Bruderhof in Paraguay. This was the first of several developments which led to the return of strong and consistent leadership within the communities. During the next years the Bruderhof looked north to the United States for the purpose of raising funds for the Primavera hofs. One or two couples were sent regularly to the States and a growing network of seekers and supporters began to develop. Postwar America was experiencing the growth of a community movement and many such seekers were searching for examples of established communities.<sup>75</sup> Strong relationships were established especially among Quaker and Church of the Brethren families. Heini and Annemarie became regular travelers to the States, most probably due to their interest and ability in representing the ideals and needs of the Paraguayan communities. Contact also was maintained with the Mennonites and the Hutterian Brethren of the midwest United States and Canada. In a letter to Annemarie during a trip in late 1951, Heini observed, "The longer I am here in America, the more conscious I become of the poverty and sacrifice of the brothers and sisters in Paraguay. We simply have to find help."<sup>76</sup> By July 1953 the Bruderhof realized support and resources from North America could best be

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<sup>75</sup>Ulrich Eggers, Community for Life, 155.

<sup>76</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 179.

developed from the States themselves; thus, at a conference in Primavera, the decision was taken to start a new community in North America.<sup>77</sup>

In the months that followed, a strong relationship developed between the Bruderhof, a communal group from Kingwood, New Jersey, and another cooperative community in Georgia called Macedonia.<sup>78</sup> By mid-summer the Bruderhof purchased an estate called Woodcrest just south of the Catskills in New York. Soon the majority of the Macedonia community and two-thirds of the Kingwood group officially joined the new Bruderhof community of Woodcrest. Annemarie wrote to her family in Paraguay, "All these people want to build up with us a life of brotherhood based on the early Christians. So the beginning is not so small anymore; already forty people or more--grown-ups and children--want to start."<sup>79</sup>

The new hof consisted of a three-story Victorian mansion set on a plateau overlooking a valley. There was a large carriage barn with a coachman's cottage, three small ice houses, two chicken houses, and another large barn. Though the buildings were "dingy, and the once-manicured lawns were overgrown with weeds and high grass," the setting itself and the natural beauty were like a "vista of the new life" for which those assembled sought for years. Unlike the agrarian basis for the Primavera hofs, the Woodcrest mode resembled the earlier European pattern of community work. The uniting with part of

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<sup>77</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 13. Bob and Shirley Wagoner, Community in Paraguay, 220-21.

<sup>78</sup>Started during the Depression, this community was a "social and economic experiment" intended to address the poverty of Appalachia. This sincere group had good intentions but suffered a breakdown in member relationships due, in the minds of Bruderhof members, to their lack of a "clear basis for facing their most serious problems in living communally." Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 192.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

Fig. 7. [Reprinted, by permission, from Hutterian Brethren, Woodcrest Bruderhof postcard, Rifton, NY.]

the Macedonia community resulted in the establishment of Macedonia's primary business--the production and sale of wooden blocks and other children's play items--under the trade name Community Playthings. Soon the Woodcrest Bruderhof was producing and marketing Community Playthings products from New York in cooperation with the Georgia facility. Initially under the leadership of Hans-Hermann and Gertrude Arnold, and later under Heini's direction, the Woodcrest Bruderhof took on some of the characteristics of the earlier communities of Sannerz and Rhön. There was a resurgence of some of the basic components of Eberhard's vision of community, such as the free spirit of the German Youth Movement, a concern and focus on the inner life, and a constant flow of visitors, guests and novices from various backgrounds. It was not an easy beginning, but in comparison with the physical and spiritual challenges of Paraguay it must have seemed so.

When the household grew to over 150 people in the first year, no more rooms were available. Other existing buildings, even chicken houses, were remodeled into



apartments for families. Poverty could be ignored because the enthusiasm was so great. The joy of seeking together filled communal gatherings; brothers and sisters expressed their thankfulness with lively singing at mealtimes and meetings. Americans heard nature songs from the German Youth Movement for the first time as well as poems set to music, and they contributed other songs, such as spirituals, which the Europeans learned.<sup>80</sup>

The "joy of seeking together" returned to the Bruderhof. In these early days the Woodcrest members scarcely could imagine the vital role their new hof would play.

The situation at Woodcrest was conducive to the healthy development of a new Bruderhof community. Postwar opportunities and the establishment of Community Playthings relieved some of the financial pressures which continuously plagued the communities. The physical location and condition of the hof was a great improvement over that of the South American communities. Heini Arnold's leadership as Servant of the Word,<sup>81</sup> complemented the philosophical and spiritual needs of the postwar seekers while remaining firmly rooted in the balanced approach put forth by his father for the Bruderhof. Economic development was important but not the preoccupation of the community. Finally, Heini was probably best suited to meet the demands of the upcoming collapse of the Paraguayan and European hofs, as well as the challenges of the relationship between the Hutterian Brethren and Bruderhof. It was a great time of growth and hope for the future--not without its troubles.

#### Break in Fellowship with the Hutterites

In August 1950 two Hutterian brothers--Samuel Kleinsasser and John Wipf--traveled from North America to Paraguay for a six week visit of the three Primavera hofs.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 191-93.

<sup>81</sup>Bob and Shirley Wagoner, Community in Paraguay, 222.

They came with good intentions out of love and concern for their Arnoldleut brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, they left with a negative view of the purpose and direction of the Bruderhof movement in general and its relationship with their own colonies. Their expressed concerns on the state of the Paraguayan communities were not well received by the leaders of the Bruderhof who contradicted the Hutterians in a "quarrelsome, cold way." Since the uniting of the two groups in 1930 the Hutterites had visited the Bruderhof on one previous occasion--the timely visit of two Hutterite brothers on the very day of the Gestapo's attack on the Rhön community. Though the relationship was one of good intentions, a degree of tension and skepticism always existed. The problem was one of outward cultural differences as well as mutual perceptions of spiritual shallowness, insufficient commitment, and inept leadership. The Hutterites returned to America with a hopeless report--"they have bad leadership, so nothing can be done."<sup>82</sup> The years following offered nothing to allay the pending crisis of relationship. Ulrich Eggers summarized the effects of the visit of the summer of 1950 and the following years:

It became clear that the "old" and "new" Hutterians had grown apart. The brothers were welcomed at Primavera in a friendly way, but they were shocked by what they saw. Especially the outward lifestyle caused tension. Music, folk dancing, and especially smoking were offensive to the brothers. . . .

What had been built up under Eberhard Arnold to hold the community together and to be a corrective element was now eliminated. False directions came in. . . . Faith in human reason and in one's own strength had once more become stronger than unity in the Spirit and trust in God's power and leading. So in 1957 the Bruderhof at the height of outward strength--with 1,400 people from twenty nations at ten locations in five different countries--was on the brink of its most serious downfall.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 174-75.

<sup>83</sup>Ulrich Eggers, Community for Life, 116.

The ultimate event which brought about the break of fellowship between the Hutterian Brethren and the Hutterites involved the Forest River colony of North Dakota and the Woodcrest Bruderhof. In April 1955, in the midst of new growth and the establishment of a firm foundation for future Bruderhof communities in America, some Hutterites paid a visit to the Woodcrest hof.<sup>84</sup> As he watched the unexpected arrival of four visitors in traditional Hutterian dress, Heini Arnold "realized he was facing an unexpected, possibly historic situation." Few members of the Woodcrest community knew much about the relationship of the Bruderhof and the Hutterian Brethren. The Bruderhof-Hutterian connection was low on the list of priorities of this young New York hof, comprised primarily of post-war American community seekers. The dress of the Bruderhof residents was modest, but it was not Hutterian. At a glance the setting was typical 1950s American with denim jeans, sleeveless blouses and cigarette smokers prevalent. Yet, in spite of these outward differences, the Hutterian visitors

felt a lively, brotherly spirit in the community. They were surprised that young modern Americans would choose to live in the poverty and self-discipline they found at Woodcrest; the American were equally excited and thankful to meet Hutterian brothers for the first time.<sup>85</sup>

One Hutterian minister in particular, John Maendel of Forest River Colony, did not see the outward differences as critical and sought to work toward the strengthening of the relationship between the two groups. Housing was a serious need at Woodcrest and Maendel agreed to send a work crew to assist the Bruderhof upon his return to North Dakota. A team

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<sup>84</sup>They included representatives of colonies in North Dakota, Manitoba, and Montana.

<sup>85</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 196-97.

of five carpenters, three from Manitoba communities and two from Forest River, was sent to help build the first new building at Woodcrest, appropriately named Forest River House.

During their visit, the team of carpenters witnessed the working and living together of the Woodcrest community. They were inspired by the steady flow of seekers, novices, and new members compared to their own experience of limited biological growth within the Hutterian colonies. A mutual respect and love developed and after a time of regular correspondence between the Forest River colony and Woodcrest, it became apparent that a "good part" of the North Dakotan colony intended to join the Bruderhof community. Heini Arnold kept the European and South American Bruderhof communities well-informed of the development and sought generally to encourage the inclusion of Forest River into the life of Woodcrest and the Bruderhof. In August 1955, Heini Arnold, Hans Meier, Arnold Mason (from Wheathill), and Bruce Sumner (from Primavera) met with eleven Hutterian ministers at the James Valley Colony in Manitoba with the hope of presenting Forest River's intentions to join with Woodcrest and other "seeking people from 'the world.'" They especially sought the blessings of Hutterian elder Peter Hofer, without whom the move would be seen as a challenge to the leadership of the Hutterites. Arnold Mason later recalled that the crisis arose when the Hutterian elders realized John Maendel intended to join Woodcrest with some of the people of Forest River. Perhaps Heini, as Eberhard's son, with an understanding of the historical importance of the relationship between the two groups, could have presented the situation in a manner which would have resulted in a compromise for the future. Unfortunately, "unresolved tensions" from the past along with the "disrespectful" and "impudent" behavior of the other three "Paraguayan"<sup>86</sup> Bruderhof representatives caused a final break in the relationship between the two groups.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>A name evidently given Meier, Mason, and Sumner by the Hutterian ministers.

More than half of the Forest River colony joined the Bruderhof with the minority members returning to their mother colony in Manitoba.<sup>88</sup> The three "Paraguayan" Bruderhof members remained at Forest River to provide leadership to the new community. Chaos ensued as old issues of leadership and direction, which permanently infected the Primavera hofs, manifested themselves. A serious challenge to Heini's leadership ensued, with the eventual result of the return of the three "Paraguayans" to their English and Paraguayan hofs. Next came the realities of merging a predominantly rural-agrarian community and its own economic problems with the emerging culture and industry of the new Woodcrest community. The decision was made to sell the Forest River farm leading to further disintegration of the group with some returning to the Hutterian colonies and a few striking out on their own.<sup>89</sup> One positive result of the Forest River fiasco was the purchase of Gorley's Lake Hotel, a mountain resort near Uniontown, Pennsylvania eventually known as the New Meadow Run Bruderhof--an existing and strong community today.<sup>90</sup>

The Forest River crisis resulted in a split between the Hutterites and the Bruderhof movement. Years of physical and spiritual struggle in South America, the unfortunate events of the 1950 visit of the Hutterites to Primavera, and the tragedy of the Forest River colony resulted in a break in communications, cooperation, and fellowship that would last almost twenty years.

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<sup>87</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 199-201.

<sup>88</sup>Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Seeking, 280.

<sup>89</sup>Eventually the Forest River property was returned to the Hutterian Brethren. Ulrich Eggers, Community for Life, 157.

<sup>90</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 201-3.

### The Pilgrimage Ends

The growth and guarded prosperity of the new American community of Woodcrest signaled the beginning of the end of the twenty-odd years of indigence experienced by the Bruderhof. The issues of leadership and the ultimate philosophical-theological direction of the movement had yet to be resolved. The frail leadership style of Paraguay, with its emphasis on the business of communal living rather than the inner spirit of community, was losing prominence. The essence of Eberhard's vision for the Bruderhof was renewed under the leadership of Heini Arnold. The postwar American age of opportunity was providing financial success through the new venture--Community Playthings. By the spring of 1959, there were ten bruderhofs--four in Paraguay (Asuncion, Isla Margarita, Loma Hoby, Ibaté), three in the United States ( Woodcrest, Oak Lake, Evergreen), two in England (Wheathill, Bulstrode), one in Germany (Sinntal), and one in Uruguay (El Arado). The Paraguayan and European hofs were struggling while the American communities were experiencing success and even unsolicited recognition (TIME magazine covered their move to Gorley's Lake Hotel in Pennsylvania).<sup>91</sup>

Though regular communications were maintained and an occasional conference of leadership from the various communities was held, the distance between the American hofs and the others seemed to increase. The sixteenth-century Hutterian leadership principle of choosing one among the group to serve as Elder had been neglected by the Bruderhof since Eberhard's death. Perhaps this was intentional as the leadership of the Paraguayan years attempted to depart from the old Hutterian ways of Eberhard, or perhaps it was merely a result of the lack of a reasonable leader to serve. Hans Zumpe was the closest thing to an

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 212-13.

Elder during those difficult years, but he was relieved of his service of the Word in 1958 and was eventually excluded from the community.<sup>92</sup> The European and Paraguayan hofs seemed to be in a constant state of decline. The impending issues were many--inept leadership, mistrust of stewards, jealousy concerning distribution of resources, and frustration over educational practices concerning the children. The need for action became apparent:

There was no elder to draw the whole movement together; no one named to give spiritual leadership; no one to watch over the movement's economic development in its many parts. Not since Eberhard Arnold's death had there been an elder.<sup>93</sup>

In the autumn of 1961 the brotherhoods decided to close the South American hofs and sell the properties. Soon afterwards Sinntal and Wheathill were also liquidated. It was a difficult time for the Bruderhof movement. Many left the community altogether while others separated for a time and eventually returned. Those who wanted to continue with the Bruderhof were moved to one of the four remaining hofs--Woodcrest, Oak Lake, Evergreen, and Bulstrode. Finally, on 13 July 1962, in a joint brotherhood meeting, Heini Arnold was chosen as Elder and "responsible servant of the Word" for all the Bruderhof communities. The pilgrimage from the devastation of Nazis Germany and the Rhön Bruderhof ended. With a new era of opportunity based in America, a return to the basics of the vision of Eberhard Arnold, and a stabilized leadership, the future of the Bruderhof looked promising.

Torches Rekindled  
Taken from the title of Merrill Mow's chronicle of the events surrounding  
the re-uniting of the Bruderhof and t

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<sup>92</sup>In 1960 it was revealed that Hans Zumpe had been living in adultery within the community for years. He was unrepentant and was disciplined by the community and was never reconciled to the Bruderhof. Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 128-30, 150.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 213.

Before looking at the results of the development of the Bruderhof community over the last thirty years, it is necessary to update the events concerning their broken fellowship with the Hutterites. From 1955-62 the two groups had minimal contact. Apparently this disunity continuously troubled Heini Arnold. In a letter to the Schmiedeleut Elder, Peter Hofer, dated 3 January 1962, Heini sought reconciliation on behalf of the Bruderhof:

It is several years since we had contact with you. In these years it has become more and more clear to us that we have done much wrong to you. I want to speak about it and ask you to forgive us. In recent years we have been under God's judgment and we had to see and recognize that we had become proud and arrogant in many ways. We have forsaken the simple way of Jesus and of his love as told in the Gospels.

This also showed itself in the affair in Forest River, where we came with a kind of fanatical zeal that was unfaithful to the humility of Jesus. We hurt and harmed you as a church, also many personally, for which we feel deeply sorry and ashamed. If you would feel able to forgive us, we would be deeply thankful and joyful.<sup>95</sup>

In November 1963, five Hutterian brothers and one sister visited the Woodcrest community. This was a friendly meeting but also served as a reminder of the rift between the two groups.

In January 1964, Heini Arnold, Art Wisner, and Dwight Blough traveled to Manitoba to visit the Schmiedeleut Hutterians. Years later, Wisner recalled the events of their visit in great detail. Heini's purpose was to secure the forgiveness of Peter Hofer and the brethren for the Forest River affair. To this end the trip was a success. Peter Hofer forgave Heini and arranged for him to meet with several Hutterite leaders, all of whom forgave Heini for what they perceived as his lack of leadership concerning Forest River. The Hutterites made it clear that forgiving Heini was not the same as forgiving the Bruderhof community as a whole. It was suggested that if all of those involved in the Forest River tragedy were to return to their

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<sup>94</sup>Taken from the title of Merrill Mow's chronicle of the events surrounding the re-uniting of the Bruderhof and the Hutterites.

<sup>95</sup>Richard E. Domer, May They All Be One, 229.



respective communities and ask to be excluded from the fellowships, then perhaps reconciliation could be achieved. This seems to have been suggested as a symbolic opportunity for true forgiveness and a re-uniting of the two communities. After much thought Heini asked the Woodcrest community to put him under the exclusion.<sup>96</sup> In retrospect, many Bruderhof members feel that Heini's suggestion was the correct one. Perhaps reconciliation would have been expedited if they had excluded Heini and the others for the sake of unity. Perhaps Heini and the others would have been reinstated eventually and all would have been well. The brotherhood could not bring itself to exclude their new Elder and the primary leader of the quest to seek forgiveness from the Hutterites. Thus the Bruderhof community remained under the Hutterian ban for another ten years.<sup>97</sup>

In the years leading up to 1974, the Bruderhof was preoccupied with its own growth and development. Many broken relationships with excluded members from the early 1960s were reconciled. New communities were begun and the prosperity of Community Playthings increased. The Plough Publishing House aggressively pursued the publishing of the writings of Eberhard Arnold, Johann Christoph Blumhardt, and the early Hutterites. Yet, in spite of this time of growth and development, Bruderhof members were constantly reminded of the rift with the Hutterites. Heini Arnold especially was committed to the day when the two groups would re-unite.

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 229-31. Heini proposed that while under the discipline of the community he could travel to Europe and attempt to re-establish contact with the many members who were living outside the community as a result of the turmoil and disintegration of the Primavera and European hofs. As another "outsider" excluded from the community, he might be better received by those who were disenfranchised.

<sup>97</sup>Merrill Mow, Torches Rekindled, 188-95. Wisser's account provides a serious, yet refreshingly personal account of the challenges faced by the Bruderhof.

One night in March 1973 during a communal meal at Woodcrest, two Hutterian brothers from Manitoba arrived unexpectedly. They had been in eastern Canada on business and decided to stop by for a visit. It was a friendly two hours and resulted in a series of new contacts between the two groups which led eventually to an historic meeting at the Sturgeon Creek colony, Manitoba, on 7 January 1974. Approximately seventy servants of the Word from the three Hutterian family groups attended in addition to Bruderhof representatives Heini Arnold, Merrill Mow, Glenn Swinger, Dwight Blough, and Don Alexander. With the Hutterites taking the lead and the Bruderhof members submitting in a spirit of repentance, the sins of the earlier years were forgiven and the relationship was restored. Amazingly, in the midst of their continuous fears of strictly imposed rules concerning dress and behavioral restrictions, the Bruderhof members were swept up in this "hour of God." They did not object to the conditions of the reconciliation which provided that all the previous Hutterian members from Forest River would be temporarily excluded. In addition, the Hutterites were to send leaders to various Bruderhof communities to carry out the exclusions. Heini recalled the mood of the moment.

That was a tremendous surprise for us. We had no opportunity to talk together alone, but we all felt that it was God's leading and that we had nothing to say. It would have been a second Forest River-type sin if we had said we couldn't do that without asking at home first. If you had experienced that atmosphere of love and embracing, you would understand.<sup>98</sup>

In a letter to the Bruderhof communities explaining the rush of events, Heini explained that the hand of Hutterian fellowship had been extended and suddenly they all had been accepted as Hutterian brothers and sisters. There would be challenges ahead but the broken fellowship between the Bruderhof and Hutterites finally had been restored.

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 212-21.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE BRUDERHOF TODAY

Since their restoration of fellowship with the Hutterites in 1974, the Bruderhof has prospered. In 1994 the Bruderhof community was comprised of eight established hofs of over 2,200 residents.<sup>1</sup> In addition there existed ties with the New Hutterian Church of Owa, Japan and the Oakwood colony of the Hutterites. A work begun in Nigeria in 1992 was progressing and regular contacts with other communal groups or community seekers in countries such as Hungary, Russia, Israel, and Haiti were established. A perusal of recent issues of The Plough reveals the unmistakable ethos of a church with a story to tell and a commitment of lifestyle to support their claims. Like the Hutterites of ages past and inspired by the vision of their founder, Eberhard Arnold, the Bruderhof today appears to be on a mission of reaching out to others in witness and service according to the precepts of Jesus Christ and the leadership of God's Spirit. Though not without reversals, their mission seems characterized by an unwavering commitment, economic stability, sustained growth, and an international diversity leaving outsiders wondering at the potential of this radical way of Christian life. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an inside look at the life of the Bruderhof movement today.

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<sup>1</sup>Dick Domer, interview by the author, 23 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. A time line of the establishment of hofs is included in appendix 2.

### Historical/Theological Foundations

In Chapter 3 the basic components of the vision of Eberhard Arnold were analyzed. Always looking first to Jesus Christ, Arnold called upon the community to hold on to 1) original Hutterianism, 2) the spirit of the Blumhardts, and 3) the attitude of life of the true Youth Movement of Germany. These components of his vision were vital to what he saw as the potential for a "real and wonderful providence" for the group.<sup>2</sup> After almost losing sight of this formula for a balanced community life during the 1930-50s, the Bruderhof movement reclaimed their commitment to Christ and the exhortation of Arnold. Today the Bruderhof continues to preserve the basic components of Arnold's vision.

### Reason for Being

The Bruderhof today is built solidly upon the historical and theological foundations of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament and as lived out by the early church. Eberhard Arnold insisted the life of the Bruderhof begins with Jesus Christ and his Sermon on the Mount. This is "the first step of the way."<sup>3</sup> It is not simply a set of new laws or demands to be obeyed. It is a way of life, the true, living, organic, primal life, which comes from God and is foretold in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.<sup>4</sup> This way of life demands both decision and action, prompted by "the unique Spirit of Jesus Christ" rather than

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<sup>2</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Darmstadt, Germany, to the Bruderhof community, Rhön Bruderhof, 14 November 1935, Eberhard Arnold Collection, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, NY. See also chapter three, note 69.

<sup>3</sup>Eberhard Arnold, *Salt and Light: Talks and Writings on the Sermon on the Mount* (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1986), 1. Eberhard often referred to the life of community as "the way." Today, Bruderhof members still use this term when referring to the Bruderhof way of life and commitment to Christ.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

the efforts of people.<sup>5</sup> Those who truly have received the power of God's spirit are able to decide and act according to the radical new way of Christ. It is an "either-or decision" which results in following the god of this world--the god of mammon, or the God of love--the God and Father of Jesus Christ. It is the ultimate decision in each person's life, the decision between heaven and hell, God and the devil.<sup>6</sup> The Sermon on the Mount exhorts believers to act. What kind of action is required of this true life of Christ?: action which promotes true humanity, justice, truth, peace, righteousness, and the love of God. Acts of love toward all of God's creation are central to the way of life prescribed by the Sermon on the Mount. Eberhard applied the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5 to the call to action. A church without action is not a church, just as salt is either salt or nothing at all. The essence of salt is its action. By itself it has no purpose. Salt is there for the sake of the whole world.<sup>7</sup>

Herein lies the essence of "the way" of the Bruderhof today. The way of religion has all of the right words, ideas and theology, but lacks action. The way of the Bruderhof starts with the call of Christ and involves a decision to follow, not a prescribed religion, doctrine, or ecclesiology, but a comprehensive lifestyle. Once the decision has been made, God's spirit bestows the power of love upon the follower. God's love leads to action, the kind of action which shares that love with all mankind and results in a new "way" of Christian living, exemplified in Acts 2:41-47. The new "way" of Christ is to live in such a community where all things--worship, teaching, learning, working, eating, living--are held in common one with another. The words of Arnold remain representative of the basic foundation of the Bruderhof today. Whatever else might be said, the *raison d'être* of today's Bruderhof is Jesus Christ--his life, teachings, and the power of his spirit.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 147-48.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 13.

### Original Hutterianism

The bond between the Bruderhof and the original Anabaptists of the sixteenth century is as vital today as it was in those formative years of the 1920-30s in Germany. The history of the life and persecution of the early Hutterites remains a cherished aspect of the heritage of the Bruderhof. Though this heritage is in a sense adopted, it is no less real to the Bruderhof than if they had lived it themselves. Indeed, primarily through the publications of the Bruderhof, the history of the early Hutterians has been made available in English to those other than academics. The current catalog of books available through the Plough Publishing House contains a section, "Anabaptist Witness," including titles such as: Peter Riedemann, Confession of Faith; Andreas Ehrenpreis and Claus Felbinger, Brotherly Community; Jakob Hutter, Brotherly Faithfulness; Peter Walpot, True Surrender and Christian Community of Goods. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Bruderhof to the history of the Anabaptists has been its diligent effort to translate and publish The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren. Volume one was published in 1987 and volume two is soon to be completed. This commitment to the writings, teachings, and history of the early Hutterian Anabaptists is indicative of the importance placed by the Bruderhof on a shared identity with sixteenth-century Anabaptism.<sup>8</sup>

The Bruderhof still maintains the Anabaptist theology of Riedemann's Rechenschaft. They adhere to the same positions of faith taken by early Anabaptist groups. Common beliefs include those on voluntarism, baptism of adult believers, the community of saints, the symbolic practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper, separation of church and state, discipline, exclusion, and marriage. In addition, the more specific Hutterian practices of pacifism and community of property are central to the life of the Bruderhof. They study, teach, preach, sing, publish, proclaim, claim, and live an Anabaptist faith similar to that of

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<sup>8</sup>Bruderhof members regularly participate in Anabaptist dialogues and conferences. For example, a new "Anabaptist Network" has been formed and represents an interdenominational group which seeks to explore biblical Christianity by drawing from the teachings and examples of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The second

the earliest Hutterian Brethren. Based on Jesus Christ first, the basic theological foundations of today's Bruderhof are generally Anabaptist and specifically Hutterian.

Similarly the Bruderhof shares a heritage of persecution with the early Hutterites. As twentieth-century Anabaptists, Bruderhof members lay claim to the heritage of persecution of all Christians including the early church. Just as a Baptist might share in the heritage of the struggle for religious liberty of Roger Williams, or as a Methodist might identify with the spiritual pilgrimage of John Wesley, so do Bruderhof members relate to the persecutions of Hutterian Brethren like Jakob Hutter. Bruderhof children are taught the importance of the history of the earlier Hutterians and accept this history as a part of their own. Yet the Bruderhof community can rightfully claim more than an inherited history of persecution. Bruderhof members suffered harassment and exclusion under the rule of Nazi Germany. They endured years of continual migration from Germany to Liechtenstein, England, Paraguay, and the United States in their struggle for survival. The heritage of persecution shared by the Bruderhof and the Hutterites is real.

#### Spirit of the Blumhardts

The spiritual vitality of the Blumhardts is still evident within the Bruderhof community today. The story of the Blumhardts has been well documented by the community.<sup>9</sup> The Bruderhof's sense of purpose is firmly rooted in the teachings of the two Blumhardts on eternity and the power of Christ in the here and now, not simply in the life to come. A passage from the Blumhardt's devotional booklet, Now Is Eternity, typifies the Bruderhof's philosophy of ministry.

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annual conference of this network was hosted by the Bruderhof at their Darvell hof in England, May 1994. Bruderhof Communities, "Anabaptism Today," The Plough 39 (Summer/Autumn 1994): 4.

<sup>9</sup>Six titles by or about Blumhardt are currently available through Plough Publishing House.

Christ wants to appear to men today. True, it is still in secret and in the Spirit; yet we can already see beginnings of clear, eternal life. And anyone who surrenders to this will realize how real Christ is!<sup>10</sup>

In a meeting for guests one evening at the Darvell hof, one young British visitor asked what the Bruderhof taught about the Holy Spirit. The Bruderhof member replied that they are reluctant to speak openly about such things as they are matters of the Spirit and of a personal and intimate nature. She then acknowledged that though the Bruderhof generally does not identify closely with the more "exaggerated" manifestations of the "charismatic" churches of today, God's spirit is real and at work in the Bruderhof. God heals in many ways and the Bruderhof brotherhood may pray earnestly for physical or spiritual healing for a brother or sister in Christ. She mentioned that often when the community enters a season of earnest prayer for one person, God heals another person in a miraculous way.<sup>11</sup> Though practical reasons might be sighted as the cause for conflict, eventually someone will point out that it is a product of spiritual battles and that only through seeking God's Spirit of love can a lasting solution be found. The spirit of the Blumhardts and their teachings about the realities of God's Spirit at work in the world are a part of the life of the Bruderhof today.

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<sup>10</sup>Johann Christoph Blumhardt and Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, Now Is Eternity, trans. Society of Brothers (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>11</sup>Guest Meeting, attended by author, 23 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.



### Attitude of Life of the Youth Movement

The Jugendbewegung (German Youth Movement), discussed in Chapter 3, was characterized by a love for nature and the outdoors. Youth trekked throughout the countryside and gathered around campfires in the evenings to sing their songs and dance around the bonfire. The Youth Movement culture was an integral part of the formative years of the Bruderhof. Eberhard and Emmy Arnold were active leaders in the movement and the "attitude of life" manifested during the Jugendbewegung was part of the early years at Sannerz and the Rhön hofs. Throughout their relationship with the Hutterites, the lighting of candles, singing of non-religious songs, bonfires, and general spirit of the Youth Movement has been a point of contention. To the Hutterites, the lighting of candles was a reminder of the misdirection and persecution of the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth century. Though the Bruderhof have taken care not to offend the Hutterites, they have still maintained an element of the culture of the Jugendbewegung of the early twentieth century. The influence of the Youth Movement can best be seen in the celebrations and special events of the Bruderhof such as weddings or the New Year's celebration. As with the Youth Movement, outdoor weddings are common. Natural decorations and flowers grace the grounds and a possible wagon ride for the bride and groom through the hof adds the natural Jugendbewegung flavor to the event.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the event which reminds one most of the Jugendbewegung is the traditional New Year's Eve service. The community gathers together at about 11:30 P.M. and has a time of singing followed by a kind of annual report of the activities of the community in the passing year. Around midnight the scene focuses on the Christmas tree in the center of the gathering, decorated with unlit white candles. One-by-one the members rise and stand at a microphone and offer a prayerful thought or remembrance of a brother, sister, or friend of the community. They then move to the tree and light a candle until all are lit in a brilliant display of light. Songs are often interspersed between the

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<sup>12</sup>Wedding of Johann Heinrich Arnold of Woodcrest Bruderhof and Wilma Hofer of Elm River, Manitoba, attended by author, 19 August 1990, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, NY.

lightings. It is an emotional service symbolizing the mutual care, love, and unity, which is the object of the community.<sup>13</sup>

Music remains a vital part of Bruderhof life. In addition to the hymns of faith passed down through Hutterian and Bruderhof traditions, there remains a strong emphasis on musical instruments and performances primarily for the entertainment of the community. This latter aspect is definitely not a result of the influence of Hutterianism, but that of the Jugendbewegung. A recent example can be found in the production and recording of a Christmas Cantata, The Universe Sings of the Wonder of God's Creation. Written for choir and small orchestra, this piece "proclaims the glories of the universe, laments Earth's fall from grace, portrays the wonder of redemption through the birth of Christ and looks to the return of God's kingdom."<sup>14</sup> The music is distinctively Bruderhof in style and the quality of the performances are superb. Though this cantata does not flow directly from the culture of the Jugendbewegung, it is undoubtedly a musical product of the undying attitude of life of the German Youth Movement which still permeates the Bruderhof.

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<sup>13</sup>New Year's Eve Service at Woodcrest Bruderhof, attended by author, 31 December 1990, Rifton, NY.

The annual report presented at the above service began with a summary of activities. During the previous year there were 80 novices (71 yet to be baptized), 70 births (35 male and 35 female, with one deceased baby), 41 baptisms, 5 conferences held, 15 weddings (2 involving the East and West), and 5 deaths.

Mention was also made of two brothers who were spending New Year's Eve in Saudi Arabia encouraging the Persian Gulf War soldiers [undoubtedly with the message of peace]. It was also pointed out that this was the first year in the history of the Bruderhof that two new hofs were founded, Catskill and Michaelshof. "Little" Michaelshof hosted 2,175 visitors including 465 overnights.

Publishing activities were mentioned. A new translation of Riedeman's Confession was due to be published by the Mennonites and work on the Chronicle, vol. 2 continued. Also four issues of The Plough and three of Fluge (in German) were published.

Other reports included word from the two Bruderhof families sent to attend a funeral in the West. They sent good greetings and reported that many felt there was no bitterness between the eastern and western communities.

<sup>14</sup>Bruderhof Communities, "The Universe Sings--Advertisement," The Plough 40 (Christmas 1994): 24. The Universe Sings has been recorded several times. It is available on CD, cassette, or choral music. Marlys Swinger, The Universe Sings of the Wonder of God's Creation, 100-voice choir of the young people of the Society of Brothers, Plough Publishing House, PPH-104, copyright 1975.

Built on Christ--the teachings of the apostles and early church--empowered by his Spirit, supported by the three pillars of original Hutterianism, the Blumhardt teachings, and the Jugendbewegung, and conditioned through the historical experiences of the community itself, the historical and theological foundations of today's Bruderhof appear to be solidly in place.

### Political System

#### Unanimity

The political system of the Bruderhof today is patterned after that of the original Hutterites of the Golden Years based on Riedemann's Confession and other ancient Hutterian writings.<sup>15</sup> The noteworthy exception is whereas the Hutterites historically made decisions on the basis of a democratic vote (male baptized members only), the Bruderhof govern themselves through a process of unanimity.<sup>16</sup> They base this approach on what they consider as "the fact that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of the Church, leads all who believe in Him to unanimity in all decisions and in all activities." This should not imply the loss of freedom for the individual. To the contrary, the Bruderhof feels governance by unanimity through God's Spirit guarantees freedom and voluntariness for individuals.

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<sup>15</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders of Sannerz and the Rhön Bruderhof, Section II (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1991), 8, 25.

<sup>16</sup>In his extensive studies, John Hostetler concludes that the most difficult problem faced by "intentional communities" is governance by consensus. He claims that groups that survive beyond the initial stages usually revert to an authoritarian style of governance. John A Hostetler, "Expelled Bruderhof Members Speak Out--Draft 2191," (1991) TD [photocopy], p. 1, Willow Grove, PA.

God has in Christ, in His Spirit, and in His Church, freed man from sin, self-will, and selfishness, from all possessions, covetousness, untruthfulness, from all hurting of his fellowmen, all human lovelessness, and all coercion and slavery. So from within, every believer experiences through a renewal of heart that the Spirit and the will of the Church are his personal calling, his only real calling. Thus man, in whom the image of God was corrupted, has this image restored again in Christ. The unanimity of the Church brings him back to joy in God.<sup>17</sup>

This practice of unanimity is foundational to the well-being of the community. It is the basis of the political system of the community.

### Structure

Like the original Hutterites of the sixteenth century, the Bruderhof system provides for one elder (overseer, bishop, or shepherd) over all of the communities. Their history taught the Bruderhof that the lack of a true elder chosen unanimously by the community can be "disastrous."<sup>18</sup> In addition to the elder, there are Servants of the Word, also chosen by the unanimous consent of the combined communities, who are responsible for the "inner" or spiritual life of the Bruderhof. The name "servant" is used with the implication that the leaders serve the community, not the other way around.<sup>19</sup> A servant has the role of leader for a specific hof in its "daily religious and practical life." Each hof usually has two or more Servants of the Word. Along with his wife, a Servant of the Word, often called "minister,"

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<sup>17</sup>Bruderhof Communities, "Constitution of Hutterian Brethren Church International," (1995) [photocopy], p. 1-2, Darvell Bruderhof Archives, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, England.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 7-8. Bruderhof members remember their own years, 1935-62, without an elder and the struggles that ensued. Many also feel the modern Hutterites are struggling due to the fact they have not been united under one elder since before their years in Russia.

<sup>19</sup>Martin and Christina Köpfschoff, interview by the author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

acts as a counselor and sometimes peace keeper concerning the daily life of the Bruderhof.<sup>20</sup> Together with the elder, the Servants comprise the leadership team for the communities.

Meetings serve a vital role in the governing system of today's Bruderhof. Meetings are called and chaired by the elder, with the exception of the Sisters's meetings (see below) which are chaired by a Housemother or wife of a Servant of the Word. The elder chairs the meetings of several hofs together by "telephonic communication" and usually includes communities within reasonable time zones meeting together. The current elder is Johann Christoph Arnold (son of Heini, grandson of Eberhard), who currently lives at the Woodcrest hof in Rifton, New York. Generally the American hofs will link with one another by phone for a meeting and the German and English hofs do likewise, the two groups sharing transcripts of each other's meeting records. When necessary, all hofs link by phone and meet together. Daily meetings are not uncommon. Several types of meetings are outlined in the recently printed "Constitution"<sup>21</sup>:

Society meetings	for all baptized members over twenty-one years old
Brotherhood meetings	for all baptized and novice members
<u>Gemeindestunde</u> meetings	for worship or non-business matters, attended by all members, novices, guests, and children who are invited
Household meetings	for guests, older children, members, and novices

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>21</sup>For a complete copy of the constitution see appendix 4.

Sisters's meetings for women concerning the care of children and families

All major decisions are made by unanimous consent at either a Society or Brotherhood meeting. It is at these meetings that major matters of division of labor, special projects, travel requirements, property purchases, family moves, marriages and so on, are deliberated. Members are not intimidated into going along with the leadership for the sake of harmony, but are given the freedom to express their views for the general well-being of the larger community.<sup>22</sup> Each member may enter into discussion concerning a decision and anyone may ask for a delay in deciding a certain matter.<sup>23</sup>

### Membership

There is no discrimination concerning those eligible for membership in the Bruderhof today. Anyone called by God to a life of "brotherly sacrifice and service" can qualify regardless of "nationality, race, social positions, religious background, sex or age." Membership means sacrificing all personal property and, perhaps more importantly, personal ambition. Members are those who are baptized into the Church (i.e. of the Bruderhof) or whose previous baptism by another group is accepted by the Church.<sup>24</sup> As previously discussed, members participate in the governance of the community through the system of unanimity. Each member takes a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and maintains no

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<sup>22</sup>Amy Hindley, interview by the author, 25 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. The author has had numerous conversations with members concerning the decision-making process of the Bruderhof.

<sup>23</sup>Bruderhof Communities, "Constitution," 7.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

property or assets whatsoever. The last point is central to the practice of community of goods and is clarified in "The Ten Baptism Points" as follows:

8. No one any longer owns anything, for each gives and surrenders himself to the Lord and his Church with all that he has and can do, as it was in the first apostolic Church, in which no one said of his goods that they were his own, but they had all things in common (Acts 4:32). . . .

9. We say this clearly to each one in advance so that there is no obligation to return anything to anyone later. Therefore, if anyone should enter on this way and then cannot continue and should wish to have what is his returned, let him stay away now, keep what is his, and leave us in peace. Our concern is not to get money and goods, but to win God-fearing hearts.<sup>25</sup>

During baptism new members must answer affirmatively the ten baptism questions<sup>26</sup>, one of which is, Do you believe in and agree with the "twelve points of the Christian faith," which in fact is the identical Apostles' Creed. Another revealing question is, "Have you now understood enough of the Word of the Lord to recognize it as the way to eternal life?"<sup>27</sup>

Through this service of baptism one becomes a full "lifetime" member of the Bruderhof.

Prior to full membership one becomes a novice member which basically includes the same level of commitment, including the three vows, as does full membership. The novitiate is also "for life," but differs from full membership regarding the level of responsibility given to the novice. It serves as a period of growth towards the complete level of responsibility required of a full member. Young adults raised within the community and new members from the outside generally comprise the novitiate.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 5-6. The ten points are attributed to Jakob Hutter.

<sup>26</sup>The ten baptism questions (points) are listed in the church constitution, appendix 4.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 6.

Guests and children are also acknowledged in the structure of the Bruderhof.

Guests include those invited to visit the Bruderhof temporarily for the sake of becoming more familiar with the way of the community. The children of guests, novices, or full members are also recognized in this group, though their level of commitment and responsibility is limited.

At first glance the political system of today's Bruderhof closely resembles that of the Hutterites. The offices of leadership are the same, with the primary and noteworthy difference being the practice of unanimity versus democratic governance. Historically, the Bruderhof has struggled with a system of self-governance. Today they are committed to the one-elder approach based on unanimous consensus decision-making. Since the restoration of a single elder in 1962 the system appears to have served the community well.<sup>28</sup>

#### Economic System: Community of Goods

As with the political system, the economic order of the Bruderhof resembles and contrasts with that of the Hutterites. The practice of community of goods is absolute among the Bruderhof communities. Bruderhof members do not have personal money, furniture, vehicles, property, investments, or pensions. Likewise, there is no compromise in the concept of work distribution based on practical and human need and ability rather than individual preference. The structure within a hof is based on the original Hutterian system as outlined in the early Hutterian writings.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the modern Hutterites, the Bruderhof incorporated their properties and business enterprises under one common entity of ownership

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<sup>28</sup>The question arises of whether or not the Bruderhof today exhibits any cultic tendencies. The author thinks not, based on the published faith and practice of the community as well as their living example as observed by the author for extended periods, throughout numerous interviews, and much research over the last seven years. There have been difficult moments when leadership and direction were lacking, people were misdirected and the well-being of the community at large suffered. But the classic manifestations of a cult do not reside on the hofs. True, Eberhard Arnold's teachings are esteemed and used today for instruction and admonition, and the only three elders in the history of the Bruderhof were from the Arnold family. Still there is no evidence of "Arnold-worship" in the communities. Their commitment is to Jesus Christ, his teachings, those of the apostles, the Sermon on the Mount, and the community practice of the early church. Though there is great encouragement for, indeed dependence upon, unity of spirit and purpose; there is no evidence of manipulation, "brain-washing," or oppression of freedom, which frequently accompany the development of a cult.

<sup>29</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders, Section II, 48-93.



with no one individual or group of individuals in control, whereas Hutterian colonies are each owned and operated separately.<sup>30</sup> Though this may seem to be a minor issue, it is in fact a primary reflection of the radical nature of the commitment of the Bruderhof to community of property. For example, the financial success of a single hof is not a factor since all of the bruderhofs share a common ownership of property.

### Work Management

The work management system of the Bruderhof is simple, yet precise. The Steward serves as the hof manager of financial and logistical resources. He handles the disbursement of all funds and coordinates travel, necessary travel documents, and other logistical matters which involve contact outside the community. He has a major responsibility and is sometimes referred to as a "minister" or leader of similar responsibilities to those of a Servant of the Word. In addition there are two Work Distributors, one each for the brothers and the sisters. They are responsible for insuring workers are available where and when required for the efficient operation of the community. Each primary business enterprise (see below) of the Bruderhof has a Business Manager who works closely with the Shop Foreman of each company. In addition, there are other management positions such as Purchaser, Production Manager, Assembly Foreman, and Sales Manager. The management of the work of the women is similarly divided. The work of the women is primarily overseen by the Housemothers (wives of Servants of the Word) who are responsible for the inner well-being of the women as well as outer matters concerning work. Work-team leaders for the women are simply referred to as "responsible sisters."<sup>31</sup> In accordance with the spirit of sharing all

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<sup>30</sup>For legal reasons, the Bruderhof church structures its holdings through various subsidiaries, but the ownership and control remains common.

<sup>31</sup>Martin and Christina Köppschoff, interview by the author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

things in common, a member submits to the needs of the community concerning work assignments. It is normal for Bruderhof members to have held various work assignments during their lives.<sup>32</sup>

Work activities are divided into categories or departments for the men and women workers. The women are primarily responsible for the following departments:

Laundry	provides for the entire community
Kitchen	prepares all community-wide meals (daily breakfasts and weekend lunches are generally prepared and taken by individual families)
Offices	provides clerical, computer, and administrative support
Cleaning	sanitizes common areas such as dining room, and shared toilets
Medical	maintains clinics within each hof
Sewing	provides basic clothing for the entire community

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<sup>32</sup>Cordell Bowman, interview with the author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. During this interview about the educational system, the author learned that the night before, in a Brotherhood meeting, Cordell was reassigned from his primary job of teaching to that of working in the Community Playthings shop. Teaching had been his primary job for the last fifteen years, but due to an upcoming surplus of teachers he was asked to make the change. Though he felt that the responsibility to teach the children was an honor, he was genuinely willing and eager to make the move.

Household	supplies shoes, clothing, goods (e.g., jackets, coats) purchased outside of the community
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The work of the men is divided into the following departments:

Maintenance	maintains all hof facilities
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Buildings	constructs new buildings, roads, and bridges
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Farming	maintains the farm animals and vegetable gardens
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Landscaping	handles major landscaping tasks
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In addition, the men serve as the primary workers for the various business enterprises of the Bruderhof. Many of the work responsibilities listed above are performed during "free time" before or after the normal work hours related to one of the business enterprises.

### Business Enterprises

Though the work management structure is definitely "Hutterian," the economic system of the Bruderhof differs with that of the Hutterites on one key point. Since its beginnings, the Bruderhof has been a community of industry rather than agriculture. Today the Bruderhof have three major enterprises: Plough Publishing House, Community Playthings, and Rifton Company.

Publications have been an active source of income and contact with the outside world since the earliest days of the Sannerz and Rhön hofs. Seen as a vehicle of the mission to the world, The Plough periodical is produced quarterly and is available by request, though contributions are accepted. Other books and publications of the Plough Publishing House are marketed and the income generated serves to offset the costs

Fig. 8. [Reprinted, by permission, from Community Playthings, 1995 sales brochure p. 1, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, England.]

involved in maintaining the publishing house.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the mainstay of economic viability for the Bruderhof is Community Playthings, an enterprise which for more than forty years has produced and marketed wooden toys and playground equipment. Sold primarily to schools and institutions, and based on their original design of building blocks, the product line includes: cribs, highchairs, tables, shelving, playpens, bookshelves, nursery gyms, the "wagon for six," seesaws, small toys, climbing equipment, slides, rocking ponies, wagons, and tricycles. All products are of the highest quality and the most modern production management schemes are utilized in the factories. Everyone who lives on the Bruderhof has worked in the "Playthings" factory.<sup>34</sup> The Community Playthings customer base is international in nature and continues to expand. For example, during the Persian Gulf War, the community called upon their customer contacts in Saudi Arabia in order to obtain visas for two brothers who met with the soldiers and shared their commitment to global peace. Currently, the company is introducing a new "play loft" product design which is projected to be a great success.<sup>35</sup>

The third primary industry of the Bruderhof is Rifton Company, named for the town nearest the Woodcrest hof. Rifton products consist of equipment used for people, especially children, with severe physical handicaps. Many of the products are therapeutic in nature and include items such as: sidelying boards, adjustable wedges, reclining chairs, potty and bath chairs, floor sitters, bolster chairs, therapy roles, swing chairs, supine boards, standers, walkers, and tricycles. As with the playthings, Rifton products are of noticeably high quality

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<sup>33</sup>Lois Ann Domer, interview by the author, 24 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

<sup>34</sup>On various visits to the hofs the author worked in the factories and assembled "playthings" or Rifton products.

<sup>35</sup>Martin and Christina Köppschoff, interview by the author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

and are sold primarily to institutions. Rifton Company is a primary supplier of products utilized with the MOVE teaching method for working with the handicapped.<sup>36</sup>

Other Bruderhof enterprises include the operation of a jet airplane, used for Bruderhof transportation requirements and partially supported through selling charter flights to other businesses or groups. Some of the brothers have been given the task of developing a kennel for the purpose of breeding, training, and selling purebred dogs. They specialize in German Shepherds and Golden Retrievers and use the selling point that their dogs are ideal family pets due to the fact they have been raised on a hof with regular family contact.<sup>37</sup> Another brother in America, with skills in the field of welding, has received additional training and is now producing metal sculptures to be marketed to individuals and art collectors. The initial success of this enterprise is promising.<sup>38</sup> Though occasional business enterprise experiments are encouraged, the primary sources of economic vitality for the Bruderhof today are the publishing house, Community Playthings, and Rifton Company.

### Educational System

Since the first days of 1920 when Eberhard and Emmy Arnold started what became the Sannerz community, they took in needy children and orphans. Throughout the history of the Bruderhof, a priority has been placed on proper education for children. They produced considerable literature on the subject and still offer a variety of titles on children's education from the Plough Publishing House. Undoubtedly, the textbook of children's education for the

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<sup>36</sup>MOVE is based in Kern County, California, and was developed by physical therapist Linda Bidabe. For information, contact MOVE International Europe Office, Darvell Bruderhof, East Sussex, TN32 5DR, United Kingdom.

<sup>37</sup>Dick and Lois Ann Domer, interview by author, 1 February 1995, Redhill, Surrey.

<sup>38</sup>Tim Maendel, trip report during dinner, 25 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

Bruderhof today is Eberhard Arnold's Children's Education in Community: The Basis of Bruderhof Education.<sup>39</sup>

Education is defined as guidance for children, whose basic nature is free and innocent, in order to prepare them for the challenges of evil they will face. Much of education takes place through the example of the community and its members. The service of teacher is considered "one of the highest things in the Church" and is understood to be like the Service of the Word and the Service of the Steward to the children.<sup>40</sup> Teamwork and cooperation between the teachers and the rest of the community is vital. The Bruderhof seeks to educate their children to the point of having the following qualities:

1. reverence for the Holy Spirit
2. childlike prayer life
3. gratitude toward what is good and loving
4. freedom and courage to dare
5. faith in truthfulness and love
6. freedom from possessiveness
7. purity
8. childlike spirit
9. sympathy for poverty and suffering<sup>41</sup>

Children are observed from an early age to determine whether they are gifted in areas of physical work or mental activity. There is an integration of the traditional academic subjects with other activities such as games, projects, crafts, and the arts, with special emphases on

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<sup>39</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Children's Education in Community: The Basis of Bruderhof Education (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 19-31.

religion, history, and what might be termed the natural sciences. Discipline is an integral and necessary part of education. Discipline by force may be required but is generally seen as a sign of "educational bankruptcy" and should be avoided if possible by "guidance through the Spirit." Finally, a sense of community among the children should develop. This prepares them for the option of life within the Bruderhof community as adults.

The structure of the educational system of the Bruderhof resembles that of state schools in America. Children under four years of age attend "Baby House," which provides basic child care. Four and five-year-old children attend kindergarten. There is a school for grades one through eight which relies on a basic American school curriculum and utilizes generally accepted textbooks.<sup>42</sup> Technically these schools are registered as private or independent schools and they must meet the requirements of the local authorities. Each class generally has two teachers (one male, one female) of which half are "qualified teachers" according to formal training.<sup>43</sup> German is taught early in the curriculum along with French at the Darvell hof in England.

When the children complete the eighth grade, they leave the Bruderhof school and attend a local state school in the outside community. This is in distinct contrast with the Hutterites, who isolate their teenagers from the outside world and its temptations. The Bruderhof accept this practice as a calculated risk for the benefit of the children and their future. Sending the high school students outside is often a painful experience according to long-time Bruderhof teacher, Cordell Bowman, but it prepares them for the outside world if they continue higher education or if they chose to live outside.<sup>44</sup> This lends credence to the emphasis by the Bruderhof of voluntarism or the necessity for each person to decide for

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<sup>42</sup>Cordell Bowman, interview by author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

<sup>43</sup>Susan Thomas, "A Quiet Life in Robertsbridge," The Times Educational Supplement, 17 February 1995, 4-5.

<sup>44</sup>Cordell Bowman, interview by author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.



themselves concerning the lifelong commitment to live in community. Bruderhof high school students generally excel academically and are often placed in the top group within their class. One head teacher of a British secondary school notes that the Bruderhof students are an asset to his school, "strong in music, singing and dancing, good at basketball, playing in school teams. And highly motivated to learn."<sup>45</sup>

Many Bruderhof high school graduates proceed to university and are trained in education, engineering, law, medicine, or some other field allowing them to provide specialized services to the community. The educational system of the Bruderhof produces capable, knowledgeable, inquisitive, communicative, and skillful adults, capable of competing in the world outside or of adequately serving their community from within.

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<sup>45</sup>Susan Thomas, "A Quiet Life in Robertsbridge," 4-5.

## Social Patterns

### The Family

The Bruderhof social system is one of equal opportunity and responsibility for all, male or female, black or white, young or old. The family is central to the life of the Bruderhof. The concepts of purity and marriage are taken literally from the Bible (Matt. 5:32-33; Rom. 1:24-28, 6:12-20) and are stated clearly in the Bruderhof church constitution.

The Church maintains a clear and sharp stand against sexual immorality, which is the most dangerous and poisonous form of untruthfulness and deceit. We take very seriously Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount about lust, divorce, and remarriage. Therefore no member may divorce and remarry, and no divorced and remarried person may become a committed member while continuing to live in such a marriage relationship if a former spouse is still living.<sup>46</sup>

Large families are the rule, eight to ten children being common, and though mature families do not necessarily live on the same hof, the frequent contact between hofs allows the family unit to remain strong. Grandparents receive regular letters, faxed drawings, and occasional visits from their grandchildren. Due to the recent contact of the Bruderhof with a Nigerian community, the first black-white mixed marriages have occurred.

The elderly are provided for with love and honor throughout their "retired" life. In fact, most of the elderly continue to work in some area of the hof until their health no longer permits. Many of the older members are assigned work in the offices or archives of the hofs. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the outdoors, with the care and attention of many family members and life-long friends, the quality of life for the elderly on a hof is enviable.

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<sup>46</sup>Bruderhof Communities, "Constitution," 9.

### Discipline

As is common with most Anabaptist groups, the practice of church discipline is an important aspect of life. When a novice or full member is in "disunity" with the brotherhood or another member of the brotherhood, they do not participate in the decisions or prayers of the community. If they recognize their spirit of disunity and are repentant, they may be put under the discipline of the community. Initially this might take the form of the person standing during meetings and refraining from participating, or they might temporarily cease to attend meetings. Such a person would not be "avoided" or shunned as is the practice of some churches, but they would be "offered the hand of unity" and encouragement. If the issue of disunity persists, the member might be excluded from all Gemeindestunde and Brotherhood Meetings including community meals. This person would not be "debarred from the house and home or from the premises."<sup>47</sup> Discipline is intended to help the person come back into unity with the community. The practice of discipline is taken seriously and is not a regular occurrence.

If a member is unable to return to a sense of unity with the community, then they might be completely excluded from the community for a time. Exclusion is the most severe form of discipline.

That [excluded] person cannot share in the fellowship of the table, of prayer, or in . . . meetings; he cannot live in marriage with his partner; he cannot take part in communal work or have access to our grounds or any of our houses, though the proclamation of the gospel is not denied him.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 11.

Again, such action is rare on the hof, with perhaps several years passing between occurrences of severe discipline. If the member is unable to reconcile their problem with the community, they may resign voluntarily from the Bruderhof or they may be expelled permanently.<sup>49</sup>

### Daily Life

Though the schedule may vary, a normal day on a bruderhof begins in the individual family "homes" or quarters shared in multifamily dwelling facilities. One rises to the sounds of mothers preparing breakfast from shared kitchen facilities within the buildings. Bruderhof men wear the same basic dress of their Hutterian brothers. Likewise, Bruderhof women wear the dress of the Hutterites, which includes the recognizable "Kopftöchen" or polka-dot scarves. Men wear beards and the women wear their hair in a modest, simple style. Variations on dress are not uncommon and dress rules generally are not viewed as strictly as in the Hutterian colonies.

The buildings vary from re-modeled multistory traditional houses to more recently designed and practically constructed Bruderhof dwellings. Each building has a name which matches a previous or existing hof of the Bruderhof. For example, at the Darvell hof in England the author stayed in the New Meadow Run house, named after the hof in Farmington, Pennsylvania. This serves a valid purpose of maintaining a sense of unity within the larger community. More than one family usually shares common toilet and bath facilities, but the privacy of individual bedrooms and family rooms is provided. The furnishings are simple, though colorful and often include paintings or photographs of natural settings or

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<sup>49</sup>The difficult years surrounding the dissolution of the Paraguayan and European hofs (1961) resulted in unfortunate acts of discipline and exclusion by the Bruderhof community. Those who were disenfranchised have in recent years established a support group which also serves as a critical voice against the Bruderhof concerning their actions. This author has observed unsuccessful attempts at dialogue on the part of both the Bruderhof and the disenfranchised support group. The support group, known as K.I.T., circulates a newsletter which includes letters and articles regarding these unreconciled relationships: KIT Newsletter, an activity of the K.I.T. Information Service, a project of the Tides Foundation, P O Box 460141, San Francisco, CA 94146-0141.

family gatherings. A colorful hand-stitched table cloth and a vase of fresh or dried flowers seem to be the normal decor. One is never far from a window with a bird-feeder perched on its pane and an occasional billed visitor.

A pre-breakfast family prayer or song is typical but not adhered to legalistically. After breakfast the men are off to work around 8:00 A.M. and the kids make their way to school. The women and girls tidy up the house and then proceed to their places of work or school. Infants under six months of age are cared for by their mothers at home, after which they are sent to the "Baby House" where mothers visit regularly throughout the day to attend to feedings and spend time with the infants.<sup>50</sup> After early morning outdoor games, the classrooms and workrooms become a steady hive of activity until mid-morning when most everyone takes a tea or coffee break. For the men this usually provides an opportunity for fellowship and a well-earned refreshment. Lunch is taken at around midday and is an example of teamwork at its best, with several hundred people being served a tasty hot meal simultaneously. The meal begins with a spontaneous moment of silence, a song or hymn, and a prayer of thanks. During the meal, notices may be shared and a report on a recent trip or an update on current world events may be shared. Some form of entertainment, usually in the form of music or the reading of a story may round out the time. The cleanup after lunch is another example of timing and precision as it is accomplished before everyone returns to work. For the men, an afternoon break is common and the workday ends around 6:00 P.M. This allows some family time before the usual 7:00 P.M. evening meal. Meetings may be held after dinner or the families will spend time in recreation or relaxation until it is time for bed. Nothing is set in a rigid schedule and variations are common. When a schedule change occurs, word is circulated throughout the community by word of mouth.

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<sup>50</sup>Marjorie Hindley, interview by author, 27 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

During weekends and holidays the routine changes and includes more meals taken in homes and more time for family recreation and activities. Saturdays usually include a half-day workday for the men in their normal jobs, while the women take care of the weekly household cleaning chores. Opportunities for weekend recreation abound, and though there is no television, music is played on CDs or cassettes, outdoor and indoor games are always available, and most hofs have a pool or lake for swimming, fishing, or ice-skating, weather permitting. One of the most common weekend activities is a family walk through the surrounding countryside.

### Mission

A discussion of the Bruderhof today would be incomplete without the mention of the mission activity of the community. The concept of mission was basic to the founding of the Bruderhof. The biblical mandate or "commission" for sharing the life and call of Christ with others was often cited from Matt. 16:15--"Go ye out into all the world" or as Eberhard Arnold paraphrased, "Go out, get to work! Call the people and gather them in! Now is the hour! [Jetzt ist die Stunde!]." <sup>51</sup> Unlike the Hutterians, the Bruderhof feel compelled to come face to face with the outside world and present the gospel of Jesus Christ. Much in the same way as the early Hutterites of the Golden Years, the Bruderhof are on mission for God.

The mission of the community might be broken into two types of activity: taking a stand for peace and justice, and sharing the gospel through word and example. The Plough quarterly is undoubtedly the best resource for gleaning materials concerning the mission activity of the Bruderhof today. Contact with numerous groups and individuals, both seekers and friends, is frequently reported in The Plough. Regarding peace and judgment, articles are published concerning the treatment of prisoners, civil rights issues, ministries to the poor and

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<sup>51</sup>Eberhard Arnold, God's Revolution, 99. Eberhard Arnold, Die Revolution Gottes: Aus dem Lebenszeugnis der hutterischen Gemeinschaften, mit einer Einführung von Franz Alt (Stuttgart: Radius-Verlag, 1984), 52.

needy, social issues such as abortion or divorce and marriage, world peace, nuclear arms, crime, capital punishment, the holocaust, AIDS, modern wars, world hunger, euthanasia, or political oppression. Many articles report the involvement of Bruderhof members as they meet with groups at home or abroad for the purpose of increasing the awareness of the world concerning injustice.

For example, in December 1992, brother Charlie Huleatt of the New Meadow Run Bruderhof, went with an interfaith delegation to Croatia to learn first-hand about the treatment of war refugees from Bosnia. His trip report exposed the injustices of the war and the treatment of war victims in Bosnia. A plea for justice was made and an appropriate channel through which support could be offered was publicized.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, Bruderhof members occasionally participate in peaceful protests concerning injustice in the world. A group of children from the two hofs in Pennsylvania participated in a peace protest against the Persian Gulf War held in Washington DC on 28 December 1990. One of the older brothers reflected a realistic view concerning the potential of such a protest, "it is naive for them to think they can have an impact but 'let their hearts speak.'"<sup>53</sup> A more recent example involved the "Kadima" (Hebrew for "forward"), a group of eighteen to thirty-year-old singles from the Darvell Bruderhof, who attended a lobby of Parliament in February 1995. The lobby was organized by several church and pacifist groups and focused on "Stopping Nuclear Proliferation: Britain's Role." The group attended a pre-lobby service at Westminster Cathedral, where their choir performed, and then they walked to the House of Commons and attended the talks on nuclear proliferation. The group

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<sup>52</sup>Bruderhof Communities, "A Visit to Croatia," The Plough 34 (February/March 1993): 2-3.

<sup>53</sup>"Hutterian Brethren Children Peace Protesters," WTAE 4 News Program, Pittsburgh, PA, 28 December 1990.

participated in the lobby to make a statement concerning anti-nuclear proliferation, but the group also attended for the purpose of meeting others who share their stance of pacifism.<sup>54</sup>

The Plough also serves as a consistent voice of the gospel of Christ and the view of community as the way of life of the Sermon on the Mount. Articles are regularly published on questions of faith and practice such as: life in community, the meaning of mission, speaking in tongues, the occult, church discipline, the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, church and state, Christian mercy, and the meaning of advent. All contact with outsiders is viewed as an opportunity for mission, that is, the chance to share by word or example the way of Jesus Christ. The message is clear and available for all who will receive it. This zeal for going outside the community and speaking forth the gospel as understood and practiced by the Bruderhof, seems to be an increasingly vital aspect of the life of the community today.

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<sup>54</sup>Anke Fischer, interview by author, 27 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.



## CHAPTER 6

### IDENTITY CRISIS: TWO PEOPLES OR ONE?

Thus far this study has provided a historical overview of the original Hutterites, followed by an examination of the Bruderhof in terms of the vision of its founder, its beginnings, its development, and the community today. The purpose of this approach was to clarify the historical context of the Bruderhof through a synthesis of the primary writings of the community itself. Now the critical question of the identity of the Bruderhof community and its relationship to the Hutterites will be addressed. Just where does this community of self-proclaimed, twentieth-century Bruderhof Hutterians fit into the scheme of the original Hutterites of the West?<sup>1</sup>

The question of "two peoples or one?" is valid not only for outside observers but for the two movements themselves. From the Bruderhof's point of view, they were becoming Hutterian before they ever had contact with the Hutterites of North America. In their minds, the union with the Hutterites in 1930 and the ordination of Eberhard Arnold in the Service of the Word<sup>2</sup> affirmed and confirmed them as Hutterians. The people of the Bruderhof

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<sup>1</sup>The term "West" refers to the descendants of the original sixteenth-century Hutterites now residing primarily in the mid-western states of the United States and Canada versus the twentieth-century Bruderhof group.

<sup>2</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., Brothers Unite, 185.

recognize that their relationship with the Hutterites of the West has been difficult. They acknowledge their share of guilt and claim forgiveness for the mistakes of the 1950s and 1960s. During the last years, they attempted to put behind them that part of their past and view themselves as more closely tied to the Brethren of the West than ever before. Until recently, they cited their excellent relationship with the Schmiedeleut family of Hutterians and pointed to many examples of cooperation and unity. For the Bruderhof, their reinstatement into the fellowship of Hutterians in 1974<sup>3</sup> settled, once and for all, the issue of their identity. In fact, however, they generally have not been accepted within the fellowship of Hutterians. The controversy concerning this relationship is alive today and still preoccupies some members from both communities.

To analyze this crisis of identity, an examination of both the commonalities and contrasts between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites will precede a discussion of the crisis itself.

### Commonalities

The Bruderhof and Hutterian Brethren have much in common. From the formative years of the Rhön Bruderhof, Eberhard Arnold sought to emulate the community of the original, sixteenth-century Hutterites of Moravia. Perhaps this is most evident by the new group's choice of "Bruderhof" as its name, after the practice of earlier Hutterians. The Bruderhof adopted the Anabaptist theology of Riedemann's Rechenschaft and based their own Foundation and Orders of their faith upon that of the early Anabaptists. The theology of the Bruderhof today remains the same as that of the Hutterites, that is, Anabaptist with emphasis on community of goods and pacifism.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., xiii.

The common faith of the two groups is not merely theoretical. The Bruderhof intentionally established a pattern or form of living based on that of the Hutterites of the West. As early as August 1928, they were committed "to change and rearrange everything to the way it should be on a Hutterian Bruderhof."<sup>4</sup> Today a bruderhof generally looks and operates like a Hutterian colony. They utilize the same offices of spiritual service and similar systems of work management. Bruderhof worship services include prayers, readings, and sermons taken from those of the Hutterites. Bruderhof men and women wear the same basic dress of the Hutterites.

The two groups share a mutual heritage. As twentieth-century Anabaptists, Bruderhof members claim an affinity to the persecutions experienced by the Hutterites. Their own experiences in Nazi Germany authenticate this claim of a persecuted people for the sake of their commitment to Christ. They also share in the nature of their commitment. Both groups experienced years of wavering commitment, physical hardship, erosion of the practice of community of goods due to prosperity and/or materialism, and misguided leadership. Yet both have recommitted themselves to the faith, practice, and heritage of their predecessors. Compared to other Christian denominations, the Bruderhof and the Hutterites have much to celebrate in the way of commonalities.

### Contrasts

The reality is there is a longer list of contrasts between the two groups concerning outward aspects of culture, philosophy of leadership, practice of community of goods, and vision of purpose or ministry. Some contrasting aspects are demographic in nature, whereas some are related to methodology and still others are more basic to the philosophy and theology of the two groups.

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<sup>4</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Foundation and Orders, Section I, 59.

### Culture

Some argue that a major difference between the two groups concerns culture. One represents sixteenth-century, agrarian, German, peasant stock, while the other is from twentieth-century, urban, German-Austrian, intellectual, bourgeois circles.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps neither group should be categorized according to these generalities. It is true many of the early Hutterites were poor peasants, separated from the benefits of the elite classes of royalty, education, or religion. They were not, however, simply a band of uneducated, displaced refugee farmers. Many of the early Hutterites were well-educated and familiar with the life of court and religious leadership. During the Golden Years, Hutterians established themselves as professionals in various fields including medicine, education and crafts. Today they are capable agriculturalists managing high technology farms and dealing with the complexities of assets management, commodities marketing, land development, and legal matters on a daily basis.

In the same regard, to generalize the Bruderhof as a school of urban Austrian intellectuals is equally unfair. Though Eberhard came from educational and religious circles, he never joined the ranks of academia. The fruits of Plough Publishing House have been devotional and practical in nature rather than academic or intellectual. Unless one visits the Michaelshof community, the culture of the Bruderhof one encounters is hardly German or

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<sup>5</sup>This contrast has been hinted at by several sociologists. Similar conclusions were postulated during a post-presentation dialogue between the author and sociologist Benjamin Zablocki at the Third Triennial Conference of International Communal Studies Association, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, 25-28 July 1991. Zablocki has done extensive research on communal societies, including the Bruderhof and Hutterians, in his book, The Joyful Community: An Account of the Bruderhof, A Communal Movement Now in Its Third Generation, (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1971).

Austrian but more international in flavor.<sup>6</sup> The people of the Bruderhof represent a diverse society of modern-day Hutterites rather than an elitist culture of European intelligentsia.

There is, however, a clear contrast of culture at another point. The Hutterian Brethren, almost totally comprise "insiders" or those born and raised in the colony, while the Bruderhof are significantly "outsiders" who left society in general to join the community.<sup>7</sup> This explains both the international and diverse nature of the Bruderhof. Some members came from careers in law, business, education, manufacturing, publishing, medicine, and farming. Some came as the disinherited of society, from difficult families, unemployment, poverty or neglect. Several admittedly came searching for a radical way of life. Many came from previous experiments in community which did not fulfill their expectations. This heterogeneity of culture is in definite contrast to that of the Hutterians of the West, where growth has been biologically and culturally homogeneous.

### Church Unity

Despite the diversity of backgrounds of Bruderhof members, one senses a powerful spirit of unity. Members credit the unifying spirit of God for their sense of togetherness and oneness. This unity is authenticated by the practice of the original Hutterians of choosing one elder for all of the communities, an overseer of the whole. Unity is also manifested in the practice of community of goods throughout the hofs. One hof has no claim to property or goods over another. Though the business enterprises may be incorporated as individual business for legal purposes, it is clear that all goods and property throughout the entire Bruderhof community are owned by no individual or hof but shared by one and all. In

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<sup>6</sup>At a gathering at Woodcrest, the author visited with members from England, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, and various regions of the United States.

<sup>7</sup>Though the number of second generation Bruderhof members increases daily due to the typically large families and excellent retention of young adults, a large percentage of newcomers continues to join their

contrast the modern Hutterites have at least three elders, one for each of the traditional families or leut, and each of their colonies is a separate corporation with independent ownership and control of their property and goods.

The Bruderhof preoccupation for unity is facilitated through a unique practice of daily networking between Bruderhof communities. Every day the leaders of the various bruderhofs converse by telephonic networking to discuss the life and work of each community. Most evenings the six bruderhofs in the States will be listening by phone during the evening meal, when letters, faxes, phone messages, important business matters, world news, and spiritual devotions or messages are read aloud for the general membership. Across the ocean, the two European bruderhofs stay in close touch with each other. Transcripts of the American and European meetings are sent to each other and included in subsequent meetings. On special occasions such as holidays or weddings, attention is given to linking all eight bruderhofs at one time in order to share in the event. It is quite a moment when, at the beginning of a special service, each community calls in over the loud speaker, "Greetings from Darvell!" "Hello from New Meadow Run!" "Welcome from Woodcrest!" and so on.<sup>8</sup>

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ranks. These are two reasons for the significant growth of the Bruderhof in recent years. The eight existing bruderhofs now include about 2,200 members.

<sup>8</sup>In recent years, Schmiedeleut colonies from the West participate in the teleconference calls during special occasions. For example, at the New Year's service of 1 January 1991, at Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York, the author noted that, in addition to the stateside Bruderhof communities, the Hutterian Schmiedeleut colony of Crystal Spring participated.

The first order of service included annual reports from the Schmiedeluet Elder, "Jake Vetter" (Jacob Kleinsasser) and Bruderhof Elder "Christoph Vetter" (Johann Christoph Arnold). Jake Vetter reported that the year 1990 at Crystal Spring witnessed 2 weddings, 45 deaths (almost doubling the previous year), and considerable troubles with the Brethren in the west. Christoph reported for all eight bruderhofs, 80 novices (71 yet to be baptized), 70 babies (35 male and 35 female!), 1 deceased baby, 41 baptized, 5 conferences, 15 weddings (two between members of the east and west), and 5 additional deaths. Christoph reminded everyone that two brothers, Dan and Bill, were presently in Saudi Arabia on a special mission of the Bruderhof communities to minister to the needs of the soldiers there in connection with the Persian Gulf Crisis. He added that 1990 was the first year in history for two bruderhofs, Catskill and "little" Michaelshof, to be founded. Michaelshof saw 2,175 visitors with 465 overnights. Publishing activities were mentioned, such as a new translation of Riedemann's Confession in progress, translation work on Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder, four issues of The Plough, three issues of Pflug (the German edition, like The Plough), and so on. Other reports included word from two families sent to attend a funeral in the West, with assurances of good greetings and no apparent bitterness between the east and the west.

Other practices which encourage unity and prevent power and responsibility from residing with only a few, include the dispersing of adult families throughout the hofs. This may seem harsh but in fact works quite well in a system where daily contact of some kind is likely and travel between hofs is common. Accordingly, it is also common for the Servants and Stewards not to remain in one hof for too long. In contrast the Hutterites tend to accumulate members of only a few families within a colony, this due partly to the demographic nature of an agricultural colony versus an industrial hof.<sup>9</sup> Much time and energy within a Bruderhof is taken in order to insure a sense of unity within the community.

#### Numerical

Close networking is possible for the Bruderhof communities due to another point of contrast between them and the West. Simply stated, it involves sheer numbers or the lack thereof. The difference in numbers of Bruderhof members versus Hutterian colonies and their people is significant. The most recent figures indicate approximately 355 Hutterian colonies exist in the West with about 33,300 members compared to eight bruderhofs of about 2,200 members.<sup>10</sup> Until now the use of networking technology to enhance communication and maintain unity has worked well for the Bruderhof. As numbers increase and new communities are established, this practice will undoubtedly require modification. Though the

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This kind of teleconference communication between members in general exemplifies the attempt of the Bruderhof communities to use technology to increase unity among the Brethren.

<sup>9</sup>Dorothy Waldner, interview by the author, 26 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. Dick Domer, interview by the author, 27 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. Due to the facts that a farming colony can only optimally support about 125-150 residents and Hutterite families are generally large, there is in fact a concentration of power and responsibility in the hands of a few.

<sup>10</sup>Lawrence C. Anderson, "Gelassenheit and the Hutterian Brethren," and "Hutterite Directory, 1991." The figures on the Bruderhof were obtained during an interview by the author with Brother Dick Domer, 23 February 1995, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

Hutterites communicate with each other through correspondence, fax, and phone, they are unaccustomed to the daily networking and business conferences of the Bruderhof.

### Industry

One of the most obvious contrasts is in the area of industry. The Hutterites are known for their agricultural expertise in developing some of the most efficient farms of North America. They are almost exclusively involved in producing agricultural products. What limited manufacturing or craft industry they participate in serves primarily to provide products for the colony insuring self-sufficiency. Housing, furniture, and clothing are generally made in the colony for the colony. Generally few non-agricultural items are produced for the outside market to generate income.<sup>11</sup> The Bruderhof communities, to the contrary, have three major enterprises: Community Playthings (playground equipment and toys), Rifton Company (equipment for the handicapped), and Plough Publishing House.<sup>12</sup> The hofs raise a few crops and usually maintain a barn with farm animals more as an educational tool for the children than for commercial purposes. They are, however, basically industrial producers rather than agriculturalists. The Bruderhof enterprises are international in nature with clientele spanning the globe, thus a jet airplane is owned to facilitate necessary

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<sup>11</sup>This seems to be changing as more colony members see the success of the Bruderhof in marketing manufactured products and literature. According to several members of Woodcrest, some colonies in the west are now experimenting in diversifying their production in a similar manner.

<sup>12</sup>An analogy concerning industry might also be applied to the contrast of unity. In contrast to the colonies of the West, each Bruderhof contributes to the production of one or more of these three enterprises. No matter which Bruderhof, everyone knows what the new Community Playthings "loft" product is and that it is being well-received in the marketplace. Almost everyone has assembled a "plaything" at one time or another. In contrast one colony may be heavily into the raising of pigs whereas another cultivates wheat primarily. Both are agricultural in nature but they are infinitely different in nature. In one case unity is built through the sharing of similar work for a common product. In another case the basis for unity is limited.

For another example, most hofs have some kind of archives office which works closely with the publishing house. The author was invited to attend a weekly tea break of the Darvell archives. This weekly event often involves a guest sharing in some aspect of their work, whereupon a transcript of the talk might be produced and sent to the other archives offices of the community for their information and benefit.



sales and marketing trips. This is in contrast to the scope of the world of the agriculturalists, sophisticated though they may be.

### Vocation

Another contrast related to that of industry concerns how each group provides certain vocational or professional services, such as education or medical care. For the most part, the Hutterian colonies rely on outsiders for these kinds of services. Colony members use doctors or dentists from nearby towns and employ non-Hutterian teachers for state required schooling of their children. In contrast, the Bruderhof send their members who seem to have gifts, skills, and a commitment to a given field to attend colleges or universities and obtain the requisite education and credentials. The decision to send members to college is made by the Brotherhood after consultation with students and parents.<sup>13</sup> It is based on the anticipated need of the community and the level of commitment of the student. As a result, many Bruderhof teachers of kindergarten through eighth grade have obtained formal training to satisfy state certification requirements.<sup>14</sup> In addition, most bruderhofs now have some members who serve as dentists, nurses, physician's assistants, or doctors. The medical center at Woodcrest is impressive, with a full staff and modern equipment to provide primary

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<sup>13</sup>Dick Domer, interview by author, confirmed by letter, 27 August 1991, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

<sup>14</sup>It is interesting that several Bruderhof members attend the university for a couple of years to obtain the minimum required education for certain professions or skills. For example, one young man serves as surveyor, architect, and/or community planner as needed. He attended a local college for two years but did not pursue the degree in his field. When asked why he did not go ahead and complete the degree, he replied, "The degree was not necessary for the work of the Bruderhof." Credentials are pursued only when required by law as in the case of teachers and/or some medical personnel. This information came through interviews of several anonymous Bruderhof members, 1-2 June 1991, notes, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

medical care for the community.<sup>15</sup> This is in obvious contrast to that of the Hutterians of the West.<sup>16</sup>

### Education

Attitudes and methods of education offer another contrast. Much like the Amish, the Hutterians view English school as something necessary in order to be able to function in an English-speaking society. Concerning Hutterian children, some imply that

[t]he farther the child goes in English school, the less he is said to learn. From the colony's point of view this is correct, for once a child has mastered the basic skills, much of the rest of the subject matter learned has little relevance to his way of life. German school teaches the Hutterite way; the English school teaches worldly knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Children from the colonies usually complete only the years required by law. Seldom would a Hutterian child advance past the elementary or middle school years in English school.

In contrast, after the eighth grade, Bruderhof young people attend local state high schools until graduation. Some of the high school graduates will continue undergraduate studies, while most settle into work responsibilities of the community. The community realizes there are "risks" in sending young people out into the culture of the world, especially at this volatile age of adolescence.<sup>18</sup> One reason for the community's willingness to "risk" in

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<sup>15</sup>Brother Milton Zimmerman, interview by author, 26 July 1991, notes, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Milton was a physician prior to joining the Bruderhof in the late 1950s. He still serves as doctor for the New Meadow Run and Spring Valley Bruderhof in Farmington, Pennsylvania.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Zimmerman and Brother Martin Johnson pointed out that some of the colonies of the west are moving in the direction of training their own members to provide such professional services.

<sup>17</sup>Hostetler, *Hutterite Society*, 219.

this area is to allow the young people to complete the necessary learning to be able to represent the Bruderhof in business and community relations.<sup>19</sup> The industry of the Bruderhof, by nature, has regular contact with the outside world. How could someone with only an elementary education handle the tasks of marketing Community Playthings products or negotiating a purchase contract? Bruderhof industry is "high tech" and "cutting edge" in many respects. Educated members are needed to carry on the work of the community.

### Voluntarism

There is another important reason for sending the youth to public high school. It prepares them for life outside of the community if they so choose.<sup>20</sup> This attitude of encouraging young adults to choose on their own and of preparing them in the event that they decide against the way of community is in direct contrast to that of the Hutterians of the West. Rather than expose their youth to society and encourage a free decision, the colonies protect them from the ways of the world and expect a commitment to the community. It is understood that "[t]he young person eventually rejects the world and chooses the colony way of life." Hutterian young people may experience some "flirtation with the world" but this is seen as simply an "investigation of that which will be rejected." Though "[a] young man may temporarily leave the colony . . . [he knows that] he will return to marry and raise his family."<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the Bruderhof practice of encouraging a freer individual choice for

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<sup>18</sup>Brother Dick Domer, interviewed by author, 1 June 1991, notes, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

<sup>19</sup>Brother Eric Phillips, interviewed by author, 31 December 1990, notes, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 223

community,<sup>22</sup> rather than the more protective method of the West, is more in line with the basic Anabaptist doctrine of voluntarism practiced by the early church and the sixteenth-century Hutterians. Bruderhof communities realize that until the person makes his or her own decision, a life of communal commitment will be especially difficult.

### Publishing

The practice by the Bruderhof of publishing their story and the message of Christ is another point of contrast mentioned already. Historically, the Hutterians placed great importance on maintaining historical and theological records. They have, through the generations, copied the great history books and books of martyrs along with the confessions and sermons of their predecessors. With few exceptions, however, their transcripts are in the distinct German dialect of their unique heritage and have not been presented to outsiders. In contrast, the Bruderhof regularly published not only for themselves but in order to provide a witness to the world of the way of Christ and community.

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<sup>22</sup>Brother Hugo Brinkman, interviewed by author, 4 December 1990, notes, Michaelshof, Birnbach, Germany. Hugo shared that many times the Bruderhof will agree to send and finance a young person's time away from the community if they are involved in activities (educational or vocational) which may benefit the hof in the future. In cases where the young person has definitely decided against the life of community, some initial assistance is provided and families remain in contact and are supportive of that youth in his or her endeavors. The author has visited with several adults who chose not to remain in community but maintain good relations and visit the Bruderhof regularly. Of course, families are disappointed that a child or sibling does not choose the way of the Bruderhof.

### Celebration and Recreation

Another contrast which has caused concern on the part of the Hutterians pertains to the use by the Bruderhof communities of fire, candles, music, and drama in celebration and recreation.<sup>23</sup> It seems this form of expression reflects the spirit of the Jugendbewegung. In the days of the Wandervögel, celebrations around the bonfire were a regular component of the symbolic expression of freedom and unity with nature. Music and drama were also a part of the Youth Movement experience.

Today, candles are often lit in the homes of Bruderhof members during meals or "tea time." Holiday decorations in the dining halls often include candle arrangements. For example, New Year services traditionally are concluded with a beautiful time of meditation and the symbolic lighting of candles on a Christmas tree concerning those on the minds and hearts of Bruderhof members.

During a typical evening mealtime, the more traditional Hutterian songs, sung a cappella and in parts, are complemented with presentations of special music uncommon to the practice of the colonies. One or more ensembles or choirs will perform special arrangements of Christian or secular music for the Brethren. These performances cover a range from the classics to current popular arrangements. Most have a Christian theme or message with a few of more general content. Bruderhof members are encouraged to learn an instrument, so pianists, cellists, or other instrumentalists are seldom scarce. Skits or dramatic interpretations of certain community themes are a regular event. During the Christmas season the story of Kriss Kringle was regularly read during mealtimes for the entertainment of the community as well as for its message.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>At first, the author used the term "worship" instead of celebration, but was corrected by the Bruderhof. According to Dick Domer, in an interview by the author, confirmed by letter on 27 August 1991, "Instruments are not used on the Bruderhof in the worship services but at mealtimes or in separate gatherings."

<sup>24</sup>Observed by the author during a four-day stay at Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York, 30 December 1990 through 2 January 1991.

This Bruderhof style of celebration and recreation stands in contrast to the ritual of the Hutterites. For the Brethren of the West, the purpose of music is "to inculcate Hutterite values of self-surrender, communal living, and obedience in times of trial, and to form a psychic unity with the forefathers."<sup>25</sup> The use of instruments is forbidden. The Hutterites follow the teaching of Riedemann, who said that

to sing spiritual songs is good and pleasing to God if we sing in the right way, that is, attentively, in the fear of God and as inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

For it is for this reason that they are called spiritual songs: namely, that they are inspired and made and composed by the urge of the Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21), and also attract and move men to blessedness. . . .

Where this is not the case, and one singeth only for carnal joy or for the sweet sound or for some such reason, one misuseth them, changing them into what is carnal and worldly. . . . Likewise also, he who enjoyeth listening for the music's sake . . . so doeth greatly against God; for he useth his word, which was given for his salvation and as an urge to blessedness, as leading to the lust of the flesh and to sin (Ps. 50:14-23).<sup>26</sup>

It would seem that according to the Hutterites the Bruderhof do "misuseth" music. On the other hand, Bruderhof members would argue that their performances of pieces such as Handel's Messiah do "move men to blessedness" for the glory of God. It is interesting that of all the contrasts between the two groups, large and small, this one of music appears most sensitive. Some might blame the Bruderhof's apparent unwillingness to compromise on this point to the secular backgrounds or "worldliness" of many of their members. A more valid explanation may be found in the vision of Eberhard Arnold himself. Eberhard intended that the spirit of the German Youth Movement be included in the community life of the Bruderhof. Herein lies an important contrast between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites.

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<sup>25</sup>Hostetler, *Hutterite Society*, 170.

### Mission

Perhaps the most evident contrast between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites concerns their views on mission. The Hutterites rightfully claim their heritage of missionary activity of the Golden Years. Hutterian missionary ventures are for the most part, however, a thing of the past. Today's Hutterites do not send out missionaries nor do they make a concerted effort to serve the larger community around them. Some might consider their willingness to educate a visitor for the sake of conversion to the Hutterian way of life a form of "mission" activity; this practice however, is seldom applied and is hardly related to the "sending out" activity inherent in the term "missionary."<sup>27</sup> In fact the Hutterites are isolationists in their approach to the outside world. With the possible exception of a few Schmiedeleut colonies, they discourage contact between themselves and outsiders.<sup>28</sup> Their way of life may serve as a testimony of the way of Jesus Christ, and they certainly attempt to get along with their local community of outsiders. These efforts, though, are a mere shadow of the missionary zeal of their ancestors.

In contrast, Bruderhof communities have from their beginnings included the goal of mission in their vision. Bruderhof members regularly participate in community service groups and establish contact with "outsiders." The missionary purpose of their literary activities has already been discussed. In addition, they protest certain activities they deem

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<sup>26</sup>Peter Riedeman, Account of Our Religion, 123.

<sup>27</sup>Hostetler, Hutterite Society, 296.

<sup>28</sup>In recent years several Schmiedeleut colonies have been involved in certain efforts to reach out to the world with the message of Christ and the way of community. In 1989, the Schmiedeleut partnered with the Bruderhof in the founding of Michaelshof in Birnbach, Germany. They sent human and financial resources in this effort. Much of Michaelshof's early work involved interaction with "outsiders," interested in community life. It appears that most of these missionary efforts of the Schmiedeleut included the cooperation of the Bruderhof.

In March 1992, the Schmiedeleut and the Bruderhof partnered together in their efforts to lead a new group of Nigerian Christians in their attempt to become a Bruderhof.

unchristian in an effort to provide a witness of what they see as the way of Christ. The Bruderhof has developed a network of contacts with other groups and individuals for the sake of cooperation and exchange. In The Plough one finds articles reporting conferences and shared experiences with those such as the Kibbutzim, friends from Nigeria, India, Sweden, Mexico, and other countries, inmates from various prisons, and Christian workers and pilgrims from around the world. At a conference of the International Communal Studies Association in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, 25-28 July 1991, several Bruderhof members participated in the paper presentations and dialogues. On the last day of the conference, a choir of approximately one hundred Bruderhof young adults attended a presentation of particular interest and then participated in that evening's gathering, offering examples of communal music. This is indicative of the commitment to mission of the Bruderhof communities. In this sense the Bruderhof is more than "a city on a hill" (Matt. 5:14). It is a community committed to "go into the world, and preach the Gospel" (Mk. 16:15).

This analysis of commonalities and contrasts is by no means conclusive. Its purpose is to reflect the observations and conclusions of the author based on personal experience and research. Views and interpretations on such issues vary, depending upon their source. This comparison of traits seeks to point out that which brings the two groups together as well as that which keeps them distinct. The commonalities are more general, philosophical, and fewer in nature, whereas the contrasts are more specific, practical, and numerous.

### Current Crisis

Throughout the years there existed undercurrents of mistrust and disunity highlighted by times of crisis. In December 1990, these undercurrents resurfaced and resulted in a new episode of the identity crisis. A controversial letter was sent from the elders of the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut families of the Hutterites to the "Society of Brothers who



call themselves Hutterian Brethren."<sup>29</sup> It was a formal statement excluding the Bruderhof from fellowship with the Hutterites and claiming, in fact, the restoration of 1974 was never meant to be such but merely provided that the Bruderhof be accepted on a "probationary basis." A list of ten objections (referred to as "Untugend" or iniquities) were listed, some of which were related in the previous section of this paper. This letter was presented in its entirety at a conference held at the Spring Valley hof and comments in defense of the Bruderhof were offered by the Elder of the Schmiedeleut Hutterites, Jacob Kleinsasser.<sup>30</sup> By examining these points a better understanding of the persistent nature of that which separates the two groups should result. Some of Kleinsasser's comments are included in the analysis.

### Ten Objections

I. *Regarding the Millennium--the Hutterites rejected what they saw as the "false doctrine" of Blumhardt concerning the 1,000 year Kingdom of God on earth or the "third coming of Christ. They contended that this was not a part of the Apostles Creed, agreed to during baptism, nor is it found in the teachings of the scriptures.*

This challenge on the question of the millennium seems overstated. It is unclear from the letter which specific "Blumhardt teaching" cannot be accepted. That Blumhardt taught and wrote much about the end times and eschatology is undeniable. Perhaps the letter's reference to a "third" coming refers to Blumhardt's discussions on the "third strand" or

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<sup>29</sup> "Society of Brothers" being the name used by the Bruderhof during their pilgrimage years.

<sup>30</sup> The conference was held in April 1991 and was attended by members of the Bruderhof, Schmiedeleut and a few from the Dariusleut colonies. Plough Publishing House, Rifton, New York, published a 53-page account of the conference. For this section the author used a copy of the original letter provided by the Woodcrest archives: The Hutterian Brethren Church to the Society of Brothers, 11 December 1990, from the Darius and Lehrerleut Conference, Bruderhof archives, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York. The letter contains several errors of spelling and punctuation which are indicative of the contrasting language and culture of the two groups. Where quoted, corrections have been made to facilitate reading and understanding. See the appendix 3 for the complete transcript of the letter.

"third epoch of revelation" [Offenbarungsepoche],<sup>31</sup> a self-admitted bold proposal which some connected with a Blumhardtian version of universalism.<sup>32</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that talk of a millennium, third coming, third revelation, or eschatology in general is infrequent in today's bruderhofs.<sup>33</sup>

There is, as previously mentioned, a preoccupation with the biblical concept modeled by Blumhardt that "The Savior is Coming,"<sup>34</sup> and that the purpose of the church is to be active in ministering that message and necessary care to those outside of the church until Christ returns. Whether or not the Darius and Lehrerleut leaders object to the practice of what Barth coined as "Action in Waiting"<sup>35</sup> is unclear. If so, the point is one of objection to mission, which is central to the existence of the Bruderhof and to that of the original Hutterites. Otherwise, it may be that some have convinced the authors of the letter that this millennialism of Blumhardt is a factor for the Bruderhof. It would not be the first time that a group or individual was deemed guilty by association with another.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>William George Bodamer, Jr., "The Life and Work of Johann Christoph Blumhardt," 85.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>33</sup>This same issue was discussed in great detail during Eberhard's visit to America in 1930. It seems that some of the Hutterian Brothers, accustomed to the rule of "no private" correspondence in the community, obtained and read much of Eberhard's diary during one of his visits. This resulted in a discussion about the millennium, among other things. Eberhard says he emphasized "the difference between our spiritual understanding and the literal understanding of those sects which think they can calculate the exact date of the millennium." Brothers Unite, 127.

<sup>34</sup>R. Lejeune, Christoph Blumhardt and His Message, 220-27.

<sup>35</sup>Karl Barth, Action in Waiting.

<sup>36</sup>At the Third Triennial Conference of International Communal Studies Association, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, 25-28 July 1991, the author's article, "Eberhard Arnold and His Vision," (taken from Chapter 2 of this study) was challenged by sociologist Benjamin Zablocki, who felt that Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism must be included as key elements of Eberhard's vision. Zablocki implied Eberhard lacked a systematic theology and his "syncretistic" approach to theology could be blamed for many of the problems of the Bruderhof throughout their history. True, Eberhard was fascinated with the plight and philosophy of the Manichees, as have been many philosophers and theologians throughout the ages (e.g. Augustine). His vision, however, did not include their influence beyond that which is common to Christianity in general. The author still maintains, as did Arnold himself, that the doctrine of the Bruderhof is basically Anabaptist.

Bruderhof member and researcher Dick Domer points out, in defense of the Darius and Lehrerleut brothers, that they have since coming to North America, been proselytized by various "Christian" groups and sects with radical views on issues such as eschatology.<sup>37</sup> In his commentary on the letter, Schmiedeleut Elder Kleinsasser discounted the claim that the Bruderhof believe in a millennium.

Brothers, it doesn't make sense. I don't know if many of you here even know what the word Millennium means. Neither do the Schmiedeleut, or even the ones who are writing. They have found something which they have gathered to their own deception and misconception against the brothers.<sup>38</sup>

Regardless of the source of this point of contention, it seems extreme if not unfounded.

II. *The Rearing of Children--the Hutterites challenged the Bruderhof practice of sending young people to outside schools. They rejected the idea as non-biblical and not Hutterian, They contended that it merely facilitates the Bruderhof's need for doctors, teachers, nurses, and people with technical knowledge required for business. "We fear that sending our children, and especially young people who have reached the age of puberty, into outside schools, is like throwing lambs out to the wolves."*

The contrast of approach to education of adolescents is significant. The Bruderhof practice of sending out teenagers to attend state schools runs counter to that of the Hutterites who isolate their students from the educational influence of the outside world. This raises the valid question of whether or not the varying methods can be compatible.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Brother Dick Domer, interview by author, 10 August 1991, notes by phone, Woodcrest Bruderhof, Rifton, New York.

<sup>38</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., East-West Conference, (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1991), 16.

<sup>39</sup>In his commentary on the letter, Kleinsasser did not address this specific issue. He implied that the accusation sprang from a "really sad" fear that the Bruderhof might start a community in Winnipeg. His

III. March to protest death penalty--referring to *The*

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failure to directly address the contrasting practices concerning education and "rearing of children" may be

Fig. 9 ["East-West Conference," 1991, by permission, from Hutterian Brethren, Darvell Bruderhof, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, England.]

*Plough 25, August 1990, "the Hutterites march against the Death Penalty." They agreed that all Christians should be against "any kind of killing, but to march with other denominations in public was disgraceful and to claim that they were representing the Hutterites of Canada was unacceptable.*

The mission activities of Bruderhof communities are problematic for a Hutterian colony which isolates itself from such issues and activities. The doctrine of separation as cited in 2 Corinthians 6 is an ingrained part of the survival heritage of post-Golden Years Hutterian life.<sup>40</sup>

IV. *Torches and Idols--the Hutterites condemn the use of fires and candles in gatherings and services foreign and idolatrous.*

The Bruderhof practice of using "torches and idols," as the Hutterites put it, is based on their desire to retain the attitude of life of the German Youth Movement. One might understand such activities as "on the road to idolatry" had they come from a people persecuted almost to extinction by the Roman Catholic Church. In his commentary on the letter, Kleinsasser agreed that such practices do lead to idolatry. He conceded that "maybe we could accept this [accusation], if it had led to idolatry. But for the time being, it is fitting."<sup>41</sup> He advised that this is a danger area for the Bruderhof but should not be an issue for breaking fellowship.

V. *Presentation of babies to the church--the Hutterites stated, "Your presentation of babies to the church may look like an innocent ritual to you, but seems to us as being only half a step away from infant baptism."*

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indicative of the sensitive nature of the issue. East-West Conference, 16.

<sup>40</sup>On this point Kleinsasser seemed to acknowledge the difference in the approach of east versus west, but discounted it as "such a small reason . . . [to] make a big point out of in order to bring an accusation." *East-West Conference*, 16.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

Many churches of the "free church" tradition have included such dedication services and have been accused by some of moving back into the practice of pedobaptism for the sake of ecumenism. This does not seem to be the case of the Bruderhof, who are precise and clear on the importance of voluntarism and the symbol of adult believer's baptism. Concerning this accusation, Kleinsasser was so dumbfounded that he was "speechless."<sup>42</sup>

VI. *Supporting courts--the Hutterites condemned the Bruderhof for "condoning or abetting of one Colony or Colony Member suing another in a secular court of law," as in contrast to Paul's teachings, 1 Corinthians 6, and the stand of the Hutterites regarding Matt. 5:25-26, 38-48.*

This point on "supporting courts" refers to the trial case of Hutterite member Daniel Hofer, Sr., excluded from the Lakeside Colony in Manitoba over disputes surrounding his efforts to manufacture and market a special hog feeder developed and patented by the colony. The dispute resulted in an unprecedented colony action seeking a court order to prohibit Hofer from living in the colony. On 31 October 1989, Justice Patrick Ferg of the Queens Bench, Manitoba, ruled that Hofer and his followers must "remove themselves or be expelled" from the colony.<sup>43</sup>

The role of the Bruderhof in this episode involved Elder Johann Christoph Arnold and his critical testimony, in which he covered the ten points of Jakob Hutter on reasons for exclusion from the community. Justice Ferg quoted "all ten points" in his judgment.<sup>44</sup> In this case, the Schmiedeleut appeared guilty of violating a long-held practice of the Hutterian Church. The Bruderhof played a minor role in this event. Court involvement in civil matters is no stranger to the Bruderhof, who frequently have been involved in legal matters

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>43</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., "Church Discipline Upheld in Court," *The Plough*, 24 (April/May 1990), 17-20.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 18.

concerning their manufacturing activities. The Hutterite's involvement in bringing a suit against a member of their own community was, however, unprecedented.

Kleinsasser defended the role of the Schmiedeleut and Christoph Arnold in the Hofer case by claiming that The Chronicle is full of examples where the brothers had to defend themselves against attacks from others. He argued that,

apparently the brothers who wrote this letter believe Daniel Hofer is a brother, and that we are now fighting and defending ourselves brother against brother. Daniel Hofer is far removed from being a brother. Even before any court action developed, he was not a brother, he is nothing but an enemy . . . .<sup>45</sup>

VII. *Hutterite Sermons, Music, and Acting--the Hutterites indicted the Bruderhof for neglecting the Hutterian sacred sermons or Lehren in their worship services. They also accused the Bruderhof of dishonoring God with their blasphemous and impious practices "putting on a live show, or imitating any part of Scripture, or the words of the Bible or any parable . . . [or] introducing musical instruments on any occasion."*

Concerning this, Kleinsasser defends the approach of the Bruderhof. He argues that the message of the gospel is what is important, not a sermon.

I have told many of the brothers in the West: Brothers, do you expect people of another language to preach our German teachings? Then you must find a way to translate them so they can make use of them. . . . But any teaching that refers to the gospel message and any speech, whether it is Christoph Vetter or whoever has the meeting, that points to redemption and to the plan of salvation and to the work of Jesus, is beneficial for our eternal blessedness. That is the important point. That is the only point that counts.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., East-West Conference, 17.

Again, the accusation is based on a real contrast in culture and form of expression of the community.

VIII. *Regarding baptism--the Hutterites challenged the Bruderhof practice of baptism by immersion. They cited a letter from Elder Peter Walpot in 1570 (Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:411) where a group of Polish delegates were not accepted into the novitiate because of their practice of immersion.*

Regarding baptism by immersion, the Bruderhof does not take a dogmatic approach to such matters. Various forms of baptism have been employed in the past, including immersion, dipping, and pouring.<sup>47</sup> When The Chronicle refers to the rejection of the Polish delegates in 1570, it outlines issues of major concern, such as Christology, and the Trinity. The fact is that the Polish did not accept the basic principles of the Incarnation, Virgin birth, and the three-in-one view of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In addition, the Polish practiced baptism by immersion and rejected pouring as "insufficient."<sup>48</sup> Walpot mentioned they had discontinued baptism altogether due to discord within the community.<sup>49</sup> There was much to prevent a union of these two groups, the least of which was the method of baptism. Upon that point the real issue might have been the inability of the Poles to accept the practice of the Hutterians rather than vice versa.

The Bruderhof have not imposed their form of baptism upon the Hutterians of the West. For them, the meaning, not the form is critical. Kleinsasser also concluded that

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>47</sup>Brothers Milton Zimmerman and Martin Johnson, interview by author, 26 July 1991, notes, Elisabethtown, Pennsylvania.

<sup>48</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., The Chronicle, 1:411.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 1:414.



"[w]hether the practice of the Hutterian Church is to baptize by sprinkling, by immersion, or by pouring over--that commitment [to Jesus and his Church] has to be and must be."<sup>50</sup>

IX. *The Word of God--the Hutterites accused the Bruderhof of a blasphemous attitude about the Word of God, based on a letter from New Zealand of 27 April 1987, to Jacob Kleinsasser from Neville Cooper. They cited the following blasphemous points:*

1. *The Bible is the greatest weapon of the devil.*
2. *The Bible is not the Word of God.*
3. *The living Word is the Word of God which wants to speak to us at this moment, not what he said to Moses, or Elijah, or even to Jesus.*

This letter draws from discussions which Johann Christoph Arnold and Jacob Kleinsasser had with some interested New Zealanders concerning the meaning of the Word of God. Perhaps Heini Arnold's article in The Plough best reflects Bruderhof thinking on God's Word. Heini draws his message from the fifth volume of Eberhard's Inner Land, titled "The Living Word."<sup>51</sup>

In "The Living Word" my father warns that in the last days the persecution of Christians will be cloaked in verses from Scripture. The Bible is the greatest weapon of the Devil, who uses it constantly to kill souls. The Bible is not the Word of God; reading aloud from the Bible is not necessarily proclaiming the Word of God, which cannot be handled and printed and sold.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., East-West Conference, 18.

<sup>51</sup>Eberhard Arnold, Inner Land: A Guide into the Heart and Soul of the Bible (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1976), 441-525.

<sup>52</sup>Heini Arnold, "The Living Word," The Plough 11 (July/August 1985): 2.

This kind of language would naturally alarm the Hutterians who through the years placed such prominence upon the literal, written Word of God.

When viewed within the context of the vision of Eberhard and his life experience, perhaps his meaning is better understood. Eberhard lived through a generation where the likes of Adolf Hitler and his followers skillfully employed Scripture in their systematic destruction of a society and culture. Surely, from Eberhard's viewpoint the Bible was used as a "weapon" by the powers of evil. Another factor Eberhard may have had in mind was his opinion of the misuse of the Word by the church itself. One is reminded of his warning in the last letter to the Brethren concerning the "false piety" of the Baptists, whom Eberhard believed correctly understood the message of Christ but had lost sight of the true spirit of the message.<sup>53</sup>

According to Eberhard, those who mean well may read, proclaim, and know the written Word without ever experiencing the living Word of God. So, it is not the written word which should be first, but, the living Word of God, as revealed to and experienced by believers.

This contrasting interpretation of God's Word is difficult to deal with by nature. How does one measure the reality of an inner experience? It is easy to see that the Hutterians cherish the written Word. They carry it with them by book and memory daily. Bruderhof members regularly discuss the messages of the Bible, but they do not emphasize its reading in public or commitment to memory. So, how does one measure whether or not they live according to the written Word through the Spirit of the living Word? They would say by their lives in community and their desire and striving for unity. The question of the ultimate authority and nature of the Word of God remains an issue.

X. Lovemeal--the Hutterites reject the so-called "lovemeals" of the Bruderhof.

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<sup>53</sup>See chapter three, page 80, note 69.

The Bruderhof have a "lovemeal" on occasions when a special sense of agape love is being shared within the community. This might be upon the arrival of a family who is moving to a new hof or upon the return of a member after a special extended trip. There is no special outward form, however there is usually some kind of special presentation by the children or a choir.

Kleinsasser is almost apologetic in his attempt to explain this objection by the others from the West. He assures that "[a]ll communal meals, especially on Sundays, to me are lovemeals. . . . Where there is one united spirit, brothers, there is a lovemeal."<sup>54</sup> He seems to discount this issue as insignificant.

Following the ten points of contention, the Darius and Lehrer Hutterites summarized their letter as follows:

Therefore 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. We ask that in the future you not send any of your literature and The Plough, for fear of being led astray, because we have sadly experienced that our counseling was in vain all these years.

In his presentation of this letter to those gathered at the East-West Conference, Schmiedeleut Elder Jacob Kleinsasser summarized his response to the letter by pointing out that the mention of a probationary period during which the Bruderhof would be judged as to their faithfulness to Hutterian practices and beliefs "is absolutely out of order and doesn't make sense."<sup>55</sup> Kleinsasser pointed to the end of the letter which confirmed "in 1974 the Schmiedeleut, Lehrerleut and two of the Dariusleut ministers agreed to the uniting with the

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>55</sup>Hutterian Brethren, ed., East-West Conference, 15.

Arnoldleut."<sup>56</sup> Based on this, he claimed the letter was ill-founded and not representative of the true relationship of the Bruderhof with the Hutterians of the West.

Unfortunately, Kleinsasser's defense of the Bruderhof resulted in the exclusion of the Schmiedeleut family of Hutterites from the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut families in 1992. This undoubtedly was not a complete surprise in light of his arguments against his Hutterite brothers and sisters.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the relationship between the Bruderhof and the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut families had never been strong. So, in their attempt to unite with the Hutterites, the Bruderhof were now faced with the dilemma of a divided community of Hutterites. However, the frequency of interaction between the Schmiedeleut and Bruderhof continued to increase and hopes for a truly united Bruderhof and Hutterian Church were kindled.<sup>58</sup>

What happened next can only be explained as a culmination of years of effort between the Bruderhof and primarily the Schmiedeleut Hutterites to become truly united in spite of the obvious unresolved contrasts between the two groups. As contact between the two groups increased, those contrasts manifested themselves in a previously unseen manner. It must be stated that the impetus for unity always had come primarily from the Bruderhof. They sought unity with the Hutterites in 1930. They approached the colonies and asked for forgiveness in 1974. They traveled west to become closer to the Hutterites in the 1980-90s. They adopted many of the outward practices of the West without compromising what they saw as the essence of who they were, kindred spirits of the original Hutterites. They were willing to wear the dress and limit their use of musical instruments and drama for the sake of unity. At no point, however, have the Bruderhof considered a departure from what they

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>57</sup>It should be noted that many of the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut colony members were surprised by the reactions of their leaders in the December 1991 letter.

<sup>58</sup>At this point, unnamed sources from various groups consistently speculated Kleinsasser might be the choice for the elder of a united Hutterian church of Bruderhof and Schmiedeleut communities.

understood as the basics of their faith as put forth in Scripture and described by Eberhard Arnold.

In the final analysis, the ultimate issue was the Bruderhof's concept of a unified church built of many communities with one elder and a comprehensive system of community of goods. Through their own history, they felt they learned the imperative of a comprehensive unity under one overseer. Surely their ultimate goal was to unite with the Hutterites under one elder and share in all property and goods. This radical approach proved too much even for the Hutterites.

By the end of 1994 the crises came to a breaking point. In the Winter 1995 issue of The Plough, an open letter appeared from the Bruderhof elder Johann Christoph Arnold.<sup>59</sup> It acknowledged the exclusion of the Bruderhof from the Hutterian Church was imminent. The letter revealed the depths of the chasm between the two groups. Christoph laid the blame for disunity upon the powers of evil--"as soon as a group is united anywhere in this world, the devil is not far behind."<sup>60</sup> He included a summary of the history of the attempt at unity between the Bruderhof and the Hutterites. He attacked the vitality of the original witness of the Hutterites concerning "brotherly love, mutual service, community of goods, nonviolence, sexual purity, and faithfulness in marriage." He challenged the deteriorated faith and practice of the Hutterian communities, and observed that members withhold money and other goods for themselves; they work outside the community to earn money for their own personal use; communal work departments have become independent "kingdoms," without a sense of common work or purpose; there is little spiritual leadership and many seek to increase their own personal authority; young people no longer receive clear guidance and many are baptized and enter marriage with unconfessed sin; alcoholism is rampant, even among some leaders; premarital sex is widespread; and there are illegitimate children. Christoph lamented,

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<sup>59</sup>The complete open letter is included in appendix 5.

<sup>60</sup>Johann Christoph Arnold, "An Open Letter from the Bruderhof," The Plough 41 (Winter 1995): 3.

In other words, the church has lost its salt and has become lukewarm, shallow, and superficial. The right words are still there; the form is still there; but the church has become a lifeless and self-defeating system. The light of Jesus has gone out in many hearts.<sup>61</sup>

Christoph states that he pleaded many times with the Hutterian leadership for them to change their ways, but he was "rejected and seriously resented." The Bruderhof knows well from their own history how a loss of vision within the leadership can destroy the community. Christoph includes a note of hope for the many young people in the colonies "who are looking for something new, who are sick and tired of tradition, and who long for the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, to break in as it did at Pentecost." He closes his letter with a statement of love and commitment of faithfulness for the colonies of the West, but he maintains that the Bruderhof will move forward even if they are excluded from the "Hutterian Church." He disclaims the intention of the Bruderhof is to build itself up, but "to proclaim Christ for the sake of God's kingdom."<sup>62</sup>

### Two Peoples or One?

The events of the above discourse appear to have answered the question: two peoples or one?" After sixty-five years of struggle to attain true unity between the descendants of a sixteenth-century community of Anabaptists and a twentieth-century group of like-minded radical Christians, the answer appears to be, "two peoples, not one." Though there is much in common between the two groups, their differences will not dissolve. The

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid. The author corroborated the claims of Christoph with other Bruderhof members including those raised on the colonies of the West. Certainly the Hutterites have their own side of the story of this failed attempt at unity, however this paper consistently has been from the Bruderhof perspective. The remaining interest of some families from the West to maintain contact with the Bruderhof and the addition of some of these families to the Bruderhof communities speaks for itself.

radical commitment of the Bruderhof to a comprehensive unity under one elder and a complete sharing of property and goods in some ways surpasses that of the modern Hutterites. The Bruderhof's commitment to mission among those of the outside world challenges the isolationist approach of the Hutterites. In some ways, the Bruderhof movement resembles that of the Hutterians of the Golden Years more than the modern Hutterites.

Yet, the commitment to attain unity still lingers within the hearts of many members of both groups. What seems to be the end of the story of attempted unity between the Hutterites and the Bruderhof may only be the beginning of the next chapter.

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 5.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was twofold: to tell the story of the Bruderhof, and to clarify their relationship with the Hutterites. The history of the Bruderhof movement presents a unique example of a community of twentieth-century Christians striving to live the life prescribed by Jesus Christ. The founding members of the Bruderhof were of a generation of German youths who observed the atrocities of World War I, and experienced the joys and freedoms of reform according to the German Youth Movement. From their beginnings, they took as their models the first-century church, as described in Scripture, and historical groups of radical Christians such as the sixteenth-century Anabaptists Hutterians.

Their founder, Eberhard Arnold, encouraged them toward a community based on a balance of three primary influences: 1) a spiritual and physical uniting with the original Hutterites, 2) an attitude of faith characterized by the teachings and practices of the two Blumhardts, 3) an attitude of life inherent in the German Youth Movement. Their natural affinity with the original Hutterites increased upon the realization of the existence of surviving Hutterian colonies in North America. Arnold was the driving force behind the uniting of the Bruderhof with the Hutterites in 1930. He was committed to the Anabaptist heritage and practice of community as described in their historical writings and chronicles.

With community of property and pacifism as distinctives, they were subjected to persecution and eventual eviction at the hands of the Nazis. Subsequent years resulted in a seemingly endless search for a viable location from which to build their community. These years of struggle took them across Europe into the jungles of South America and finally to



the United States. Their preoccupation for survival during these difficult years resulted in a failure of leadership, a deterioration of the spiritual condition of the Bruderhof, and consequential turmoil and suffering among its members. Only in the last years have the painful memories of the past re-surfaced and a healing taken place.

The relationship of the Bruderhof and the Hutterian Brethren has been a source of concern and frustration for both groups for many years. In spite of outward cultural and practical distinctives, the two groups attempted through the years to establish a meaningful and edifying relationship. It seems the closer they became, the more evident were their differences. The "Open Letter" of Johann Christoph Arnold, published in January 1995, recognizes the relationship is no longer viable. What has in recent years been perceived as an outward condition of difference in fact appears to be based on certain fundamental differences, now described in inward or spiritual terms. Indeed, the Bruderhof's radical approach to original Hutterian principles such as polity (e.g. one elder, decision by consensus), community of property (all things shared by all members of all hofs), and mission have pushed the relationship to its current breaking point.

For the time being, clarity concerning the distinctive natures of the two groups should become evident. The Bruderhof recently ceased using the name "Hutterian Brethren," though they may still claim a strong affinity with the original Hutterian movement of the sixteenth century. Today, they are indeed "two peoples not one." The future will reveal whether another day of reconciliation of the two groups will prevail. Meanwhile, the Bruderhof moves forward (Kadima) with a renewed sense of purpose and mission, seeking the way of Christ. Their course is uncharted with many potential risks.

The story of the Bruderhof is a fascinating account of Christian commitment at its best, imperfect though it may be. It is a story of people seeking God, daring to be worthy of the call of Christ. It is a story of families working together in Christian community. It is a story of mission, of providing a voice of encouragement and a life of witness to the love of Christ. It is a story of struggle, of pain and suffering, of striving for discipleship, yet surrendering to forgiveness and reconciliation. It is a story worthy to be told, from which lessons for today and tomorrow may be learned.

Sannerz--Germany	1920_1927	
Rhön--Germany	1926___1937	
Alm--Liechtenstein	1934-1938	
Cotswold--England	1936-41	
Oaksey--England	1939-41	
Primavera--Paraguay	1941_____1961	
Wheathill--England	1942_____1961	
Loma Hoby--Paraguay	1942_____1961	
Asuncion--Paraguay	1942_____1961	
Ibate--Paraguay	1947___1961	
El Arado--Uruguay	1953_1960	
Woodcrest--USA, NY	1954_____today (1995)	
Forest River--USA, ND	1955-57	
Sinntal--Germany	1955_1961	
New Meadow Run--USA, PA	1957_____today	
Bulstrode--England	1958___1966	
Deer Spring--USA, CT	1958_____today	
Darvell--England	1971_____today	
Pleasant View--USA, NY		1985___today
Spring Valley--USA, PA		1987___today
Michaelshof--Germany		1988___today
Catskill--USA, NY		1990___today
Palmgrove--Nigeria		1992-94

APPENDIX 2: "Bruderhof Time Line," adapted from Ulrich Eggers's, Community for Life, (Scottdale, PA, 1988), 196.]

## APPENDIX 3

### LETTER OF CONTENTION

On December 11, 1990, four leaders, including the two Elders, of the Darius and Lehrerleut families of Hutterian colonies sent the following letter.<sup>1</sup>

To: Society of Brothers who call themselves Hutterian Brethren.

Greetings:

The reuniting of the Hutterian Brethren January 7, 1974 at Sturgeon Creek Colony, Manitoba with the Society of Brethren, or Arnold Leut, Woodcrest New York, was the topic of the meeting and conversation. We were all in unison that you were accepted on a probationary basis, so that you would get acquainted and accept the teaching and tenets, rules, Ordnungen and Principles of the Hutterische Church as they were practised by us at that time and our forefathers, so that you may adopt and adhere to them, which up to that time you shunned and trod with your feet, and in fact disgraced and abused the messengers that were sent to you from time to time, all out of love for your salvation.

#### First: Regarding Millennium

You still cling to the false doctrine of The Millennium, the so-called 1,000 years of The Kingdom, which is against The Apostolic Creed (Articles 6 & 7) to which we all said "Yes and Amen", in our baptismal vows, and again those of us in the ministry of the "Word". Our forefathers made no mention of this 1,000 years of The Kingdom of God here on earth, in their abundant writings and epistles in which they recognize the first and second Advent, or The Coming of our Lord; of the third they know not. We agree wholeheartedly with them. This Blumhardt teaching we cannot accept.

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<sup>1</sup>The letter was read with commentary, by Jake Kleinsasser Vetter, Schmiedeleut Elder, at the East-West Conference, Spring Valley, April 1991. The conference was attended by members of the Bruderhof, Schmiedeleut and a few from the Dariusleut colonies. Plough Publishing House, Rifton, New York, has published a 53-page account of the conference. For this section the author used a copy of the original letter provided by the Woodcrest archives: The Hutterian Brethren Church to the Society of Brothers, 11 December 1990, from the Darius and Lehrerleut Conference, Bruderhof archives, Woodcrest, Rifton, New York. The letter contains several errors of spelling and punctuation which are indicative of the contrasting language and culture of the two groups. Where quoted, corrections have been made to facilitate reading and understanding. All underlining is of this author for emphasis. The use of "Schmiedeleut" in this letter is the only instance seen by the author.

### Secondly: The Rearing of Children.

We cannot agree with you on the issue of sending young people to school outside of our communities at the age when they need the most protection from the wiles of the devil which are rampant in this world as never before. The reasons stated in Johann Christoph Arnold's letter of November 3, 1986 (especially reason No. 2) are totally not acceptable to us, even though he erroneously tries to prove that our Hutterian forefathers sent their young people out in the world, for a trial period, of up to two years. We have many other sermons that prove, that the passage he quotes from Heb. 12:5-9 was only intended as an analogy or comparison. The rearing of children (your letter of Nov. 3, 1986) defending your position, is not in harmony with the teachings of Ehrenpreis, pages 70-74 or in Peter Rideman's book, page 130. You on the contrary need teachers, nurses, doctors, for your business, for your means of income, people with technical knowledge. Why didn't Jesus think of that when he chose his disciples? He must have been very naive, not to know how to build his church, to make such a selection. We fear that sending our children, and especially young people who have reached the age of puberty, into outside schools, is like throwing lambs out to the wolves. At this age young people are most vulnerable to evil influences. This is not a good way to test for "dead wood". Delphini. Your Elders' suggestion (letter March 5, 1990) to build a colony close to Winnipeg amongst The Schmiedenleut to implement this, greatly alarms us.

### Third: March to protest Death Penalty.

Referring to The Plough #25 Aug. 1990) Hutterites march against the Death Penalty. What a disgrace. Surely Christians are against any kind of killing, whether by the Death Penalty, or any other form, but have we ever heard of Hutterites marching with other denominations, or taking part in such activities? No! never in Hutterite history, or in biblical history. What would our forefathers say to such practices? or Paul 2 Cor. 6:13-16 How did you dare to say, that you were representing the Hutterites in Canada????

### Fourth: Torches, Idols.

Your use of fires and candles in your gatherings and services is also foreign to us. We believe that this is on the road that leads to idolatry.

### Five: Presentation of babies to the church.

Your presentation of babies to the church may look like an innocent ritual to you, but seems to us as being only half a step away from infant baptism.

### Six: Supporting Courts.

The condoning or abetting of one Colony or Colony Member suing another in a secular court of law, in which you have been a willing and aggressive partner in complete contrast to the advice of Paul: Dare any of you having a matter against another go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints, etc. etc. 1 Cor.6 It is also against the stand Hutterites have taken for 4 1/2 centuries. (Matt. 5:25-26,38-48).

Seven: Hutterite Sermons, Musical and Acting.

Wedding at Elm River in Manitoba. Where in the 500 year History of the Hutterites have we ever heard of play, acting, by putting on a live show, or imitating any part of scripture, or the words of the Bible or any parable (the 10 virgins). Surely this was a dishonor to God and church. Imagine imitating the devil and our Saviour Jesus Christ! What blasphemy and impious act against God! And when asked at a meeting Oct. 8, 1987 this was denied, and the truth was refused deliberately. Where are the teachings of Peter Rideman, whom you said and claimed you were following more fervently, than any of the three Leut? And this was also affirmed by some of the Schmiedenleut Ministers, when all along, they and you, knew that this was not being done. One can only imagine how much more of this is going on in the eastern colonies. How did you dare to willfully violate the ordinances, and humble practices of the scripture and the church, by introducing musical instruments on any occasion. Has this not infiltrated in some of our dear Schmiedenleut Colonies and caused a drifting in your direction? This is why we are so concerned and therefore, try by all means, to not let this happen, to our Lehrerleut and Dariusleut Colonies. So help us God. And also the main downfall of your people is, that you do not preach the Hutterian Sermons, or Lehren, which to us are so sacred, and indeed biblical, and were written by men of suffering and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and were sealed with the blood and tears. These sermons are the solid foundation that keeps our church alive and in order, and Jesus is the head of this true church. The booklets that you publish and send to all the colonies are as far apart from these sermons as heaven and earth, especially the last one was utter nonsense. Note 2 Cor. 5:6-7

Eight: Regarding Baptism.

It has been brought to our attention that you still baptize by immersion. If so, we advise you to read Page 411 or the whole letter that Elder Peter Walpot wrote the Polish delegates in the year 1570, written in The Chronicle of the Hutterites. Because of this, the Hutterian Brethren did not accept them even as novices.

Nine: Letter from New Zealand.

Your blaspheming attitude about the Word of God. (see letter of April 27, 1987 by Neville Cooper to Jacob Kleinsasser).

1. The Bible is the greatest weapon of the devil.
2. The Bible is not the Word of God.

3. The living Word is the Word of God which wants to speak to us at this moment, not what he said to Moses, or Elijah, or even to Jesus.

Ten: Lovemeal.

Our opposition to your lovemeals which you practice today, which our former Elder Rev. Joseph Waldner refers to, in his letter to you April 6, 1975, wherein he tells you, they do not belong to us.

Although it is true that in 1974 the Schmiedenleut, Lehrerleut and 2 of the Dariusleut ministers agreed to the uniting with the Arnoldleut, after they heard the pleas of the then present Arnoldleut and we earnestly thought you would adopt the Hutterian Brethren Customs and traditions, and ordinances as much as possible, (and all Elders acted in good faith) however we are very well aware that you did not keep your promises, and instead of coming closer to us, you are so to speak, deliberately drifting in the opposite direction. Especially like in the case of musical instruments and radios, you seem to have absolutely no concern whatsoever, whether we agree with you or not. It doesn't seem to bother you the least bit, let the other Hutterians think what they may, therefore, even if it is hard for us to do. We are forced to revoke the 1974 unification. We fear that such forbidden sins may slowly infiltrate into our colonies. Although it is said, that you say, you don't live on customs and traditions, but on love, may we point out to you, that a church without customs and traditions, is not a true church. God is a God of ordinance, and he wants ordinance to be adhered to by his followers and that includes customs and traditions. In German: Gott ist ein Gott der Ordnung, und er will haben dasz unter seinen Volk Ordnung sein soll. Now what causes the division between us? Let us read Jes. [Isaiah] 59 v.2 But your iniquities (Untugend) have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. And 1 John 5:17 says: "All unrighteousness (Untugend) is sin. Now we do not claim to be infallible, because we are prone to sin like all humans, but when the Elders of a church, deliberately, and without any considerations openly exercise play-acting, music, and all such things, as mentioned in this letter, we feel we have to voice our objections, lest we should be found guilty in the eyes of the almighty God. Therefore 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. We ask that in the future you not send any of your literature and The Plough, for fear of being led astray, because we have sadly experienced that our counselling was in vain all these years.

Very sincerely,

Darius Leut.  
(Signed by)  
John K. Wurz  
M. S. Stahl

Lehrerleut.  
John S. Wipf  
John Kleinsasser

C.C. Copy

Christoph Arnold  
Elder Jacob Kleinsasser  
Rev. Joseph Wipf

## APPENDIX 5

### AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE BRUDERHOF<sup>1</sup>

Exactly twenty-one years ago, January 7, 1974, the Bruderhof (Society of Brothers) was reunited with the Hutterian Church in a meeting of ministers and stewards in Sturgeon Creek, Manitoba. Five brothers from the Bruderhof attended, including my father, Heinrich Arnold, who was elder of our communities at the time. These brothers had been sent out to ask the "western" Hutterian Church in Canada and the Dakotas to forgive us for our part in a division between us that had occurred in 1955 after disagreements at Forest River Colony in North Dakota. To the great surprise of my father and the brothers with him, we received much more than forgiveness. We were completely reconciled and reunited, and the "Society of Brothers" became the "Hutterian Society of Brothers" and later "Hutterian Brethren."

In these last twenty-one years we in the Bruderhof have worked together with our Hutterian brothers and sisters in many wonderful ways. We have exchanged families for longer periods. We have celebrated twenty-two marriages between our groups. We have sent young people to help out at various western colonies, and they have sent many of their young people to help us. Most importantly, we have gone on many mission journeys together. My wife Verena and I have traveled with Hutterite elder Jacob Kleinsasser and his wife Maria to Germany, England, New Zealand, Hawaii, and Nigeria. We also made two other journeys to Nigeria, and one to Israel, with other Manitoba ministers and their wives. In 1988, together with the western Hutterites, we started a Bruderhof in Germany. More recently, we joined forces to build up Palmgrove, our community in Nigeria, and baptized our first African members.

Western Hutterite ministers came to us many times to confirm and ordain our ministers, to baptize, and to perform marriages. In the same way, many of our ministers have helped in baptisms, marriages, and confirmations in Canada and the Dakotas. It is hard to grasp how much God has given us in the past twenty-one years.

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<sup>1</sup>Johann Christoph Arnold, "An Open Letter from the Bruderhof The Plough 41 (Winter 1995): 2-6, reprinted by permission.



However, as soon as a group is united anywhere in this world, the devil is not far behind. He has been very active--so much so that now there is another break between us.

The Hutterian Church has now existed for over 450 years. It has always witnessed to the clear teachings of the New Testament, especially those concerning brotherly love, mutual service, community of goods, nonviolence, sexual purity, and faithfulness in marriage. Unfortunately this witness has been almost completely lost.

In many Hutterite colonies in Canada and the Dakotas, members withhold money and other goods for themselves in spite of their membership vows to relinquish all private property and share everything. Some work outside the community to earn money for their own personal use. Communal work departments have become independent "kingdoms," and a sense of common work and a common purpose has been lost. There is little or no spiritual leadership, and ministers are no longer true servants of their flocks but lord it over them, seeking to increase their personal authority (Mt. 20:25). Young people no longer receive clear guidance and direction from their ministers, teachers, and parents. Many are baptized and enter marriages with consciences burdened by unconfessed sin. Alcoholism is rampant, even among some community leaders. Premarital sex is widespread, and there are illegitimate children.

In other word, the church has lost its salt and has become lukewarm, shallow, and superficial. The right words are still there; the form is still there; but the church has become a lifeless and self-defeating system. The light of Jesus has gone out in many hearts. Christoph Blumhardt (1842-1919) prophetically described this situation already a century ago:

It so happens that there is only a very small band of those who truly want to be fighters. I tell you, there are peoples, Christian peoples, where not a single person is a fighter, not one. There are thousands of Christians, yet not one will hazard his blood; they all make excuses. They bow and scrape around the Lord Jesus, but they are not fighters. They will not give their lives even unto death; and whoever will not do so can never be a disciple of Jesus, fighting for his victory.

The sharpness of Jesus against sin, especially as emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount, has been completely rejected by modern-day Hutterianism. It has been replaced by a false emphasis on eternal salvation--the attitude that this world is a vale of tears, and we can

only hope to find blessedness in the life to come. The rule of Christ is pushed into the distant future, and there is complacency and a general acceptance of sin in the church. How far removed we are from the clarity of the Hutterian forefathers of the Reformation--Jakob Hutter, Andreas Ehrenpreis, Claus Felbinger, Peter Riedemann, and others!

Jesus warns his disciples not to let themselves be lured by false teachers into a narrow, rigid way of life. This way can be recognized by its fruits: lovelessness and callousness, hostility, touchiness, hatred, pride, and smugness. Its followers are satisfied with themselves, but they are far removed from the Beatitudes of Jesus, especially his words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Because they are self-satisfied, they do not hunger or thirst for righteousness; neither can they experience purity of heart, by which a person can be freed from everything, including himself. And they know nothing of meekness or peace-making, not even among themselves, let alone with others.

Sad to say, the Hutterian Church of today has fallen into just such a state. There are three *Leut* ("peoples") in the Hutterian Church--the Dariusleut, Lehrerleut, and Schmiedeleut--and at the reuniting twenty-one years ago the ministers of all three *Leut* agreed to reaccept us as full members of the Hutterian Church. In the last years, however, the Lehrerleut and Dariusleut excluded first our Bruderhof communities (1990), and then the Schmiedeleut (1992). The Schmiedeleut themselves have now split into two factions, and every group or subgroup claims to be the true Hutterite church. Everyone sees the guilt on the other side. They fail to realize that as Christians we all need to change. As the Apostle Peter says, judgment must begin in the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

We in the Bruderhof long to embrace the call of the apostles of 2,000 years ago: "Repent and be baptized; save yourselves from this crooked generation." This call was and still is the challenge of Pentecost. Together with those Hutterites who seek for change we ask for a reawakening by the Holy Spirit. The God of present-day Hutterianism has become too small. The understanding of the true Church has been lost. We want to seek anew the living God of Judaism and Christianity, who alone is unchangeable.

We have pleaded many times with the leaders of the Hutterites in Canada and the Dakotas to recognize that we all need to change, and that this change must begin in the leadership of the church. (We should not forget that when Jonah preached to Nineveh, it was the king who was the first to put on sackcloth and ashes; and then God was once more merciful to the people.) Sadly, our pleas have been rejected and deeply resented.

Yet not everything is lost with the Hutterian Church. There are many young people who are looking for something new, who are sick and tired of tradition, and who long for the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, to break in as it did at Pentecost. In John 13:34-35 Jesus tells us, "A new commandment I give to you: love one another. Even as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The Holy Spirit wants to engrave this love on our hearts.

We love our brothers and sisters in the western colonies, and we want to remain faithful to them. Yet to our shock we have heard that in the coming weeks a meeting will be held in which we in the Bruderhof communities may be officially excluded from the Hutterian Church.

Even if we are not allowed to remain members of the "Hutterian Church," we will continue to move forward. We still identify our movement with the revival of New Testament Christianity as it found expression among the Anabaptist of Reformation times and among other groups throughout the centuries. No one can separate us from the spirit of God which we want to serve--the spirit that also lived among the original Hutterites and drew us to their descendants in the first place.

In this sense we turn to you, our friends, and plead with you to join us in proclaiming the full Gospel to all people, and teaching them, as Jesus said, "to observe all I have commanded" (Mt. 28:19--20).

We do not want to proclaim the Bruderhof as such or to make members for our own group, but to proclaim the living Christ so that God's kingdom might break into this dark world and change people's lives.

To conclude, let me share a short passage written by my grandfather Eberhard Arnold. It was written in 1920, but it is perhaps more important now than ever before:

To the extent that churches and communities are moralistic, they form an obstacle to the liberating spirit of Christ. Some of them have indeed grown increasingly rigid to the point where they represent form and tradition, moralism, and authority more than the free Spirit who entrusts and leaves everything to God and Christ. Certainly, in many respects the honor of God and the mighty approach of his kingdom have receded behind an all-too-pretty soul.

Freedom from old forms! Liberation from all that is untrue and ungentine in outward authority and tradition!--All this can yet go together with respect for whatever living manifestations of God's working we may meet, even if they take different forms, just as the early Christians emphasized the variety of spiritual gifts. One thing, however, is clear; the present-day movement can no longer be made to submit to the yoke of servitude, to anything that obstructs the flow of its inwardly surging and pulsing life. It is and remains revolutionary in the sense of truly building up something new.

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