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**Cults and Sects:**

**The Case of the Amish in the U.S.A**

Dissertation submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in  
Literature and Civilization.

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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## **Dedications**

*In the memory of my beloved grandmother,*

*To my beautiful mother,*

*To my siblings, Nadir, Yacine, Ayman, and my wonderful sister Mounira,*

*And above all, to my incredible father, you have supported me, you have been there through thick and thin, and for everything you did I am eternally grateful.*

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## **Abstract**

The current paper discusses the case of the Amish as the most distinctive religious sect in the United States and how a traditional community like that is capable of not only survive and preserve the Amish identity, but also thrive and flourish in the midst of modern life. Moreover, this dissertation aims to study the misconception that the Amish are “Anti-technology” or “Technophobes” just because they are very selective when it comes to the modern technologies they let in the community. And finally, this thesis will demonstrate how their religious convictions help govern and shape daily Amish practices. The results of this study will reveal that as a group, the Amish have managed to survive distinctively and at the same time have stepped toward modernity without harming their religious peculiarity as a sect.

**Key words:** Amish, United States, Modernity, Technology, Identity.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

The Amish people were a part of the Anabaptist group that evolved in the midst of the Protestant reformation era in Europe in 1525. It all started when a group of people refused the idea that newborn children should be baptized by the Catholic Church right away and that making the choice of following “Jesus Christ” can only be made by adult people. And on January 21st, 1525, three men of this group named Georg Blaurock, Felix Manz, and the leader Conrad Grebel, re-baptized each other which in fact inspired the name “Anabaptist” which means “re-baptizers” making this the first ever recorded adult baptism.

This marked the birth of the Anabaptist movement. But it wasn't until after more than a hundred years that the Amish group was established in 1693. The leader of the group Jakob Ammann created it because he thought that the Mennonites group in which the Amish were a part of, were too progressive and liberal, so he went for a more balanced, regulated, and stricter way of life.

In the 1700s, the Amish started immigrating to North America in search for safety and religious freedom. After the Amish settled, they developed an unwritten set of rules called the Ordnung meaning in German discipline or order in order to guide their lifestyle, it dictates everything for them including how and which technological innovations are allowed to be used.

The Ordnung also encourages the concept of setting limits between the Amish community and the mainstream society for the purpose of preserving their traditional lifestyle. Although they are a group of people who believe in maintaining traditions, they do make changes when they feel it is necessary, especially when it comes to the use of modern tools and technologies, but they make sure when and how to do it, so it will not be a threat to the sanity and the cohesion of their community.

The purpose of this research is to shed light on the lifestyle and the convictions of Amish and how it helped them preserve their traditions in the wake of modernity in the United States. As well as investigating whether this religious group is able to accept and adapt with the modern devices

Based on the previous facts and in order to proceed, this dissertation raises the three following questions:

- To what extent has modernity managed to penetrate the Amish communities?
- Were they able to preserve their heritage in the midst of social change?
- Did the members of this group embrace the modern technology?

The hypotheses proposed for the previous research questions are as following:

- It is hypothesized that the Amish have faced some challenges in maintaining their redemptive community in the middle of the technological evolution.
- The Amish might have had many factors that helped preserve their culture and allowed them to flourish despite the new changes.
- The Amish may develop attitudes that permit them cope with modernity and technology which help them thrive.

The methodology chosen in the study of this thesis is the qualitative which is an approach that aims to provide a profound detailed understanding of the research topic and also insights into the problem. In addition to the quantitative approach which helps generate knowledge through numeric data.

In order to answer the research questions, this paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the history and the beginnings of the Amish as a new religious group, their immigration waves to the United States, the geographic as well as the demographic profile of the different Amish settlements across the country. The second chapter tackles the Amish encounter with modernity in the twentieth century, in addition to the group's fight with the social evolution to maintain their culture and traditions. And finally, the third chapter examines this group's different attitudes towards technology and how it affected them in different aspects, also how they were able to adapt with it for their own benefit.

**Chapter One:**  
**The Amish in the U.S.A**

## **1.1 Introduction:**

In his article “Sects and Cults” ,Martin E. Marty says that besides Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, cults and sects are basically what forms a third religious power. Obtaining both psychic and spatial isolation is the main difference between them and the other dominations. Normally cults and sects tend to be unsociable, reserved, uncompromising and isolated. So they build a kind of a shelter from all the social intricacies and interrelations. And they definitely do not want to be absorbed into the mainstream society, in contrast to the other dominations who are most of the time connected with larger society’s values, beliefs, and practices.

Conceptually speaking, a sect means a new small group; it is usually a breakaway group in tension with the larger society doubting the sincerity of a specific doctrine; the Baptists and the Methodists, for instance protesting against the Anglican Church in England. However, a cult is a group with different rituals and headed by a charismatic authoritarian leader.

Historically, the Amish are a Christian sect tracing their religious heritage to the Swiss Anabaptists of the sixteenth-century Europe that emerged in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. In 1525, the Anabaptists were a small group who proposed changes to the state Protestant church, objecting children’s baptism, preferring a self-governing church, encouraging the idea that there shouldn’t be a specific place for worshipping and use their homes instead. Their recommendations were rejected and after that, they were considered a danger and a threat to the social order which made both the church and the government take the decision to punish or execute them, some of them were banished, and other were drowned or burned at the stake.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Amish were a group that was founded by an Anabaptist leader called Jakob Amman who recommended several changes to the Mennonites in the late 1600s; the Amish split from the Mennonites in 1693, and in the eighteenth century, they started immigrating to North America hoping to find religious freedom. Currently living in the United States and Canada, the Amish are recognized by their rejection to modern technologies, their rural and farming society, and above all their plain living and clothing.

## **1.2 History and Beginnings of the Amish**

The Protestant Reformation that took place in Western Europe in the sixteenth century was a major event which later on shaped the Anabaptist movement and the sects that derived from it in so many ways.

### **1.2.1 The Radical Reformation**

As stated by Steven M. Nolt the American Scholar and Professor of History and Anabaptist Studies in his book “A History of the Amish”, Western Europe was unified and well-knit in only one “Holy and Apostolic Church” for over a millennium. In the fourth century and with the help of the Roman rulers and emperors, Christianity went from a persecuted oppressed religion into the one and only approved and sanctioned faith in the Roman Empire. Priests and bishops were given extra special privileges and advantages, and the bishop of Rome received a remarkable prestige. The imperial state and the church were united in establishing a united Christian civilization. And opposing or disagreeing with this “One Church” was considered an offence against both, state and society.

It is important to mention that the Western part of the Roman Empire collapsed and fell into pieces, and thereby it was for the church to pick them up. During the Medieval Era, knowledgeably, the Christians were led by the bishop of Rome and the Pope in constructing a sacred civilization in West Europe. Anyone who would join the church’s sacraments in search for divine grace such as the Holy Communion would be granted God’s salvation. Interestingly, besides supervising the path to heaven, the Church started crowning rulers, inducing exploration and trade, promoting higher education, and interceded national conflicts (14).

West Europe was led by the church for a thousand years, however, as the society was breaking up by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the church was also splintering; and this troubled people like in any economic or political dilemma. The church’s problems were quite different in 1517; thus, the Roman Catholic Church was basically losing its power in various parts of Europe mainly when it comes to both political and ethical authority. In the midst of all this, a whole set of reforms were suggested by the lecturer Martin Luther<sup>1</sup> alongside the Wittenberg monk in that same year; but unlike the previous reformers, their

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<sup>1</sup> a German professor of theology, composer, priest, Augustinian monk, and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation

changes were church structure in addition to the key church doctrines' interpretation (Nolt 14).

It is important to highlight that to Rome's fundamental teachings, Luther's reforms were revolutionary challenges. Luther believed and stood for the idea that salvation by grace can only be given only through faith, which means that God's saving grace is based on each Christian's individual faith, and it is directly given to each individual without the need of the church's sacraments. And this fact weakened the church's influence and authority. Luther also defended the idea that the church's decisions should only be made based on the Bible rather than the canon law, and he favored using the German language in worshipping as a substitute to the Latin language in order for people to understand more. Luther's teachings were promoted by printers in all the German speaking parts of Europe and way more; in other places, Luther's ideas were introduced by church leaders to their parishes.

Keeping the same line of thought, another reformer, Huldrych Zwingli was also preaching Luther ideas in addition to, defending clergy marriage, the symbolic view of the Eucharist, and disapproving with the purgatory's doctrine. In Zurich, Zwingli's teachings started attracting reform minded men and women by 1518. And in 1522, groups of craftspeople and students were having secret meetings in homes for praying and studying the Bible (Nolt 14-15).

### **1.2.2 Anabaptism and the Amish Beginnings**

In her book, "Plain Answers about the Amish Life", Mindy Starns Clark reports that the beginning of the Anabaptist movement was marked by a group of a few Christians questioning the integrity of the Swiss church regarding particular practices, especially the profound interrelation between the church and the state, children's baptism, and the church's financial connections with the Swiss government. The Anabaptists were championing the idea that the religious preference must be independent and away from the government supervision (54).

Similarly, Nolt also stresses the idea that these dissenters strongly believed that the church should have Christians who voluntarily choose to follow Christ footsteps. Since Baptism is symbol of commitment, membership, and discipleship, they thought that only adults can be baptized because they are old enough to select the path they want to follow. They also insisted



on the idea that the state should not be guiding and controlling the doctrines and the practices of the church.

In the same vein, these Radicals believed that God's saving grace will only come through faith and considered it as a ticket to heaven which changed their lives not only towards God, but also towards other people. Because of what Christ taught them about peacefulness, non-resistance, and non-violence to their enemies. The radical Christian submission forbade taking part in any in judicial arms of the government or in the military. On the other hand, they encouraged mutual aid amongst Christians and personal goods' sharing which they took very seriously (16).

Soon, the radicals' "free church" concept contradicted the Zurich Council. Dissenters did not want to baptize their children since they were not old enough. The city then told them to baptize their infants, stop meeting, and dismiss the non Zurichers between them. As a matter of fact, opposing, the radicals had a secret meeting on 21st of January, 1525 to rebaptize each other, announcing that they are consciously making the decision of following "Jesus Christ" and forming their own church free from the state's control. This was their second baptism (Anabaptismus in Latin) but for them, as Anabaptists it was their only meaningful baptism, and that made enemies to both, church and state (Nolt 17).

Contrary to what was expected, The Anabaptists persevered and stuck to their opinion in spite of the government interference, the countless arrests, and their attempts to crush the movement. Instead, the Anabaptist movement was obtaining more strength and stretching quickly all over Western Europe that a regulation was passed by the Zurich council making adult baptism a felony that will be punished by death. An Anabaptist evangelist "Felix Manz" was executed on the 5th of January, 1527, being the first Swiss Anabaptist martyr (Clark 56).

The same author focuses on the idea that the Anabaptists were threatened, fined, jailed, and exiled. In spite of all that, the threat of execution didn't really stop them. In fact, the Anabaptist movement was spreading everywhere in Switzerland and Southern Germany, Moravia, and Austrian Tyrol. In a parallel way, travelling preachers and merchants and dissident booksellers were actively circulating the message, inviting people to establish an honest church free of government interference, receiving God's saving grace, and follow Christ' teachings in their everyday life (Nolt 18-19).

Interestingly, Nolt notes that the Anabaptists were faced by strong oppositions, they were tortured, beheaded, imprisoned, burned, some were even sold as slaves. Several Swiss city states hired what they called “Anabaptist Hunters” whose job is to find and kill the Anabaptists and get paid for every head. Then the movement started spreading up North Germany and the Netherlands which made the authorities there to respond severely. It has been noted that only in the decades after 1525, more than four thousand Anabaptists that were executed (19).

In the words of the American author and professor, Donald B. Kraybill when writing his book “The Riddle of Amish Culture”, Menno Simons was considered a prominent supporter of Anabaptism. He was already ordained as a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1524; however, he was lost between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anabaptism’s new interpretations of the Bible. Leaving the Catholic Church in 1536, he quickly became an important Anabaptist leader, preacher, and writer. Menno Simons was so influential, and because of that most of the Anabaptists were later called Mennonites or Mennists (27).

The Amish were part of the Mennonites until 1693, as a Mennonites leader named Jakob Ammann suggested several changes to this group. He recommended that instead of holding an annual communion, it should be held twice Christians should wash each other’s feet in the communion service in devoutness and obedience to Christ (Clark 54).

And to boost spiritual discipline and doctrinal purity, Ammann banned trimming beards and wear plain instead of fashionable clothing. He also favored the idea of shunning members who have been excommunicated, which was the reason for the division. The people who followed him were later on known as “The Amish”. For him the Mennonites were too liberal and that they have deviated from the original teachings and practices, so he opted for a more regulated and stricter lifestyle.

Thus, Swiss Anabaptism, originating in Zurich in 1525, had two branches after 1693: Amish and Mennonite. Nourished by a common heritage, Amish and Mennonite life has flowed in separate streams since the division (Kraybill 30). The following figure gives an idea about the European and roots of the Amish.

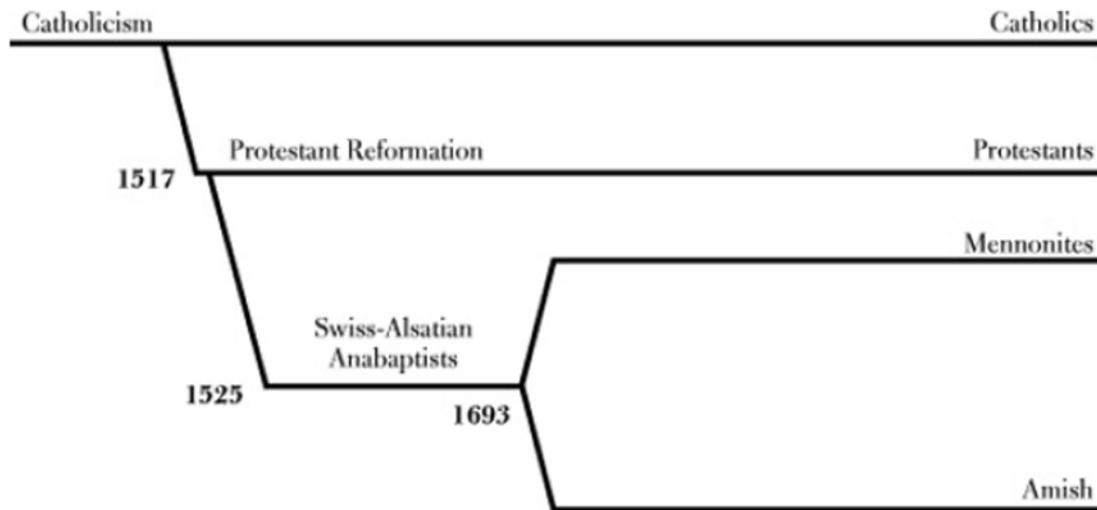


Figure 1: European Roots of the Amish

Note: Adapted from Donald B. Kraybill, “The Riddle of the Amish Culture”, 2001, p 29.

### 1.3 Immigration

The tormented Anabaptist groups could not find any better solution than to flee their home after all the harsh oppression and persecution

#### 1.3.1 Searching for Stability

The first hundred years of the Amish were noticeably identified by two things, their status of the “outsider group” and the development of friendly relationships between them and their non-Amish around them in many areas. The two factors motivated them to geographically expand their church. Being a small group living in Alsace and a few others living in Switzerland and the Palatinate. These places’ social pressure and political hostility in addition to being ordered to leave the farms in Eastern Europe and West Germany, and the temptation of North America, all prompted the Amish migration.

In the beginning of the Amish church, the fact that being a part of the society and an estrange outsider at the same time was obvious. After the division in 1693, the Swiss Anabaptists who followed Ammann decided to move north and settled in Alsace because

back then it was governed by leaders of Ribeaupierre who were known for their religious tolerance. The Anabaptists have been in Alsace for quite a while, the arriving of more than sixty families and Ammann's family as well helped the Amish community become larger (Nolt 66-67).

Nolt noted that obviously, from all the Anabaptists, the Amish were quite recognizable, particularly those who were adapted to regional appearance, customs, and traditions due to the long time they were living in Alsace. Even though the Amish were outsiders, they could still feel they were welcomed.

But in 1712, as the tolerant rulers were dismissed by the French government and the order of banishing all the Anabaptists. Even though this order did not fully eradicate the presence of the Amish, it sure scattered the early Amish Communities. These banishment orders pushed them away but the Amish moved to close regions such as Montbéliard, Hesse-Darmstadt, Salm, duchy of Zweibrücken, and duchy of Lorraine. Some of them even went to places that opened recently for Anabaptists and others moved to areas where there were already Anabaptists living there (67-68).

Keeping the same line of thought, the same historian mentioned that the Amish Families had to migrate to the Netherlands, Eastern Europe, and even North America. They had to move toward the north because of the international diplomacy and persecution. The Bernese government in Switzerland wanted to get rid of the Anabaptists in 1711, so they decided to take them anywhere else. In 1699, the Bernese government even asked Dutch shipping company called "Dutch East India Company" to ship the Anabaptists away, somewhere in Pacific Ocean. When they did not answer, they decided to send these Anabaptists to North America (Nolt 77).

In the same vein, these attempts to pull the Amish out failed. The Bernese government decided to try again in summer 1711, but the Dutch officials interfered and obtained a humanitarian promise for the Amish giving them a safe passage to the Netherlands. And they even gave them the right to choose wherever they want to go. But even though the Bern government wanted to forcibly export the Mennonites and the Amish, some were migrating to North America willingly. And Pennsylvania became practically the Mennonites destination in the eighteen century, which later becomes also the Amish destination (Nolt 76-77).

### **1.3.2 The Lure of North America**

Nolt pointed out, an English man named William Penn was given a large land grant in 1681; he decided to turn it into a colony as a “holy experiment” and was called later Pennsylvania. He was a member in “Quakers” known as the “Religious Society of Friends” which was a minority group persecuted in continental Europe and England. William Penn founded Pennsylvania based on religious toleration, that it became a North American refuge to all the persecuted religious minorities, such as Quakers, Moravians, Mennonites, the Amish, and many more (77).

According to the same author, it is not clear to historians if any Amish people sailed before 1736. But the first known Amish immigration wave was when twenty one Amis families sailed to Pennsylvania in Charming Nancy in 1737. After that, so many others began immigrating so fast that almost a hundred households made it to North America within a few decades before the American Revolution (Nolt).

According to Clark, the second immigration wave started in 1815, as about three thousand Amish adults made it to North America. Many immigrants of this wave went straight to Pennsylvania, whereas the majority went to other American states such as Illinois, Ohio, Iowa, New York, and Indiana. Many Amish settlements were established all over the country by the 1800s (Clark 56).

Nolt stated that more 70,000 European German speaking people arrived to Philadelphia in the few decades before the Revolution, and the Amish were just a tiny part of this movement. There were Reformed, Lutherans, small groups of Moravians, Catholics, and different Anabaptist groups. And all of them were identified as “Pennsylvania Dutch” by the Americans. Even though they had different religious beliefs, they did share many folkways and customs. And as soon as they settled, they developed their own dialect which is also called “Pennsylvania Dutch” which gave them a distinctive image in America.

### **1.4 The Amish and Lifestyle**

The Amish are trying to keep it simple and have a calmer life and highlighting the importance of the community and family, they believe that they can live in the world but make sure not to adapt with the larger society or what they call the “English” world, and keep it as plain as possible since plain is very important to them and to the lifestyle they decided to lead.

### **1.4.1 Beliefs**

Kraybill, Weiner and Nolt mentioned in their book “The Amish” that the Amish seek walking in Jesus Christ’s footsteps by practicing his teachings in their everyday life, and will only be baptized when they are old enough to choose committing to this faith and willing to follow the church’s regulations. So the children are not Amish members until they choose in their twenties if they will stay and make this lifetime commitment (4-5).

Clark asserts that the Amish abide by the following principles of the Christian faith: That there is only one God, that God is trinity; that Christ came to earth as God in the flesh, that God’s saving grace comes only through faith, that the scripture is the word of God, and lastly the church is the body of Jesus.

It is worth mentioning that these same beliefs as the Catholic Church’s belief and also many Protestant groups. The difference between all of them is not really about the religious beliefs; it’s all about the lifestyle that the Amish decided to live (19).

The same author noted that they believe in the importance of setting boundaries and following rules. To the Amish, rules build a strong community, provide a feeling of belonging, and more importantly shape and preserve their identity. This set of regulation is called the “Ordnung”, and without it they feel like they are vulnerable and more likely to be victims to unhappiness, pride, loss of dignity, and eventually self-destruction.

The Ordnung dictates how the Amish everyday life should be, when it comes to education, transportation, clothing, technology and way more. It is different from affiliation to another and sometimes even from a district to another. The Ordnung changes and adapt as the communities grow and split into new one (Clark 46).

The Amish lifestyle might appear peculiar or perplexing but it is actually what they believe is the right way to live their Christian everyday life, by following Jesus’ teachings and the scripture’s values which are: the surrender to God, submission and obedience to authority, separating themselves from the world, becoming “plain people” and honoring history, and ultimately being simple by practicing modesty, humility, and peacefulness. Taking Christ as an example, the Amish believe he embodied perfectly these values (Clark 20-21).

### 1.4.2 Amish Affiliations

Noting that as a result of church growth for many centuries, division, and expansion, there are various Amish affiliations in North America and each and every one of them has its own practices and regulations but there are some rules that most of these Amish affiliations abide by. These elements are as following, they need to adhere to the “Eighteen Articles”, Use the houses for worshipping instead of church buildings, wear plain clothing, they should live in rural isolated areas and invest in agrarian lifestyle, only utilize horses and buggies for transportation, limit their children’s education to the eighth grade, value their history and heritage and speak the German dialect as their first language (Clark 16).

According to Kraybill, Weiner, and Nolt, the Amish affiliations were no more than four in North America by the beginning of the twentieth century, but it kept increasing over the years that the statistics say that there are over 40 affiliations. While there are some that have small districts, there are others that have more than 100 districts:

*At the opening of the twentieth century, there were 42 geographically distinct Amish settlements in North America, representing 3 or 4 affiliations—groups defined by shared views and practices. By 2012 the number of settlements had swelled to 463, and the number of affiliations had multiplied to more than 40. If the smaller subgroups within some affiliations are counted, the number of identifiable cohorts rises above 65, not including the more than 130 fairly independent congregations that lack a firm relationship to a wider affiliation (138).*

The same author added that even though all the groups stick to the same belief system, the way they decided to live these beliefs differs from an affiliation to another, such as church discipline, buggy styles and colors, clothing, the use of technology, and way more (17-18).

The Amish do not have any main authority like the other religious denominations; so they do not have a pope, no convention, no association. Their Amish primary authority in both practices and everyday life depends on each affiliation and each district. That’s the reason why regulations are different in each area; every settlement has its own regulations that was made by its own leaders and have to be followed. Every affiliation’s issues are discussed by its bishops who meet often to do so (Clark 39).

## **1.5 Demography and Geographic Distribution**

Kraybill, Weiner, and Nolt stated that the twentieth century has witnessed an extraordinary growth of the Amish communities. From a small group of six thousand in 1900, their population increased in 2011 to more than 250,000. And statistics show that it has been growing twofold every twenty years or so. It increased from 123,000 to almost 275,000 only in the years between 1991 and 2012. Yet, the Amish have managed to thrive by insisting on the importance of separating themselves from the world and holding on to their traditions in spite of all the technological and social revolutions that came along with the twentieth century.

Denominations normally grow by other people converting or having children, the Amish did win some converts although they do not really depend on evangelism; they count on their own natural reproduction instead. It is worth noting that children's production is not necessarily enough, since the Amish need to also convince them to join the community later (155-156).

In the words of the researcher and historian Steven M. Nolt in his book "The Amish: A Concise Introduction", the Amish growth is increasing so fast that that it is doubling every eighteen or twenty years. And presently, there are more than three hundred thousand Amish members including the children in North America. The most sizeable communities are in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio. The ones that currently growing are in New York, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Michigan. And the small ones are in Florida, Texas, Maine, and Montana. However, the riddle behind this population growth is quite obvious; their families are way larger unlike the mainstream society. The Amish families tend to have from seven to ten or more children. But like it has been stated before, these children are only counted as members after the baptism's ritual in their twenties (4-6).

According to Clark, future projections for this increasing population growth are not showing a sign of decreasing or slowing down anytime soon. And since most of the time, 85 percent of the children join the community when they grow up; this growth will be driven by both of the factors, high birth rate and the high retention rate as well (58).

The following table illustrates and demonstrates where the Amish communities are situated among 31 American states with the estimated population in every settlement and district.



<b>STATE</b>	<b>SETTLEMENTS</b>	<b>DISTRICTS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED POPULATION</b>
Pennsylvania	58	537	79,200
Ohio	65	593	76,195
Indiana	25	405	57,430
Wisconsin	56	162	22,020
New York	57	155	20,595
Michigan	50	126	16,410
Missouri	49	106	13,990
Kentucky	44	103	13,345
Iowa	23	67	9,980
Illinois	20	58	7,730
Minnesota	23	41	4,680
Tennessee	13	28	3,220
Kansas	10	20	1,850
Delaware	1	11	1,695
Maryland	3	12	1,580
Virginia	7	11	1,295
Maine	6	7	850
Montana	7	9	760
Oklahoma	4	8	670
Colorado	4	6	610
West Virginia	5	5	465
Nebraska	4	5	365
Mississippi	1	2	275
North Carolina	2	2	275
Arkansas	2	3	255
Wyoming	1	1	130
Florida	1	2	100
South Dakota	1	1	90
Texas	1	1	65
Vermont	1	1	60
Idaho	1	1	50
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>2,489</b>	<b>336,235</b>

Table1: Amish population 2019 (ordered by estimated population).

Note: Adapted from “Amish Population, 2019.” Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College. <http://groups.etown.edu/amishstudies/statistics/population-2019/>

## 1.6 Amish relationship with the American society

Clark clarified that when the Amish first got to North America, their practices and lifestyle were practically the same to those of the mainstream society. Later on, the Amish stood out from the rest, as soon as the nation started changing by embracing modern and industrialized practices. However, the years between 1920 and 1970 were pretty hard for the Amish, particularly during the war; they were regarded with skepticism and hostility.

But the American society showed a different attitude of compassion, understanding, and curiosity towards the Amish after the 1970s. In the course of time, all the feeling of hatred and harshness vanished, giving way to tolerance and diversity which helped the Amish obtain approval and acceptance (57). In his book, Nolt argued that ,

*Although Amish people in contemporary North America have not been beheaded or burned at the stake like those whose stories appear in the thick martyr book, some Amish in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have sat in jail or paid stiff fines for refusing to serve in the military, send their children to high school, install smoke detectors in their homes, or place oranges slow-moving-vehicle emblems on their buggies. And when they pay the price for going against the grain, they believe they are aligning themselves with their spiritual ancestors (13).*

## **1.7 Conclusion**

The Amish population in the United States in 1900 was so small that it was really hard for the Americans to visualize them developing their own reputation across the whole country. But still, they managed to make an extraordinary cultural transformation, and with no help from a famous spoken person, no campaigns, just a small modest religious community was able to gain recognition and become known all over the country.

The way the Amish are viewed by the outsiders contributes in their lifestyle. In the twentieth century, the Amish identity was shaped by both, the Amish convictions and beliefs in addition to the public perceptions (Kraybill et al.50).

## **Chapter Two**

# **The Amish Group between Two Conjunctures: Preserving Own Identity or Embracing Modernity**

## **2.1 Introduction**

Admittedly, the Amish do display in many ways modern behavior, but they have always been cautious when it comes to modernity. In fact, the Amish have been firmly seeking to protect or maintain their traditional lifestyle and community throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century that marked the lure of modernization and progress.

It is no news that the Amish were tantalized by the wake of modernization and remained fearful and skeptical of the harm that might be hiding under this smooth tempting surface, which in time might be a threat to their community's cohesion. Their fear that this modernization will be followed by shattering or breaking their unity was not an idle one; Donald B. Kraybill and Marc Alan Olshan, the editors of the book "The Amish Struggle with Modernity" state that some scholars debated that all the changes encouraged by industrialization are usually followed by social fragmentations. They add that social separation can appear or manifest in different ways, spreading social functions such as work, education and leisure in different locations break families apart, in other words, geographical and social mobility tend to isolate friends and families and disconnect long term ties (32).

It is overwhelmingly true that modern people are free from the chains of community, and the Amish as traditional people, they think that mobility, discontinuity and individualism make it easier to separate relationships and loosen the social ties.

Again, Kraybill and Olshan add that separation from the world has always been a fundamental belief in the Amish religion, it grew out of the European persecution but today it is legitimate according to their scriptures. Many of their practices that might seem strange to the outside observers are actually social tools to shield or protect their culture from modernity that threatens to tear up their corporate way of life (33).

## 2.2 Amish Encounter with Modernity

According to Kraybill and Olshan, the Amish tend to hold on to their traditional customs such as the church services, their rejection of education, and their attitude regarding individualism. The absence of the electricity in the houses prevents them from using so many things like air conditioners, clothes dryers, microwave ovens, toasters, televisions. Although in some areas they have totally resisted the stream of progress, some have succeeded in drifting along with it.

Additionally, while some Amish groups are embracing modernity in the twentieth century despite the cherished stereotypes; still, it varies from one settlement to another across the United States. When it comes to the conservative ones, refrigerators, air conditioners and indoor bathrooms are still taboos. Hay balers are still not used in the fields and their cows are usually hand milked. It is hypothesized that the Amish adaptation to modernity is highly related to the population density of the people sharing the same geographical region. To put it differently, the Amish people's behavior towards modernity is related to urbanization. For example, the settlements in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, located in the middle of the rapidly urbanizing area; they are quite open to the larger society and progressive when it comes to the use of new technologies (22). In this sense, Kraybill agrees with the general scholarly claim that,

*The Amish encounter with modernity involved a process of negotiation—with give and take on all sides. On some issues, the Amish surrendered to the demands of modernity; at other times, the agents of change conceded to the Amish. And as we have seen, compromise was often the order of the day as bargains were negotiated between the stewards of tradition and the proponents of progress (441-442).*

It is thus important to mention that the Amish became involved in so many ways with the mainstream society, even though they have always wanted a community that's separate from the outside world. Their shift into microenterprises tied them straight to the world and its economic structure. The Amish convictions have been tested by the ongoing struggle to keep a free church in front of the legal and economic involvements. In fact, they enjoyed their religious freedom and tolerance granted by the constitution for cultural minorities. Their goal to stay separate has been successful until now, thanks to the host community (Kraybill and Olshan 17).

## **2.3 Preserving Amish Identity**

The Amish were able to adapt and thrive being separated from the larger society and popular culture. As traditional people, they flourished in the middle of an advanced predominant culture with whole different values. They succeeded under the political accommodation and the religious freedom that were granted to them by the United States. They tend to lead a humble lifestyle in an interdependent community which did not change that much in the last three hundred years. Keeping the outside world out in different aspects of their lives is their way to protect their culture. They try as much as they can to limit the contact with the mainstream society.

### **2.3.1 Amish Separation from Mainstream Society**

Kraybill and Olshan noted that being separate from the world is considered an important theme to the Amish culture. And based on that, the Amish people have always wanted to keep their identity separate from the American mainstream (44).

To emphasize the same idea, Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, and Steven M. Nolt confirm in their book “The Amish” that it is important for the Amish to keep their distance from the American society but technology can connect them in two different ways. Firstly, they can be exposed to the lifestyle and the values of the American culture by the new technologies. The telephone, for instance, linked the Amish people directly to the outside world in the early twentieth century. Followed by different developments such as the radio, the internet, and the television, that offered access to the popular culture.

Also, there are other technologies that do not necessarily link the Amish community directly to the larger world, but they can definitely change their society’s social structure and lifestyle. But still, the Amish fear these new technologies that will change their lifestyle and traditions and the disintegration that they may lead to (314).

To the Amish, technology is not regarded as evil or sinful. They believe that things can help and harm, for example, the knife can be used in two ways, cut food or kill somebody. So in this case, technology can either help them do better or tear their community down. Destroying the bonds of their community in the future is their biggest fear (Kraybill et al. 314-315).

Being separate from the world as a principle and a religious value, has always protected the Amish identity and any compromises to bring them closer with the outside world, is considered a threat to the essence of their identity (Kraybill and Olshan 44).

### **2.3.2 Preserving Amish Religious and Cultural Heritage:**

In order to protect their religious and cultural heritage, the Amish use the Ordnung as a guide that dictates what's forbidden and what's expected in the Amish lifestyle and keep them on the routes of faithfulness (Kraybill and Olshan 5).

They also communicate in their unwritten dialect called the Pennsylvania German which is a reflection to their ethnic identity. This dialect can preserve their identity in different ways. It is a way to connect and bind the community, so they can have a world of their own. Using it to read the Martyrs Mirror, the Bible, and other materials creates for the Amish a connection with their history. It separates them from the larger society, and it is not easy at all for them to communicate their emotions in English. Their dialect is a safe way to keep the outside world away that it throttles any intimate connections with non-Amish people. The dialect serves also as a way or understanding the reality that blocks the way for modernity (Kraybill et al. 125).

Donald B.Kraybill adds in his book “The Riddle of Amish Culture” that also the way they dress communicates commitment and membership. It binds them together and sets the apart from the outside world. From the beginning, it has been a distinctive symbol of the Amish identity. And it became more unique by the 20th century when manufactured clothes became popular. Dress was considered a way to make blending and connecting with the mainstream culture impossible (96-97).

John A. Hostetler notes in his book “The Amish” that they adopted dress styles that were popular back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Western Europe. And so it can be different from a region to another, there have been some small changes to it, but they absolutely did not retain anything from the North American fashion (29-30).

Mindy Starns Clark adds in her book “Plain Answers about the Amish Life” that men usually wear dark broad-fall trousers with suspenders, shirts can be prescribed differently from a group to another, and banded straw hats. They also should shave their faces until they get married, after that they can stop shaving beards, however, they definitely need to shave their mustaches. For women, they wear long dresses with black capes and aprons, they also wear prayer coverings or what they call kapps, and it can be black or white depending on the



marital status (78-79-80). In addition to the horse and buggy, as North America started using cars and in the twentieth century, the horse became a major symbol for the Amish. It is approximately a sacred badge of the Amish identity (Kraybill 113).

The horse eases things up, imposes boundaries, and represents deep values for the Amish lifestyle. The horse drawn carriage is an obvious symbol for Amish identity, to both Amish and non-Amish people. Like any cultural symbol, the horse sets symbolic limits for the Amish society (Kraybill et al. 131).

Horse drawn carriage, dialect, and dress are the most powerful cultural symbols that have effectively resisted modernity in so many aspects. Several Amish affiliations have allowed some changes which permitted the use of English words in their German dialect, hiring cars for different purposes, and the use of artificial fabrics for their clothes... etc.

Yet, horse drawn buggies, dress, and the dialect are still solid signs of integration and separation shaping their everyday life. They bind members to a common history, set limits between the community and the outside world, and offering evidence that even though there are some changes happening out of the public view, the Amish will always be Amish (Kraybill et al. 132-133).

### **2.3.3 Adopting a new Educational System**

Kraybill, Weiner, and Nolt state that the history of Amish education displays how they resisted the 20th century's educational system. Their opposition was so firm that so many parents went to jail. The Amish children used to go to small rural schools with non-Amish teachers and classmates until 1950. A huge consolidation and small schools changing into a big one were the result of the transformation of the elementary and secondary schools in the 20th century. In the meantime, the states were changing the standards for the teachers, increasing the number of the required years and the length of every year. Technology, physical education, and science became important parts in the curriculum. These changes were induced by urbanization, new and different standards of education, a growing commitment to pedagogy, paved the way to an ideology that promoted the importance of schooling in a democratic nation. Because these new laws were different from a state to another, the Amish reactions changed from a region to another (251).

Some of the parents were fined; others were imprisoned for refusing their children to go to the ninth grade. Amish families protested to change their many one-room schools into a one

consolidated school building. With the help of their bishops, they got a petition signed by three thousand Amish and non-Amish people in November 1937, arguing that the only way they will send their children to school if it is eight months a year, finished after low grades, and in a one school building (Kraybill et al. 251-252).

The same authors add that in response to these changes and the imprisonment of the parents, the Amish started building their schools; they had only four private schools before the Second World War, but after the consolidation reached the more isolated areas, that's when the real explosion happened. In the 1950s, 59 Amish schools started. Only in the decade between 1956 and 1965, ten new schools were founded every year.

The foundation of Amish private schools was a solution to the school consolidation but not to the mandatory attendance laws. But those conflicts were solved on a state basis. Pennsylvania solved the problem after negotiating the school program with the Amish leaders in 1955. This compromise allowed the Amish children to leave school after completing the eighth grade or when they are fourteen years old, and until they are fifteen, they still need attend half a day of classes every week and only then they will be allowed to have a work permit. So for the state, the Amish children are in school and for the parents, their children are right where they want them to be, at home (254).

Some states adopted the Pennsylvania compromise while others rejected it. Ultimately, a law case in Wisconsin that ended up in the U.S Supreme Court and resulted the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* decision in 1972, in which the Supreme Court saw that the Amish children shouldn't follow compulsory education after the eighth grade and it is their parents' right to decide what's best for the children's education. *Yoder* focused also on the children's right to enter apprenticeship at the age of fourteen. And thirteen years after this decision, the number of Amish private schools doubled from three hundred to almost six hundred schools (Kraybill et al. 254-255).

By 2012, there were 2000 Amish schools, with almost 55000 pupils and 3000 teachers. The teachers are usually young Amish women; they are selected based on their embodiment of the Amish values, their ability to handle a classroom, and the academic accomplishments. When it comes to recruiting teachers, it differs from affiliation to another and from a state to another. In the more conservative settlements, for instance, teachers are recruited with little or without training (Kraybill et al. 256). The following graph illustrates the increase in the number of Amish schools as explained above.

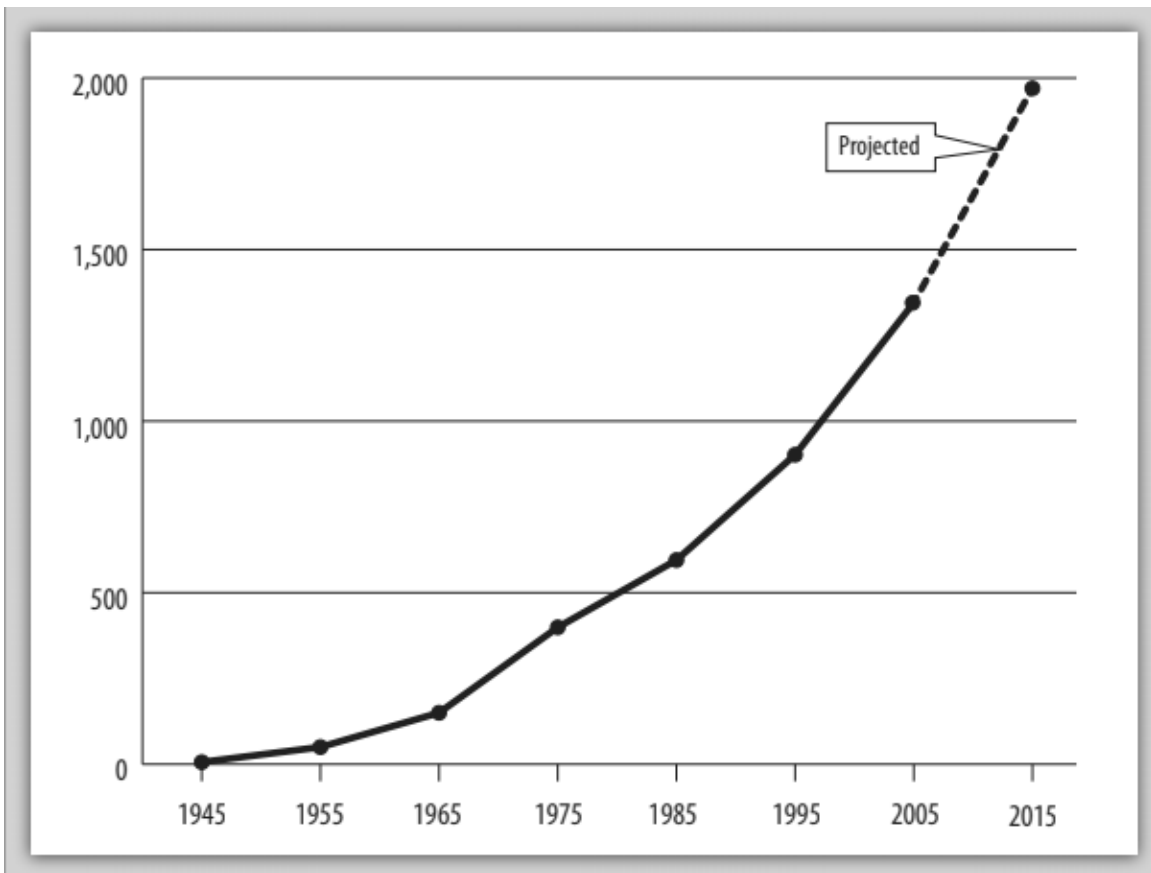


Figure 2: Growth of Amish Schools, 1945–2015

Source: Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, and Steven M. Nolt. *The Amish*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. P 255.

According to the previous figure, the numbers of private Amish schools witnessed a rapid increase especially after *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Supreme Court’s decision until 2015.

Steven M. Nolt then adds in his book “*The Amish: A Concise Introduction*” that in the end, the Amish believe that their schools successfully prepare the youth to be strong, hardworking, and have practical skills that will serve their community, and not the larger society. They don’t put their youth in schools so they can become a chemical engineer, a pianist, or a lawyer. For outsiders, these boundaries might seem disturbingly parochial. But for the Amish, things are the way they should be, where the church and the families are working together in a harmonious way to educate thoughtful, helpful, and most importantly disciplined young

individuals who will eventually have the desire and the ability to contribute in the Amish communities (79).

Nolt reinforces the same idea by quoting some Amish people when saying

*“We’re not opposed to education,” a Pennsylvania Amish school advocate asserted. “We’re just against education higher than our heads. I mean education that we don’t need.” Indeed, Amish parents insist on sending their children to school— absentee rates are low—but they believe that education always has a purpose and in their case, that purpose is to train children to be productive members of Amish society (78).*

## **2.4 Embracing Modernity**

The Amish resistance to progress in different ways has always been considered as a war against modernity. And for them to wage a cultural battle, they had to draw their social lines so they can preserve their identity and maintain their culture (Kraybill and Olshan 35).

### **2.4.1 The Amish War against Modernity**

These socially organized lines separate sacred and profane, good and bad, dirt and dignity, status and stigma, vice and virtue. The drawing of social lines grants predictability, stability, and order for fragile communities that in other circumstances might fall into chaos. In order to negotiate compromises between the voices of tradition that fear any kind of change and the forces of progress, the lines can be drawn, sometimes erased and redrawn again in a continuous process.

Again, Kraybill and Olshan think that the Amish struggled to adapt new forces of change, both external and internal while remaining faithful to their history and heritage (37). They stated that the introduction of the new technology was divided into external factors and internal factors:

#### **2.4.1.1 External Factors**

Kraybill and Olshan argue that the Amish social change in the 20th century was induced by five external factors that were introduced to them in different and in various settlements. In some cases they received these change forces with a cool acceptance or complete rejection, and sometimes grudging adaptation.

First, were the economic incentives, the everyday pressure to have a comfortable living have contributed in shaping the changes of the Amish way of life. In fact, all the technological changes were due to the attempts to ameliorate efficiency and productivity without jeopardizing their identity. For example an Amish entrepreneur was asked about his purchase of a forklift for his shop, he said “we simply had to buy it because of the competition”.

Their adoption of bulk-milk-tanks and milking machines boosted the Amish families’ incomes in spectacular ways. This newly adopted equipment promised a greater and a stable level of living as a response to the economic prods. These economic forces encouraged the hiring of vehicles, the use of telephones, as well as using the air and hydraulic equipment in the Amish shops. While other conservative settlements often considered it an economic threat and resisted the new technologies (38).

Second, were the legal factors, governmental agencies when it comes to the federal, state, and the local level imposed various changes upon the Amish. For example the flashing lights on the horse-drawn buggies and the signs of slow moving vehicles are foisted in some states by the law. Even though most of them grudgingly accepted it for the sake of the highway safety, the more conservative ones rejected it. Some settlements that are situated near the rising urban region had a great influence on the Amish regulations when it comes to the shops and buildings, in addition to the number of their employees...etc. The legal system of the states has led many of the Amish social changes, in all these ways and many others (Kraybill and Olshan 38-39).

Third, were the structural shifts, structural changes of the large society encouraged the Amish and at times shoved them into new directions. The evolution of great consolidated schools boosted the formation of hundreds of Amish. Before 1950, the majority of the children used to attend rural-public schools, but in the mid-century their parochial schools started to flourish, particularly after the well-known Wisconsin V.Yoder decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1972. Also the tourism increasing in the American life that was made by the growing connection of interstate highways popular automobile ownership has an important impact on many of the Amish that live in the bigger settlements. The flow of tourists helped increase their interactions with the outside world and provided the Amish with a market for their products, boosting both their self-consciousness and the collective self-esteem. The Amish invasion around various settlements pushed the farmers away from the lands and into factory work and microenterprises, all these changes made by the American

society have also contributed in changing the Amish lifestyle as well (Kraybill and Olshan 39).

Fourth, were the social ties, the growing interactions with larger society in different Amish settlements helped speed up the social change in almost every aspect of the Amish life. Their experience of meeting tourists, working in different jobs apart from farming, traveling, and using the outside professionals exposed the Amish people to the dominant culture and provided new ideas and new products. An increased use of lawyers, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, accountants, and agricultural specialists that introduce new practices to the Amish life. Usually the agronomic consultant has different Amish clients to whom he gives advices regularly about weed control, crop rotation, seed selection, and the use of fertilizers. Working in motels, factories, restaurants, private homes, and small businesses exposed them to new habits of which some of them were adopted. Their contact with midwives and physicians introduced the Amish people to the children's vaccination and immunization (Kraybill and Olshan 39-40).

Fifth, technological changes, the Amish being cautious and selective when it comes to adopting new technologies tend to fluctuate with their availability in the mainstream society. Although the Amish have welcomed certain technologies that have actually been accepted in many settlements, like instant pudding, detergents, automatic milkers, and gas grills for barbecuing ...etc. They remained firm in the refusal of some innovations such as air conditioners, dish washers, television...etc. In all these ways, external forces had an important role in introducing new changes to the Amish lifestyle (Kraybill and Olshan 40).

#### **2.4.1.2 Internal Initiatives**

The same editors, Kraybill and Olshan add that the initiatives for social changes were not completely induced by the changes happening in the larger society. Some of the motives came from the community itself. The external forces combined with the internal ones introduced enormous changes to the Amish lifestyle in the twentieth century.

First, were comfort and convenience, the Amish like any other people, prefer comfort and convenience over pain and obstruction. But they fear that comfort and excessive convenience might lead them to laziness and ingratitude. So they tend to be cautious welcoming some new technologies that will increase comfort. Every American generation tries to draw lines between convenience and luxury and the same for the Amish people. And when the press for

some conveniences, they become necessities to the next generations. Shifting from old habits to more comfortable and convenient ones, iceboxes have been replaced by refrigerators and wood stoves have been replaced by gas stoves...etc (40-41).

Second, is idealism, coping with the gaps between their actual practices and their ideal values, the Amish try to stay faithful to their scripture's teachings and heritage. The foundation of New Order Amish groups that came along with these social changes reflected a refurbished idealism but the more conservative groups that this might be just a mask to borrow freely the modern ways and have more individual freedom. These internal struggles helped also in bringing new changes to the Amish practice (Kraybill and Olshan 41).

Third, population growth, natural diversity that was generated by the population growth also served as an important internal source. Usually, the larger settlements have greater diversity which can help them absorb it facilely without triggering schisms (Kraybill and Olshan 41).

Fourth, is the authority structure, since the Amish leadership structure is decentralized, it can foster these social changes in its own way. Led by a book of discipline and rules and without any annual congregation or a national office, the authority structure can be flexible. And with almost nine hundred congregations enjoying autonomy, it can provide a seedbed for change. In some ways, this has also contributed in the social changes (Kraybill and Olshan 42).

Once more, Kraybill and Olshan note that social changes are sometimes made haphazardly, but most of the time they spread into practice in a deliberate and a thoughtful way. The Amish do not fully reject technology, but as soon as new product or a new technology comes around, they need to analyze it first, decide whether it will be useful, neutral, or harmful to their lifestyle. And only then, they will see if they will adopt it (42).

The rejected technologies are not perceived as 'sinful' practices, in fact they are forbidden because of the harm they may cause to the Amish community and lifestyle. In other words, it is and it has always been concerned with the long-term consequences (Kraybill and Olshan 43).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

To stay away from the fragmentations that might be caused by modernity, the Amish have always tried to keep their distance from what they call the “worldly society”. For the sake of their unity, they decided to be separate from modernity or what is to them the “Great Separator”. And the number one motive for this is to maintain and preserve their social capital and their distinctive ethnic identity (Kraybill 45-46).

Hostetler adds that by resisting technology and preventing its impact on their lifestyle, the Amish have successfully maintained the unity of their community. Unlike the charm of more powerful and effective machines chosen in the mainstream society, they chose social solidarity which made them one of the rare communities in the world that are actually the masters to their machines. Finally, the Amish are open to accepting a few social changes as long as these changes do not pose a threat to the solidarity of their community (Hostetler 14).



## **Chapter Three**

# **The Impact of the Technological World Revolution on the Amish in the U.S.A**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Limited technology is the most prominent factor that marked the Amish culture and identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Still using horse drawn buggies and being unplugged from the rest of the world, separated the Amish from mainstream Americans, these practices are the dividing lines between the Amish and mainstream society.

Still, the Amish don't condemn technology and they are definitely not technologically naive. But instead, the Amish people try to select what might be harmful or helpful to their communities. There are some technologies that they categorically prohibit, such as the electricity, the telephone and cars but at the same time, most of the groups accept without any reservation other stuff like camping gears and binoculars.

It is important to mention that in order for technology to fit their social goals and cultural principals or values, the Amish people try to modify and adapt it in so many creative ways. In the nineteenth century, the Amish identity was not linked yet to technology because the Amish households and farm technologies were the same to their rural neighbors, in fact, distinctive responses to modern technology only emerged by the twentieth century, when the Industrial Revolution arrived to rural America .

The Amish people, more than all the other groups in the U.S, have always been trying to tame technology in the hope that it does not overwhelm or damage their culture. And since this has always been a collective or a group project for more than a century, the efforts have been quite successful.

## **3.2 Amish Responses to Technology**

Kraybill, Weiner, and Nolt observe that the Amish people usually deal with new technologies in different ways: adaptation, acceptance, rejection, invention, or distinguish between access and ownership. And their responses are different, from affiliation to another. Normally the ones who adapt and invent less and tend to reject new technologies are the more conservative groups, the Swartzentrubers for instance. They pretty much stopped using technology after their group was founded in 1913. While other more progressive Amish affiliations started adapting and accepting new technologies in the twentieth century, for the Swartzentrubers, their devices can be counted on six fingers (315).

### **3.2.1 Rejection**

The Amish decision to reject the use of public electricity grid and cars contributed in maintaining their lifestyle. These rules helped slowing the social change, define Amish identity, and prevent any entanglement with the mainstream culture. The Amish are so stubborn when it comes to rejecting entertainment and communication technologies. Televisions, smartphones, internet, and radios are strictly forbidden because they can convey the outside world's vices right to the Amish homes. For example, the prohibition of the televisions makes perfect religious and practical sense to them because it helps them avoid all the wickedness of modernity that might be transferred to them (Kraybill et al. 315). According to Clark,

*They do believe that if left unchecked, certain technologies can destroy the Amish way of life by undermining its traditions, bringing inappropriate value systems into homes, and ultimately breaking communities and families apart. This is why they are so selective about which devices and innovations they will and will not use (88).*

### **3.2.2 Acceptance**

Kraybill et al found out that progressive affiliations accepted various non-electrical devices, for example, farm machinery, gas grills, pesticides, chain saws, and milking machines...etc. Battery operated tools, battery operated cash registers, scales, word processors, and copy machines have been well received and used in several communities. Also, battery powered led lights are usually used in shops, homes, and buggies. Inline skates and along with volleyball equipment are used in many communities while in the more conservative one, even LED lights are forbidden (315-316).

### **3.2.3 Adaptation**

Sometimes the Amish find themselves lost between two choices, accepting or rejecting a new device, so they tend to modify it in a way that disarms it from any damage that it might cause to their communities and try to adjust it in a sense that matches with their values. Those changes are compromises that help them domesticate the modern devices they are using. These adaptations in Amish houses include food processors, refrigerators, propane gas and gas stoves, air pumps, so they can pull out water of the wells. When it comes to the farms, the modifications include diesel engines and battery operated agitators. They also replace rubber

tiers with steel ones on tractors so they will make it inutile to be used on the highway. Some groups allow word processors instead of computers. An Old Order Mennonite developed with the help non-Amish computer technicians a “Classic Word Processor” which is a sort of an adjusted computer with a small monitor, a Linux operating system, spreadsheet and word processing software, with the inability for video games, email, media, or internet. And because normal computers are prohibited, the Amish consider the “Classical Word Processor” as a “boon” for inventory management, businesses management, accounting, and payroll. This invention is an example of how the Amish tame technologies by modifying them for their own good (Kraybill et al. 316).

### **3.2.4 Invention and Innovation**

The Amish self-taught mechanics and engineers and mechanics are fairly creative and talented. In the beginning of the twentieth century, an Amish designed a governor for threshing machines so it can control the rapidness of the conveyor feeding sheaves of wheat. Few decades later, another Amish man created compressed air motors to help them operate water pumps and big cooling fans, and then another one also made a battery powered plant pollinator for their tomato plants.

Similarly, an Amish group of inventors fixed the family’s issue in using propane gas for portable lights, refrigerators, and fueling stoves. Usually refrigerators and stoves are linked to the propane tanks outside which make it too low to fuel the lamps. So it took them about six years working on it until 2002 when they invented a lamp that burns quietly and brightly while using the same pressure as refrigerators and stoves. Consequently, all the home equipment that require gas can use the same propane source (Kraybill et al. 316-317).

### **3.2.5 Access and Ownership**

Struggling to tame technology, the Amish set the differences between access and ownership. This distinction allows them to use technology without fully putting the power in the community’s hands, thus, the Amish can harvest the fruits of technology and at the same time protect their identity and respect their historic boundaries. They developed this distinction when they were faced with the telephone. Installing the telephones was strictly prohibited by the church, while it was allowed for emergency calls and business in various groups.

It was the same case for transportation. Even though some groups banned the individuals from owning cars, they allowed them to hire taxis which they can only be used for business trips, funerals, or weddings and are owned by non-Amish people.

The line that the Amish set between ownership and access applies to electricity, office equipment, computers, and self-propelled machines. For example a groundskeeper that’s working for non-Amish people is allowed to use a riding lawn mower but he cannot own one. An owner of quilts store is allowed to use the electric lights as long as the shop is rented from a non-Amish person. Another woman for instance, is a receptionist in a real estate office and she uses a computer regularly, she is allowed to do that but she can’t have her own at home.

And business owners normally hire non-Amish people to take care of the email service, website operations, and computer services (Kraybill et al. 317).

These practices exemplify how the Amish distinguish access from ownership which allows using technology with restraints. Yet, the more conservative affiliations usually prohibit the use of “threatening” technologies that they wouldn’t adopt.

Outsiders or even traditionalists would think that these “hybrid” practices are inconsistent but the more progressive communities believe that distinguishing between access and ownership allows them to have access to necessary technologies whilst keeping in mind the dangers, the boundaries, and the supervision of the church (Kraybill et al. 318). In this concern, Kraybill states that,

*The agreement acknowledges that car ownership cannot be entrusted to the individual. If ownership were permitted, the church would lose control of the car. Ownership would intensify the pace and complexity of Amish life. Parents and youth alike would spend more time away from home at meetings and worldly amusements. Car ownership, in the long run, would not only erode the social base of the small face-to-face community, but it would also destroy the local church district—the cornerstone of social organization (314).*

### **3.3 Restraint Guidelines**

Within the same context, many scholars such as Kraybill note that the boundaries that the Amish set for technology use are different from within the groups as well. The affiliations have a set of restraint rules in six different locations in the Amish communities: home, shop, school, farm, jobs outside the community. But normally the Amish rules are severe in schools and more relaxed when it comes to working for outsiders. And same for households, they have more limitations than farms, and stores more than construction locations.

#### **3.3.1 Amish schools**

Most Amish schools do not have that much technological accessories apart from a heating stove, hand pumps, and battery-operated clocks, they do not use computers, telephones, calculators, science laboratories, or indoor plumbing in several places. Technologies used in schools are different from an affiliation to another. Even though some Amish schools use indoor plumbing and copy machines, still technology restrictions are stricter in schools than in homes.

This tactic secures that the students are getting the right message, which is technology, is not necessary. This is totally the opposite of the modern society, where schools strive to be alongside the accelerating speed of technology. For the Amish, technological skills are not really taken into consideration when it comes to someone’s vocation or life satisfaction. As a result, the schools set a secured environment free from any technological interference, where the children can learn in Amish ways (318).

### 3.3.2 Amish Households

Kraybill, Weiner, and Nolt add that the Amish use their homes for weddings, funerals, and church services regularly, which underscores the Amish sacredness. Home helps cultivate and undergird the whole social system.

As preindustrial society, the Amish home tends to be the place for various social functions such as family meals, birthing, childcare, religious services, family prayers, and even for work. Since the home is the core of Amish life, they try to be more careful and protect it from being influenced by the outside world. And that's why exaggerated technology is rejected; the Amish fear that it might expose both Amish people and children to the mainstream culture and damage the flow of the Amish lifestyle.

In the Amish homes, silence and sociability are the main characteristics. Aside from chatting in the living room or around the kitchen table, usually their houses are calm. No sound of televisions, no sound systems, no computer games, no air conditioners, and no dishwashers, and they believe that that's exactly how it should be. They believe that laptops, smartphones, iPods, video games...etc are the things that isolate and disconnect non-Amish family members, instead, the Amish try to communicate more, do home tasks, and play games together.

Technology in Amish homes varies from a group to another. In the more traditional areas, they cook using the kerosene stoves or wood, and usually they cool food in iceboxes or they do not at all. In progressive ones, they normally use state of the art gas stoves, freezers, and refrigerators. Instead of using automatic washer machines, they use wringer washers powered by air motors or gas engines, and they use outside lines or indoor racks to dry the clothes instead of electric dryers. Some homes also have mixers and food processors powered by air (318-219). The following table shows the Amish household technology in traditional and progressive affiliations.

<b>Technology</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Progressive</b>
Water	Gravity flow	Pressurized
Hot water	Heated on stove	Propane heater
Bathroom	Outhouse	Modern indoor bathroom
Kitchen stove	Wood or kerosene	Propane gas
Refrigeration	Ice box or none	Propane refrigeration
Freezer	None	Propane freezer
Food processor	None	Compressed air
Sewing machine	Treadle power	Compressed air or electric
Washing machine	Gasoline engine	Compressed air
Clothes dryer	None	Spinner
House heat	Wood stove	Propane stove
House lights	Kerosene lanterns	Propane wall fixtures
Clocks	Wind up	Battery powered
Telephone	None	Landline or cell
Reading lights	None	Battery or solar powered

Table 2: Amish Household Technology in Traditional and Progressive Affiliations.

Source: Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, and Steven M. Nolt. “The Amish”. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. P319.

The previous table reveals how progressive and traditional affiliations have decided to adapt with the new changes in the Amish households. We can notice that the progressive groups tend to adapt with changes in their own good while the traditional ones hold on to the traditional practices.

### **3.3.3 Amish Farms**

The Amish tend to use more technologies in barns and farms than they do in homes, even though compared to their neighbors; their farms are quite small with not that many choices when it comes to technology. They may have some exceptions but they do not use self-propelled machines or public grid electricity. However, the differences are very clear between the highest and the lowest Amish farms. Some conservative groups have a small gasoline engine which helps them operate corn choppers, their cows are hand milked and to chill the milk they use cold water while the progressive groups use automatic milkers which allow them to milk up until eighty cows and then chill it in temperature controlled bulk tanks. They also have diesel engine which help them operate different equipment in the farms. And horses drag strongly mechanized equipment that are powered by the gasoline engines (Kraybill et al. 320-321).

### **3.3.4 Amish Shops**

In spite of the fact that technology production differs from subgroup to another, all the Amish affiliations allow the use of technology in business more than farming. Due to the development of machine shops in 1970, there was not that much historical Ordnung

concerning commercial enterprises. Consequently, Amish manufacturers and business owners in the more liberal settlements created new inventions and practices that were later added to the Ordnung. Since farm's indoor and outdoor innovations are on display, they are under the community's supervision, while stores and shops innovations are kept behind closed doors.

Working in the absence of public electricity, the Amish need new innovations in order for their businesses to keep up with the marketplace. Mostly in progressive communities, they use generators to produce electricity, diesel engines to operate alternators, to power air driven motors they use compressed air pumps, and hydraulic pumps to operate heavy equipment. Finally, the Amish technicians managed to set up an unsophisticated machining, drilling, and different other products (Kraybill et al. 322).

### **3.3.5 Mobile Workers**

Overwhelmingly, Amish people who work outside their community have more flexible options and are quite open with technology due to having jobs away from their home. Construction workers for instance, usually use public utilities electric power in order to have access to electric power, and to power electric tools they use portable generators although they are prohibited at home in most of the Amish affiliations. Because Amish entrepreneurs in various communities cannot use their hydraulic lifts, backhoes, and different other equipment, they tend to rent them.

At another level, construction workers need access to cars almost every day for distant places and so they can transport equipment. In this case, they will rent a vehicle or a truck and have a non-Amish employee or unbaptized Amish boys drive it, or work with a non-Amish that owns a truck and drives it. Some businessmen work with outsiders who will provide and drive the cars for them. In more progressive groups, business owners that have to work outside the communities are even allowed to have cellular phones just so it makes it easier for them to do their jobs as long as it will be turned off later and left outside the homes. The more liberal communities give people who have farm stands at farmers' markets larger access to vehicles, cell phones, electricity, and different other technologies since they work away from their home.

Moreover, these mobile workers still use horses and buggies for travelling in the conservative groups, which shortens the distance they can go. But they tend to charge cheaper prices and give less overhead since they are only using traditional technology, and this has been irritating to non-Amish contractors, and even the progressive groups sometimes (Kraybill et al. 322-323).

### **3.3.6 Outside Employment**

Following the same line of thought, the Amish who have almost all the access to technology are the ones who have non-Amish employers. And the possibility of being exposed to plenty of technologies is the reason why the conservative affiliations don't permit their community's members to work for non-Amish people. Some groups allow outside employment and at the same time discourage internet and computer use. For example the



settlement of Elkhart-LaGarange in Indiana has hundreds of Amish members that have jobs in vehicle factories operating various kinds of high tech tools. And this is only possible because of the clear distinction between having access and owning technology (Kraybill et al. 323).

### **3.4 Change Negotiations**

Kraybill, Weiner, And Nolt report that when talking about the new technologies in the last century with an Amish writer, the latter declared that they believe that technology has more potential to harm them than to benefit them, so they have decided to set boundaries and limits to their access to technology. The Amish have always been trying to domesticate technology or stay away from what they call “malicious effects” at least. The Amish choices when it comes to technology confuse the non-Amish people because they think that the lines drawn by the Amish are inconsistent and contradictory. Yet, from the Amish point of view, these decisions force them cope with the mainstream society and threaten their identity and their community’s integrity.

When the Amish start experimenting new technologies, usually the results to these experiments are in five different ways: Rapid rejection after a small discussion, restrictive use and then rejecting it after months or years. Creeping use and accepting it gradually, increasing use and rapid acceptance, Modify it in order to make it appropriate enough.

Accepting a certain technology usually happens progressively by default, it is rarely for them to take a particular action before adopting a new technology. Formal decisions normally include rejection. With almost three thousand districts, each one having its own authority. Accordingly, when it comes to accepting or rejecting an innovation, there are plenty of potential outcomes for every innovation, and more progressive groups permit technologies that the conservative ones never considered (331).

Interestingly, technology’s outcomes might be applied in a whole entire affiliation or just a district. It is clear that these results are made within a dynamic matrix of socio-cultural forces, and a specific outcome is hardly ever explained by a single factor. Some of the relevant regulators involve the following.

1. Economic Impact: The technologies that are connected to the Amish making their living have more chances to be accepted than the one related to convenience, leisure, or pleasure. Therefore, they can accept having a motor on a hay mowers but not on lawn mowers
2. Visibility: the Amish might accept invisible changes over visible ones. For example, changing the buggy’s fiberglass is acceptable since it is invisible while changing the buggy’s external color is not.
3. Relation with the Ordnung: It is more difficult to accept the new tools that are more likely to mess with the Ordnung rules while it is easier for the ones that are free from the Ordnung. Accepting a new technology like a sting trimmer might be easier for the Amish to accept than a push power mower which is forbidden.
4. Symbolic Ties: When the changes are not linked to or not harming the symbols of the Amish ethnic identity such as dress, buggies, and horses, are more likely to be accepted

than the ones that menace these sacred emblems. Also, changes that are related to what they consider “negative worldly markers” are usually less accepted than the ones that don’t have ties with the outside world. A word processor for instance, it can be accepted since it has a small screen while a computer with a larger screen won’t.

5. External Connections: Technologies that expose the Amish people to the influence of the outside world and the mainstream culture are usually less accepted than the ones that do not.

In a general way, none of these elements are made in isolation. Internal church politics and practical matters also contribute in shaping the decisions, but the previous factors contribute in the decision making. However, the changes become controversial when the negative and positive forces intercross. For more illustration, using the internet for example has always been controversial, even though it helps in making a living, but it also mixes leisure with work and it exposes the Amish members to the outside world in a direct way. Furthermore, the group’s desire to innovate might prevent change in the other groups who identify themselves as conservative. For example the adoption of LED lights in a community might present difficulties to the other groups in deciding about them.

So the responses to these kind of technologies may include rejection and negotiations that will probably stretch for a few years and then end after various compromises, Like what happened with the telephone, now it can be used outside but not at home, tractors can be used at the barn but not in the field, electricity can be used from batteries but not from the public grid, cars can be used for riding but not to be owned, ...etc. From the outsiders’ perspective, these negotiated adaptations might seem strange, but to the Amish they are attempts to tame technology and control its bad effects in the long term (Kraybill et al. 331-332).

### **3.5 Go Slow, Be Careful**

Practically speaking, when a new phone is announced by a company, clients quickly line up in order to get this new product. The modern default is “the newer the better, the faster, the cooler”. People normally use technology without taking into consideration the harmful impacts on humanity on the long term. On the other hand, the Amish assumption is “Go slow and be careful”. Usually the Amish are late adopters of technology; sometimes it takes the decades to adopt a new technology, that’s if they do at all. But oftentimes, they tend to tinker with the new tools so they can adapt to them.

When describing their perspective, an Amish author claimed that plain people are actually not against all the new changes and practices. They just have to adopt those that will be genuinely be helpful and beneficial to them, and keep at bay those that threaten the values and the morals they uphold. And this applies to the households’ tools and all the modern equipment, and many that have the possibility of damaging the family and the community’s lifestyle without paying attention to it until it is done (Kraybill et al. 333).

The previously stated authors point out that this rational and dynamic analysis challenges the misconception that the Amish are old fashioned, backward luddites, naïve people. They are just sensitive to the technology's effects and what it is going to cost them when it comes to their families, their communities, and human relationships in general. Even though hardly any of them read about technology and its ability on changing the human behaviors and perceptions, they still feel it anyway all around them.

The interrelation and the influence of both the religion and community, made it easier for the Amish to curb the effects of technology. All in all, in their battle with technology, they make a kind of a presumption that the Amish individuals are not capable of making private wise choices when it comes to using technology, they thereby need the whole community to guide them making wise decisions and show them the right direction they have to follow . Without doubt, these collective efforts are definitely the reason behind their success in taming technology (333).

Not any community in the world will eventually do that. This is for the simple reason that theirs was based on religion; it is no news that the Amish church invested a significant moral impact in making technological regulations. In other words, the Amish consider the technological practices as human customs and more importantly as practices that uphold divine legitimacy. In spite of this, the Amish agree that there are some decisions that may cause them problems, and most of them would readily admit that their use of technology is sometimes inconsistent. However, they stay engaged in a sectarian discourse about the effects of technology on their community and collective life in general.

At another scale, the Amish history produced many questions concerning humans' capability of domesticating technology, and to make sure that it will only be beneficial for people and not the other way around. Making things more clear, for instance, keeping the telephone outside of Amish homes indicates that the community is controlling it whilst giving the individuals restricted access that will protect their families' life from any intrusion or violation. These arrangements are the Amish efforts to know exactly how to use technology without risking being its slaves. And even though they have successfully managed to domesticate some technologies that they use for more than a century such as electricity, computers, tractors, and vehicles, the Amish success in the future is unsure regarding modernity. Their struggle with the omnipresent and fugacious nature of technology in a modern cyber world is for sure going to be a test for their religious beliefs and convictions (Kraybill et al. 333-334).

### 3.6 A Futuristic View:

In an essay about the Amish society's future in 2100, it was speculated that when the world will be driving flying cars, the Amish will probably be driving cars from mid 2000s. We do agree that most likely their cars will not fly but it is believed that the Amish future is all about how they adapt with new technologies which means that the more Amish practices are changed, the more their identity is evolving. In the twentieth century, the Amish practices were lingered behind those of the larger society, which shed light on keen differences and put the Amish in the public eye. When rubber was added to the tractors' wheels in the American farms, the Amish kept steel ones. When American barns started using vacuum milking machines in the 1940s, the Amish took their time to adopt them. A few settlements did in the 1950s; other one did in the 1990s, while others still haven't adopted them until now. Even though the Amish are more often late adopters, however, they do adopt and most of the time adapt to new practices. So even if people will be flying in cars in the future, the Amish will probably be driving Amish adapted vehicles while displaying maybe a new but still, a distinctive identity.

Accordingly, flying cars or not, the Amish identity might face some challenges but it will be evolving throughout the twenty-first century. Most withstanding, the conservative affiliations are the one growing fast so perhaps they will be the larger part of the Amish society. By contrast, the more liberal communities will presumably reduce the visible symbols of "Amishness" and describe their identity by private religious practices and personal faith within their own church. But the question is will the Amish continue to ride in buggies and will it still be a sacred symbol of the Amish? In all likelihood yes, for the communities that seek rural isolation and cultural separation, yet others might develop different forms of identity. Recently, an Amish bishop revealed that rejecting the car seems to be a mistake which sounds like a prediction that in the future, the Amish may exchange their horses and buggies for cars (Kraybill et al. 413).

For more illustration, when an Amish family moved to Idaho leaving their community in Montana, they said that they were out of the box, meaning the Amish box, joining the world of cars, computers, and regular clothes. But they said that they weren't throwing everything away, they will keep the family first as it is really important to them. It is guaranteed that any aspect of Amish identity will probably really be fast since the family is not surrounded and supported by an Amish community. So because they are by themselves, holding onto parts of the Amish identity and letting go of others may be more difficult than they think.

Every human group has its own flag and symbols of identity, even though there are some that can be more noticeable than others. And in spite of the changes in the Amish life, there are certain groups that will hold onto the Amish identity (Kraybill et al. 413-414).

When we see it from an outsider perspective, they are an anachronism, people lost in time, an ethnic group that sooner or later will be integrated into the mainstream culture of North American life. But it is believed that the Amish will adapt with the future changes in a way that helps them improve and progress.

### **3.7 Conclusion:**

The Amish have managed to preserve values and qualities that the mainstream society lost through time, such as communities and families relationships, respect for religion, and restraint guidelines when using resources. Modern societies are usually competitive, harsh, and confrontational and cold in domestic life. While the Amish values like their love of work, social harmony, and humility are exactly what they need in maintaining a redemptive community.

Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher add in their book “The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World” that the Amish refuse the presumption that “modern” doesn’t necessarily mean “improved”. They don’t deny the fact that change will happen; it just has to be experimented. Even though the modern might be more pleasing and easier for people in some ways, but it can also be transient, shallow, and impotent when it comes to shaping their religious lives. Chasing the “modern” might eventually distract people instead of helping to reach spiritual depth.

Lastly, the Amish way displays the importance of the individuals sharing a common set of values, set of spiritual rituals, and a common purpose. The religious obligations are related to people and the consequences become crystal clear if members give up the community’s way. More than any other group, the Amish people hold one another responsible for the community’s goals and the rituals that support them (191-192).

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

The Amish struggle with modernity has been continuous and complicated, trying to figure out how to survive in a modernizing world was not that easy when they are holding on to their religious commitments. But as the forces of industrialization, urbanization, and technology changed the mainstream society in innumerable ways by the twentieth century, the Amish couldn't let themselves be in the back shelf. Instead, they try to make decisions about what to embrace and what to reject without the need to compromise the Amish religious values.

People usually paint the Amish as “technophobes” and “anti-technology” who tend to shun the modern devices and hold on to the traditional ones. But this is only based on the fact that unlike American society, the Amish make different choices and decisions when it comes to technology use. To the Amish, faster is not always better, and they do not link modern to improved. Their whole life is based on the church Ordnung and they believe that the church should be distinctive from the rest of the world. These beliefs do not mean that they are always against new technologies, instead, they try evaluating the innovations and analyzing if it will change their traditional practices or destabilize their communities. Actually, there are not that many technological devices that they consider out of the limits, in fact, most technologies are regarded by the Amish as morally neutral while they try to sort out how it might and should be used.

The Amish have always focused on the long-term effects of the new technologies rather than technology itself. Even though they have benefited from modernization, they fear that in time, it might divide and tear both the families and the communities apart. From the Amish point of view, the greatest threat of technology on the Amish communities is making its individuals independent and self-reliant on the modern devices which make the community optional rather than mandatory. In order to preserve their lifestyle, the Amish develop cultural fences as ways to resist the social changes such as their religious rituals, their distinctive dialect, their plain clothing, and their horse-drawn buggies.

Amish attitudes towards technology vary, from acceptance to adaptation to simple rejection. There are a few technologies that the Amish people ban outright, like the television. While there are plenty of shop tools and household appliances that they adopted and later on adapted them in their own way. All the affiliations draw their lines differently, with more progressive groups adapting more and rejecting less than the conservative ones are inclined to do. Yet, the Ordnung changes based on the social space when it comes to technology, which

brings us back to the fact that to the Amish, technology is not a problem, it is its use that should be carefully monitored.

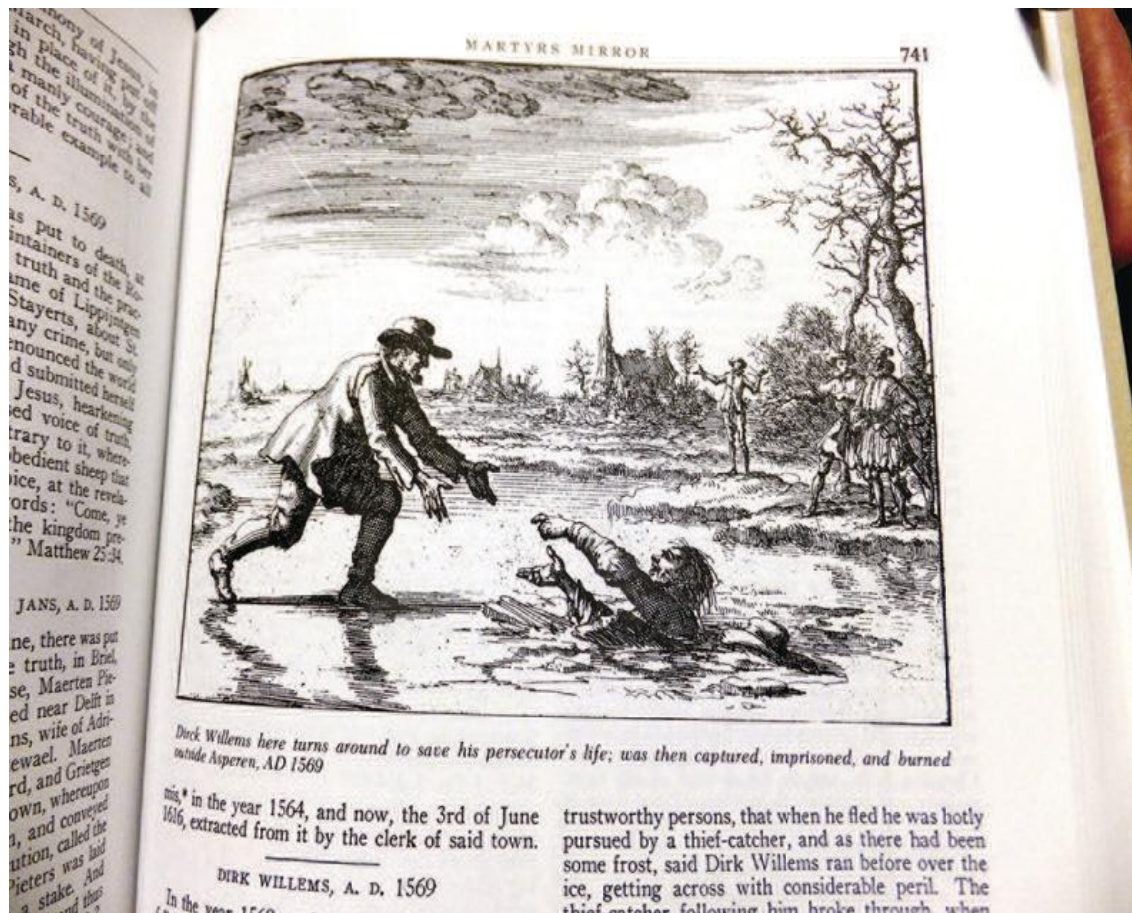
It should be noted that by keeping a safe distance from the outside world and selectively accepting several modern innovations that weren't considered a threat to them, boosted the Amish shops and farms' productivity and improved their lifestyle. This technique of "bargaining with modernity" allowed the Amish to preserve their ethnic identity and maintain their religious heritage while thriving economically.

Finally, despite the limitations and obstacles that encountered the researcher while conducting this research, first, the lack of sources due to the unavailability of books and dissertations to rely on in the library, and second, the inability to travel and check in other libraries because of the current COVID-19 pandemic; the researcher strived for the success of this humble research.



# Appendices

Appendix A:



The Martyr's Mirror is a thick book that was written by Thieleman J. van Braght, it was first published in 1660 in Holland. It is a collection of 4011 martyrs who suffered from torture and persecution in the early years of the Anabaptist movement; to record the history in order for the movement not to vanish. Today, this book is important as much as the Bible and it is found in almost all the Amish homes.

Source: Yoder, Marcus. "The Big Book: Martyr's Mirror, A look into the Past." Amish Country Insider. 22 January 2018. Available at:

[https://amishcountryinsider.com/blog/Amish\\_Insider-martyrs-mirror/](https://amishcountryinsider.com/blog/Amish_Insider-martyrs-mirror/). Accessed 29 July 2020.

## Appendix B:



The Amish men all dress alike, have the same haircut and the same beard with no mustache; usually they don't wear belts since it is a forbidden accessory. And even suspenders are not allowed in several Amish settlements.

Source: Garben, Seth. "This is what the Amish wear and why." Guff. 21 May 2018. Available at: <https://guff.com/this-is-what-the-amish-wear-and-why>. Accessed 29 July 2020.



## Appendix C:



Women also dress all the same; they only wear dresses following the community's strict rules about the length of the dress and the sleeves while the colors vary from dark or light blue to pink. And they make sure that the dresses they make are not revealing, not even the legs or the shape.

Source: Garben, Seth. "This is what the Amish wear and why." Guff. 21 May 2018. Available at: <https://guff.com/this-is-what-the-amish-wear-and-why>. Accessed 29 July 2020.

## Appendix D:



The Amish still ride the horse-drawn buggy as an everyday form of transportation in the twenty first century. Even though the color and the style of the buggy differ from an affiliation to another depending on the Ordnung, it is still a valuable symbol of the Amish identity.

Source: Parchmann, Brian. "Interesting insights on the Amish."History 101. 14 February 2020. Available at: <https://www.history101.com/amish-facts/>. Accessed 29 July 2020.

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