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Arthur O. Roberts
BOOK REVIEW


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In this volume the Hutterian Brethren have gleaned wisdom from the writings and correspondence of J. Heinrich Arnold (1913-1982), a major leader (respected elder) among them and the son of the founder of the Bruderhof movement, Eberhard Arnold. An introductory sketch reminds the reader of the context for Arnold’s life and service: growing up within a Christian resistance movement in Nazi Germany, the impact of social discontent, the streams of religious and secular dissent, confluent streams of mysticism and social activism that fed the mind and heart of a radical Christian disciple. The book makes a good companion piece to an earlier volume, also edited by the Hutterian Society of Brothers, God’s Revolution: The Witness of Eberhard Arnold (Paulist, 1984).

The book is divided topically under three major rubrics: the character of a Christian disciple, the nature of the church, and expectations about the Kingdom of God. Selections are sometimes discreet units, without transitions, but are cleanly formatted into paragraphs so that the axiomatic force of Arnold’s wisdom is highlighted.

In dealing with the personal aspects of faith the selected paragraphs show “tough love.” God is no complaisant supplier of wants, but a holy force calling us to personal righteousness. Typical is this admonition by Arnold, “In our prayer life we need to listen to the spirit of God. What God wants to tell us is of greater importance than what we want to tell him. Therefore common silence shared in the faith that he wants to speak to each heart will always be meaningful to us.” (p. 9)

Arnold speaks forcibly for the church to be a community of faithful disciples. He resists an antinomian view of grace. He wanted the Bruderhof communities to be renewed constantly by love, purity, and everything Jesus represents. In this way, he thought, they can truly
become leaven for the world. Some people have felt that the Bruderhof communities became too legalistic, too withdrawn from the world. But in these pages one feels that Arnold, at least, wanted these communities to be strong witnesses to the Kingdom.