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## Review of: Kleinsasser, Ian. 2019. *Blessings and Burdens: 100 Years of Hutterites in Manitoba*.

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Review of: **Kleinsasser, Ian. 2019. *Blessings and Burdens: 100 Years of Hutterites in Manitoba*. The 2019 Jacob D. Maendel Lectures. MacGregor, MB: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre. 111pp. \$12.00 (Canadian).**

By Martin Lutz  
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Ian Kleinsasser's short book on Hutterites in Manitoba deserves attention. It is based on three lectures given at the inaugural Jacob D. Maendel Lectures in 2019. This lecture series was established in honor of Jacob Maendel (1911-1972) in the context of the centennial preparation of permanent Hutterite settlement in Canada. The three lectures were held in Portage la Prairie, and as the book's introduction points out, were attended by representatives of both Schmiedeleut I and II groups. Jacob D. Maendel was a prominent Schmiedeleut leader of his generation and a driving force in advancing Hutterite education. His initiative led to the first Hutterites in Manitoba receiving college education and teaching certificates. It is thus perfectly fitting that Ian Kleinsasser from Crystal Springs Colony has a degree in education and that his narrative rests on solid historiographic method, empirical evidence, and a careful assessment of primary and secondary sources.

The book provides a welcome and much needed addition to historiography of Hutterites in North America. It is roughly organized in chronological order, beginning with the preconditions of Hutterite migration to Canada in the context of World War I. Kleinsasser then addresses the initial hardship and legal hurdles for Hutterite settlement in Manitoba, the hardship suffered during the Great Depression, and the restrictive legislation against further growth in the post-World War II era. Not surprisingly, the relationship between Hutterites and the Bruderhof communities plays a major role in the book, as does the Hutterite struggle to manage school education vis-à-vis a sometimes hostile government and general public. Here, Kleinsasser rejects Victor Peters' contention that Hutterite compromises with the public-school system were grounded in their "doctrine of nonresistance" and remained unchallenged (pp. 19-20). Instead, the author claims and provides some evidence that, on the contrary, Hutterite leaders were quite hesitant to engage in these compromises. In

this chapter, as in other instances, the book's scope does not allow for a comprehensive treatment of the respective topics so readers might be left with open questions and a desire to learn more. At the same time, in these instances, Kleinsasser does an excellent job of opening up the debate and identifying gaps in the existing literature.

While the overall historical development of Hutterites in Manitoba is at least partially known and has been covered in other publications, Kleinsasser also covers entirely new historiographic ground. I will mention only two aspects here. First, Kleinsasser carefully reconstructs the Hutterite Brethren organizations from their origins in South Dakota in the early twentieth century to various incorporations in the following decades. This aspect has been much neglected by historiography and it is particularly enlightening how Kleinsasser relates the incorporation processes to Hutterite attempts to secure legal rights. He also touches on the sensitive topic of taxation and Hutterite responses to the Canadian welfare state, including the Family Allowance and Old Age Pension schemes. Based in new sources, these parts greatly expand our knowledge of Hutterite institutional development. Second, Kleinsasser provides an insightful and careful interpretation of the historical processes that led to the Schmiedeleut schism of 1992. He places it in a long-term context of economic hardship, power struggles surrounding the office of the *Älteste*, and not the least the tremendous challenge of managing the transnational Schmiedeleut entity transcending two countries, i.e. the United States and Canada.

There are some redundancies in the book. For example, the author addresses the Great Depression in two chapters (page 11 and on page 37). In some instances, Kleinsasser could have provided a more in-depth and critical examination of the related literature, as for example, Alvin Esau's (2005) work on communal property in the section on Hutterite incorporation. Some parts of the book would have benefited from more references, in particular the chapters that describe the conflicts leading up to the 1992 schism. These minor points of criticism, however, do not diminish the book's overall high quality and historiographic rigor.

As the publishers from the Hutterian Brethren Book Centre point out, the lecture series' overarching goal is "to bring the academic fields of history,

theology, and literature, broadly conceived, under the discipline of, and into the service of the Church. In other words, the scholarship presented is to be of high caliber, but not merely an academic exercise for its own sake" (p. I). This reviewer is in no position to evaluate how the Hutterite "church can and must learn from the academy" (p. I) as implemented in Kleinsasser's book. From a purely academic point of view, however, Kleinsasser provides a methodologically sound and well-researched account of Hutterites in Manitoba that should be of interest to historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and legal scholars. He adds substantially new evidence to the literature and provides many, even if in some cases preliminary, insights that can and should provide further directions in Hutterite Studies. Moreover, Kleinsasser's lucid style make the book an enjoyable read that should be easily accessible to a wider audience. Based on this inaugural publication of the inaugural Jacob D. Maendel lectures, this reviewer is keenly looking forward to the upcoming lectures and related publications.

## Reference

Esau, Alvin. 2005. "The Establishment and Preservation of Hutterite Communalism in North America, 1870-1925." Pp. 207-21 in *Despotic Dominion: Property Rights in British Settler Societies* edited by John McLaren, A. R. Buck, and Nancy Wright. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

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