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Review of *The Courts and the Colonies: The Litigation of Hutterite Church Disputes* By Alvin 1. Esau

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North America and the unanticipated problems that can emerge when these groups call upon the power of the state to support internal policies and procedures. The book is especially relevant to studies of the Great Plains, since there are more than 50 constantly-expanding Hutterite colonies in the state of South Dakota alone, with dozens more in North Dakota and Montana.

What most concerns Esau are those occasions when Hutterite colony leaders have gone to court to ask for the state's support (through its policing power) for internal decisions based on religious understandings. Esau recognizes the contemporary necessity of Hutterite involvement in legal contracts and the importance of close associations with attorneys as the colonies increasingly engage in large-scale agribusiness and stock market investments. What is disconcerting to him, however, is the way that Hutterite "inside law" (communal religious policy) decisions are not being allowed to stand on their own—as was the case historically.

When someone was excommunicated and refused to leave the colony in the past (before the 1980s for the most part), that person was shunned and typically left alone. Now the state is being asked to remove dissenters from colony premises, leading to a backlash of lawsuits from those under church discipline. Hutterites are thus increasingly appealing to the "outside law" (the courts) to enforce internal decisions, often related to colony personnel problems or grievances. As a result, the "outside law" is conversely raising questions about internal Hutterite practices, especially the practice of not giving members who leave financial compensation for the years that they spent in the colony—a longstanding historical practice that has traditionally been held inviolable by North American courts. Esau describes the way in which court proceedings can lead to unexpected outcomes and may in fact endanger traditional Hutterite theology and institutions. **Rod Janzen**, *School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences, Fresno Pacific University*.

The Courts and the Colonies: The Litigation of Hutterite Church Disputes. By Alvin J. Esau. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004. xi + 384 pp. Notes, index. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

The Courts and the Colonies is an informative discussion of the impact of legal issues on communal Hutterites during the past half-century. It is a valuable addition to Hutterite studies specifically, providing significant social analysis alongside a detailed discussion of legal matters. More generally the book has important things to say about the legal status of all communal religious societies in