

represent quality scholarship. But as with most books containing a series of essays, the chapters are not of uniform quality or relevance to the books' central focus. Moreover, some Mennonite denominations have moved decisively in the direction of American evangelicalism and are only Anabaptist in a marginal way. This subject is barely mentioned in *The Active Impulse*. In a different way, the essays primarily focus on the ideas of Mennonite leaders and scholars. But there is a gap between what the educated leaders maintain and the pulse beat of the laity. How does the average Mennonite relate to popular evangelicalism? This subject is not addressed.

Richard Kyle
Tabor College

Donald Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner and Steven M. Nolt, *The Amish*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. 500. Hardcover.

When the first edition of *Amish Society* – John Hostetler's pioneering sociological study of the Amish – was published in 1963, there were nearly 37,000 Amish living in North America, located in 18 states and a province, and organized into 269 church districts. Hostetler's book described the changing realities of these Amish communities in terms of their struggle as a family based "folk society" to resist the pressures toward assimilation by such rationalizing pressures of modernity as technology and bureaucracy. In Hostetler's analysis, he featured the ecological and symbolic resources available to what he called the "little community," such as its dualist religious charter, powerful family system, traditional schooling, and land. Throughout *Amish Society*, Hostetler continued to wonder whether the Amish would be able to maintain their separated and distinctive culture against modern forces of conformity. The concluding sentence of all four editions of *Amish Society*, the last of which appeared in 1993, summarized Hostetler's response to this question: "The Amish society will thrive or perish to the degree that it can provide community and personal fulfillment for the children raised in Amish homes."

In 2013, fifty years later, there were nearly 274,000 Amish located in 30 states and a province, and organized into 2007 districts. These numbers suggest that the Amish have managed to provide community and fulfillment for their children, and also perhaps that Amish society can hardly be described any longer as a "little community." The larger and more complex world of Amish life found in 2013 is the subject of

a new book that will no doubt replace Hostetler's *Amish Society* as the definitive sociological study of the Amish. The book is authored by three seasoned scholars in the field of Amish studies – a sociologist, an anthropologist, and a historian – and is appropriately entitled *The Amish*, heralding the greater pluralism of 21st century Amish life than is conveyed by the more singular implication of Hostetler's title.

The most significant advance over *Amish Society* represented by *The Amish* is the more fully developed account of Amish diversity among the most traditional Amish groups. Even in later editions of *Amish Society*, Hostetler's description of diversity was primarily shaped by the distinction between Old Order groups that hewed more closely to tradition and New Order groups that were more open to innovation, which for Hostetler included the car-driving Beachy Amish. *The Amish*, by contrast, attends to the diversity that exists within the Old Order orbit, such as the differences between the Andy Weaver group and the Swartzentrubers; indeed, these Old Order groups and their distinctive practices are the primary focus of the book. We might ask whether a book entitled *The Amish* should give more attention to affiliations, such as the Beachy Amish, who do not fit the authors' working definition of Amish, which makes horse and buggy transportation a criterion for inclusion. Would not expanding the definition to include all those who self-identify as Amish strengthen our understanding of the variety of ways to be Amish at the beginning of the 21st century?

The authors do provide in their historical narrative a broader sense of the different ways it has been possible to be Amish over the centuries. They offer a detailed account of Amish origins, retelling the story of Anabaptist beginnings in Europe, the Amish division of 1693, and the emergence and maintenance of Old Order Amish affiliations from various 19th and 20th century North American church conflicts and movements. In these historical sections of the book, the advantage of a multi-authored interdisciplinary account of the Amish becomes clear. The historical narratives sparkle with as many intriguing details as do the sociologically precise comparisons of Amish practices. Unfortunately, the description provided of the Amish division, while correct in its particulars, tends to place the blame for the division almost exclusively on Jakob Amman, whose leadership admittedly tended toward an overbearing and zealous demeanor, without acknowledging the role of Amman's opponent, the elderly Swiss Brethren bishop Hans Reist, in making the Amish division permanent. Although Amman excommunicated several church leaders as part of his effort to get their attention and confirm the seriousness of his concern, it was Reist who actually finalized the division by excommunicating all of the church congregations associated with Amman's teachings, a decision he apparently refused to reconsider, even after Amman had confessed

his lack of patience, excommunicated himself, and pleaded for reconciliation. If the Amish are sometimes embarrassed by the story of their founder, as the authors of *The Amish* note, it might be because the most prominent accounts of the Amish division are typically written by Mennonites who tend to view and interpret the controversial division through their identification with the Reistians.

Although there is attention to history, the overwhelming bulk of the book is devoted to a thick description of Amish practices, explaining the role of each practice within the larger ensemble of Amish communal realities, and evaluating the social meanings of these practices within the changing 21st century North American cultural milieu, a context the authors, following Zygmunt Bauman, call “liquid modernity.” By contrast with “solid modernity,” which was characterized by stable systems and technologies rooted in industrial manufacturing, “liquid modernity” is organized around the unstable and rapidly changing realities of the digital information society. Perhaps this analysis of “liquid modernity” presents the most striking contrast with *Amish Society*, which can be read as evaluating the Amish struggle with “solid modernity.” While *Amish Society* framed Amish resistance to modernity as a stubborn adherence to tradition and a founding charter, *The Amish* tells a story of Amish innovation and improvisation adapting communal convictions and practices to constantly morphing technological and symbolic forms.

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

Gerald J. Mast
Bluffton University

Janneken Smucker, *Amish Quilts: Crafting an American Icon*. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 288. Hardcover, \$34.95.

Perhaps no craft product is as iconic of the Amish as quilts, and yet, as Janneken Smucker points out in *Amish Quilts: Crafting an American*