



The Amish

By Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Steven M. Nolt

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The Amish have always struggled with the modern world. Known for their simple clothing, plain lifestyle, and horse-and-buggy mode of transportation, Amish communities continually face outside pressures to modify their cultural patterns, social organization, and religious world view. An intimate portrait of Amish life, *The Amish* explores not only the emerging diversity and evolving identities within this distinctive American ethnic community, but also its transformation and geographic expansion.

Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, and Steven M. Nolt spent twenty-five years researching Amish history, religion, and culture. Drawing on archival material, direct observations, and oral history, the authors provide an authoritative and sensitive understanding of Amish society.

Amish people do not evangelize, yet their numbers in North America have grown from a small community of some 6,000 people in the early 1900s to a thriving population of more than 275,000 today. The largest populations are found in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, with additional communities in twenty-seven other states and Ontario.

The authors argue that the intensely private and insular Amish have devised creative ways to negotiate with modernity that have enabled them to thrive in America. The transformation of the Amish in the American imagination from "backward bumpkins" to media icons poses provocative questions. What does the Amish story reveal about the American character, popular culture, and mainstream values? Richly illustrated, *The Amish* is the definitive portrayal of the Amish in America in the twenty-first century.

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The Amish By Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Steven M. Nolt Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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This companion to the PBS American Experience series is organized into 21 chapters under five main subject headings detailing the roots, culture, social organization, external ties, and future of 40 distinctive Amish groups. Maps, tables, and black-and-white photographs accent the interesting narrative. There are copious endnotes as well as a 24-page bibliography and a thorough index. This is a well-written, comprehensive, and insightful book that will make an excellent resource for public and academic libraries. -- Carol Sue Harless

Review

The authors successfully address the seeming exoticism of the Amish without sensationalism... Particular attention is paid to debunking myths surrounding the teenage rite of Rumspringa, a time of contemplation before full commitment to the church through baptism. The scholarship is enlivened with quotes and personal anecdotes, and the final section on the future of the Amish raises fascinating questions, even for casual readers.

(*Publishers Weekly*)

Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner and Nolt have provided masterful research that enlightens the reader about this misunderstood religion and culture... *The Amish* is a must-read for anyone willing to look beyond the horse and buggy image and gain eye-opening knowledge of people keeping a wary eye on the modern world while holding fast to their past beliefs and traditions.

(Jeff Friend *Foreword Reviews*)

In sum, Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner and Nolt have offered us a highly readable and thoroughly engaging lens into The Amish, and in doing so offer readers an opportunity to reflect on themselves in this book.

(Joel Gehman *JoelGehman.com*)

Given its wide scope and up-to-date information there really isn't a book like this on the Amish today. I would place it among a handful of Amish must-reads.

(*Amish America*)

This is a great read for audiences from high school to professionals... highly recommended.

(*Choice*)

The book's thoroughness is praiseworthy, along with its unbiased approach. It doesn't overpraise the Amish,

nor does it criticize their ways. If you're wondering how traditional societies cope with the modern era, this book is perfect.

(Ben Wolinsky *Olive Branch United*)

It is an essential work on the Amish for both those who begin with little knowledge and those who would like to update their understanding of this unique plain Christian community.

(Rod Janzen *Annals of Iowa*)

Written by the foremost contemporary authority on the Amish along with experts on linguistics and Amish history, this impressive, illustrated volume positions itself as the best and most comprehensive book on the Amish in the twenty-first century. Based on twenty-five years of sociological and demographics research, face-to-face interviews and in-person observation, the twenty-two chapters cover every aspect of Amish life... *The Amish* is invaluable for the reader seeking a first, serious encounter with the subject, but readers with some prior knowledge of the Amish will benefit greatly from its comprehensive, national scope. For libraries with limited space, this is the one book on the Amish to own.

(J. Denny Weaver *Nova Religio*)

Ten years in the making, *The Amish* is one of a kind... The book draws on a combined seventy-five years of observation and analysis of Amish life by three of the most insightful scholars in the field of Amish studies... It does an exceptional job of conveying the cultural logic behind Amish practices... The book is a major contribution to understanding and theorizing Amish difference amid unity in the twenty-first century... *The Amish* is beautifully written and the consistency of voice is remarkable... This is interdisciplinary work at its best.

(David L. McConnell *Mennonite Quarterly Review*)

[*The Amish*] is a valuable, detailed and large (520 pp.) introduction to the Amish... The book, wisely documented with photographs (to be more appreciated, because of Amish shunning them), is a very precious documentation of Amish life and religious culture in present America - and therefore not only our best choice of 2014, but a bibliographic milestone not to be missed.

(Fabio Mora *Polifemo*)

The Amish is a sophisticated yet accessible picture of the many forms of contemporary Amish life, a picture that includes both the attractions of deeply rooted community relationships and the troubling shadows cast in a closely-knit patriarchal tribe, such as poorly addressed sexual abuse and a sometimes-dysfunctional youth culture. The nuance, accuracy, thoroughness, and respect attending this beautifully presented work of collaborative scholarship ensure that *The Amish* will define the field of Amish studies for some time to come.

(Gerald J. Mast *Journal of Mennonite Studies*)

About the Author

Donald B. Kraybill is Distinguished College Professor and Senior Fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College. **Karen M. Johnson-Weiner** is a professor of linguistic anthropology at SUNY-Potsdam. **Steven M. Nolt** is a professor of history at Goshen College.

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