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Abstract

The Amish reside mostly in the United States of America but don’t necessarily identify themselves as American. Their loyalties are with the Christian faith they so wholly embody. They serve one of the most unique and prominent examples of the American right to religious freedom and “separation of church and state”. The Amish view themselves- as subjects rather than citizens of the U.S. Following their faith, they believe they have to ‘render unto Caesar (the government of the United States) certain respects in return for the hospitality of having a place to live and practice their religion safely but their ultimate loyalty lies with the God’s Kingdom. As subjects they are willing to abide by most rules of the ‘Caesar’ but in respect to their faith they also seek exemptions from the requirements of citizenship such as mandatory public education, Social Security and general welfare aids, land usage in compliance to agricultural guidelines and more. This research project investigates the ways in which the Amish community negotiates the tension between ‘subjects’ and ‘citizens’ by taking advantage of rights given to American citizens such as conscientious objector status and alternative service to the military. I will examine the use of The National Amish Steering Committee to represent Amish causes to the American government. The National Amish Steering Committee’s founding, although seemingly paradoxical to their values has been essential to progress in favor of protecting the Amish interests. The Amish have for hundreds of years and continue to successfully live within and yet not of the state.

The Amish: In, not of America

 The Amish are a distinct people who reside mostly within the United States. They disassociate themselves from the mainstream culture, and maintain a separate identity from the rest of the country. What I wish to explore is how the Amish relate both within their own boundaries and in comparison to the rest of our country, most specifically on a political and governmental level. In other words I want to understand the process whereby the Amish live in America without adopting an American identity. What structure has the Amish used to retain their separate way of life for hundreds of years, and how does that differ from how the United States organizes themselves? What can we take away from their stance which has been so successful all of this time while immediate pressures to assimilate in ways to mainstream culture encroach on their very way of life? I’d like to break it down into a few different categories: Who are the Amish, How do they function within the United States, Where do conflicts and clashes lie, and how does the relationship between the Amish and the state stand? In essence, what is the Amish sect’s relationship to the rest of the United States?

 So, who are the Amish? Their history begins around the time of the protestant revolution, in sixteenth century Switzerland. “The year 1993 celebrates the tercentennial of Amish life.” (Kraybill, 3) They are Anabaptists, which means they believe that only adults can make a meaningful commitment to the faith and baptism should be a voluntary choice; therefore do not practice infant baptism. Because of this, and initially being known for re-baptizing which was punishable by death, they received much persecution. Originally Mennonite, a minister named Jakob Ammann began challenging the lenient tendencies pertaining to the *Meidung*- shunning of those subjected to excommunication as discipline within the group, and when he gained followers the Amish denomination was born. The Amish began migrating to North America as harassment continued, and have become extinct in Europe. “… today no Amish in Europe [who] have retained the name and the principles of the original group.” Their descendants in Europe have reunited with the main body of Mennonites or have lost their Amish identity.” (Hostetler, 38) and the vast majority of the Amish are located in the United States, but some trickle into parts of Canada. Hostetler cites economic factors and social pressures (such as persecution towards Anabaptists) for helping cause the European extinction.

 The Amish are informally organized into three levels according to Kraybill: settlement, district, and affiliation. Settlements being a geographical area where Amish families are clustered, districts generally consist of 25-35 families that are considered to be of the same church, and affiliation is a group of districts that share beliefs, and are in fellowship with each other. This separation is noted because there is diversification between the Amish church districts throughout the country. (Kraybill, 3-4) “The bureaucratic structures and formal procedures that proliferate in modern societies are completely missing in Amish life. Its informal character is embellished by a local focus on the immediate community. Horse-and-buggy transportation and large extended families living close together promote a thick ethnic cohesion and a local orientation.” (Kraybill, Nolt, 9-10) Kraybill and Nolt go on to explain how the nature of their work, living arrangements, education, religious practices etc… contribute to “overlap” in their social networks, binding their ties even tighter, creating a homogeneous people. (Kraybill, Nolt, 10)

There is no central governing authority for the Amish collectively. Rather, the Amish abide by the *Ordnung*- an unwritten set of rules that has been personalized to the given district. Despite this personalization, on account of diversity between districts, overall core values are generally shared for all Old Order Amish. The *Ordnung* dictates expectations for community living. The following is a description of the *Ordnung,* and can be found in Amish Society by John A. Hostetler:

 Once the individual has been baptized, he is committed to keep the *Ordnung* or the rules of the church. …The Amish community is distinctive from other church groups in that the rules governing the life are traditional ways not specified in writing. …The rules for living tend to form a body of sentiments that are essentially a list of taboos within the environment of the [small] Amish community. All Amish members know the *Ordnung* of their church district and these generally remain oral and unwritten. Perhaps most rules are taken for granted and it is usually those questionable or borderline issues which are specified in the *Ordnung*. These rules are repeated at the *Ordnungsgemee* just preceding communion Sunday. They must have been unanimously endorsed by the ordained body. (58)

These principles include rules for their uniformed dress (as per their belief in community and modesty versus individualism), the way they keep their buggies (white top/black top etc…which varies between church districts), their allowed conveniences (because of their firm belief that they must reject modernity to preserve their way of life separate from worldly possessions and evils) and their education policies. Those who do not uphold the rules of the *Ordnung* after being baptized and having gained membership to the church are placed under the *Bann*. This means that they are excommunicated from their community, and all contact between friends and family etc… are cut from the delinquent, sometimes for a probationary period with a chance for repentance before the church, or sometimes for life depending on the severity of the infraction.

 The Ordnung *technically* only applies to the baptized members of the church, but parents are expected to bring their children up by it. A large part of the baptismal process (generally ages sixteen to early twenties) is to agree to submit to the rules of the *Ordnung* as a church member and as a member of the community. The strict rules of the church and the discipline of excommunication make for a high retention rate. Approximately 90% of Amish youth choose to join the church, and stay in the fold. (Shachtman, 251) It is noteworthy however, that since it only applies to those who have formally agreed to uphold the rules of the *Ordnung*, those who come of age and do not pledge to uphold the rules are *not* excommunicated for failure to do so. To the Amish, the fault worthy of shunning is not as much the behavior incongruent with the rules of the *Ordnung* (although such behavior would be thoroughly frowned upon) but the breaking of one’s oath to God and community to obey.

The main principles held dear to the Amish stand in stark contrast to those of America’s mainstream society. A leading tenant to the Amish way of life is *Gelassenheit* Loosely translated; the German word is understood as submission to a higher authority. “It entails self-surrender, resignation to God’s will, yielding to others, self-denial, contentment, and a quiet spirit. …*Gelassenheit* nurtures a subdued self- gentle handshakes, lower voices, slower strides- a life etched within modesty and reserve.” (Kraybill, 12-13) To the Amish, JOY is putting Jesus first, others next, and yourself last (13). Amish life calls for obedience and humility. For these reasons they experience a conflict when considering resisting adversaries to stand up or fight for themselves. They insist on imitating Jesus. Therefore, when *Gelassenheit* is applied to political relationships, the Amish play the role of subject rather than citizen. This is the strongest way in which the Amish can claim to be in and not of America. The Amish frown upon individuality, while mainstream society encourages it. They believe it leads to pride (*Hochmut*) which is contrary to the humility (*Demut*) they so strongly value. This emphasis on communal ties over individuality is largely involved in their uniform dress, which distinguishes them from the rest of the world while keeping those of the community much like each other. It was previously described how the organization of the Amish allows for a homogeneous population. This value explains why they strive to be as such. Actual religious practices follow these values in various ways, such as having members take turns holding services at their houses or barns. There is no formal Church building, and there are no decorations. Dress remains the same.

 Economically, the Amish are an agrarian culture. Much of their proficiency in farming can actually be attributed to their history. Before migrating from Europe, when they began farming they had to work harder than many other people because of their ostracized status as an Anabaptist. When they came to the United States this skill was brought along with them having been passed on to younger generations and has continued to flourish, as still today being self-sufficient is essential to the Amish’s success in remaining a people set apart . A farming career is most highly thought of in the eyes of the Amish. They believe in the values of working hard on the land the Lord has given them, and maintaining tight family bonds, as the small farms they maintain are often a family affair. The wife keeps up the house, the husband tends to the fields and livestock, and the children help with chores both in the house and outside on the farm. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Amish to find land to keep their way of life strictly to farming, therefore it is now becoming more acceptable (because of its necessity) to work outside of farming. Men often take up factory jobs and the women, usually younger, sometimes tend house and care for the children of neighboring “English” or non-Amish families. They may also waitress in local restaurants. “A new study in the Global Business and Economics Review says the failure rate of Amish businesses is less than 10% in the first five years, compared with 50% of small businesses in the U.S. over the same time period” (Sachs)

 The Amish generally have rather low incomes compared to their “English” counter-parts, but they do not strive for wealth in the ways of money. They keep enough income to buy necessary things, but generally can furnish their own sustenance and make their own clothing. However, contrary to popular belief, the Amish *do* pay taxes. They see the need for government, and honor the tax system, but do not pay social security because the strong family and communal ties of the Amish make them responsible for taking care of the elderly, and do not believe the government should have any part in the care of their elders. “The religious center of their community revolves around *wehrlosigkeit*-nonresistance. Nonresistance convictions are woven into the fabric of the basic Amish belief, nonconformity.”(Keim 43-4) The issue of taxes and the elderly is an example of how the Amish “negotiate with Caesar”. They pay taxes, but do not seek aid for their elderly. They subject to Caesar (read: government) but do not ask for the returns of citizenship such as social security. “For the Amish, participation in Social Security violates their religious principles. Accepting this state-sponsored system would naturally violate the principle of separation from the non-Amish world; it would also spurn the spirit of *Gelassenheit* and the biblical commands that members of the church provide for their own families and assist those in the community in need.” (Ferrara, 129) Ferrara continues as to explain how the spirit of *Gelassenheit* is also violated by Social Security in that by nature it would imply a lack of trust in God to provide and to accept God’s will good or bad. The reason the Amish can opt out of federal aids is that they provide a social aid network within themselves as a church district. This is based in their strong sense of community and will to help others. If bad fortune is to fall upon a member, help in whatever form necessary- extra hands on the farm, around the house, financially, what-have-you will be provided from the rest of the community. This is part of their self-sufficiency crucial to remaining separate from the worldly ways of non-Amish.

 Ryan J. Glenn describes this sense of communal ties as a “collective precommittment”, in which the individuals bind themselves to favor their most cherished beliefs and fight temptation contrary to these beliefs. Through his framework, it is still correct to say that Social Security and other “aides” violate their religious principles. However, his work denotes it worthy of attention that it does so less directly than implied by such statements. Their working model of mutual welfare is very much religiously influenced (as all aspects of Amish life are), but it also serves a purpose in protecting their way of life; not just abiding by it. To protect their way of life, as a separate people, the group must necessarily be self sufficient. Dependency on outside society would inherently integrate them to extents and make “separation” impossible. Glenn’s idea of collective precommittment resurfaces here, in that mutual welfare is a tenant to how they bind themselves to one another. To allow these outside sources to handle welfare situations, rather than coming to the rescue themselves would certainly chip away at their solidarity. Glenn explains “ …The second main pillar of assistance is the church district” (Glenn, 189).The point of social security is to collect taxes which ultimately fund care and assistances to the elderly. Care and assistances that as previously described are delineated as responsibilities of these pillars, most specifically the first but not without the second. In essence, “The government benefit plan would have mitigated the need for mutual reliance…” (Glenn, 190)

Obtaining an exemption from Social Security was no easy feat for the Amish. The IRS as recent as the 1960’s actively pursued those who did not pay despite their descriptions of how it violated their religious beliefs. Ferrara describes an instance in which in the middle of a spring plow, the IRS showed to an Amish man’s farm and seized his horses. When he refused to pay out of principle his horses were then sold to pay his balance, and the little left over revenue from the horses was mailed to him. This specific story led to public outcries not only within the United States, but internationally as the U.S. was accused of hypocrisy in denying freedom. When the IRS tried to “compromise” by promising to return the taxes paid upon the Amish member’s retirement, a lawsuit was actually brought up but could not be executed as going to court was unacceptable via religious beliefs. (Ferrara, 131-33)

 This was not a white flag however; a different Amish approach was taken. A petition with fourteen thousand signatures was offered to Congress, amongst many visits and more option rejections in 1965 the Amish finally achieved their exemption to an extent. It was attached to a Medicare bill -the exemption covered self-employed Amish, but was not yet extended to those who were not self-employed. This lasted until the 1980’s when a legal case was finally presented: *United States* v. *Lee.*  Lee won, but on appeal lost as the Supreme Court reversed the ruling on grounds that it was essential to the program’s success. Years of more deliberating and struggle continued as the courts feared an exemption in the case of the Amish would necessitate exemptions for too many other religious denominations, but finally in 1988 the Amish exemption was extended to include those who were not self-employed. (Ferrara, 138-41)

The Amish do not send their children on to secondary schooling upon completing the eighth grade. “…they believe that *high* school and *higher* education produce *Hochmut*, or high-mindedness and pride. ‘Mainstream education results in ‘prideful thinking,’ the antithesis of simplicity and humility.” (Stevick, 61) According to Hostetler, “The word *education* as used in American society is regarded with suspicion by most Amish people. To them it signifies ego advancement, independence, and cutting the ties that bind one to the community of faith and work.” (1992, 561) Secondary education begins to focus on critical thinking, which also inspires an individual approach that is not admired by the Amish. Traditionally, they also exclude subjects covered in secondary schools such as the sciences-especially in respect to their beliefs of creationism over evolution, sexual education, physical education where one would have to change clothes, history and geography. The curriculum they do cover, focuses on language arts which include reading and writing. Their Pennsylvanian Dutch dialect is but a verbal language, so emphasis on English is necessary as it is used in correspondence to each other (a prominent method of communication among the Amish) and is how they can communicate with those non-Amish outside the fold since contact with mainstream society is inevitable. German is learned because it is the language of the church. Also included in the curriculum spotlight is arithmetic. These are of course among other things taught. Noteworthy, is that just as there is diversity within different church districts, there is diversity within the schools. Some might integrate religion into the curriculum, while others only include religion in so much as it is already integrated into what is being learned via the Amish society.

 Education in the beginning of Amish life here in the United States was seemingly unproblematic, as rural one or two-room school houses was the norm. Amish would sometimes even participate in school board activities, as their kind would sometimes make up to one third of the school’s population. However the twentieth century led to changes that compromised this setting. Rural schools began to be consolidated and compulsory attendance length and ages rose. “As the age of compulsory attendance rose, the Amish became alarmed. They believed that children age fourteen and older should be under the supervision of their parents or of a community member, learning the skills necessary to succeed economically and socially within the boundaries of the Amish community.” (Huntington, 81) Educational issues were a heavy burden that varied by state. “The problem worsened with the passage of the Bing Act by the Ohio General Assembly in 1921”, says Meyers. (88) The Bing Act required students to attend school until the age of eighteen, with work exemptions beginning at age sixteen. (This law specifically pertained to Ohio.) Parents who refused to send their children to high school or who instructed their children not to study the aforementioned subjects were fined and/or charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors. Problems with new settings of education were stationed in subjects parents wished not to be explored and the years required because of the Amish’s feelings towards too much education as well as the belief that farming should start at a young age because involvement at a later one usually led to less interest in it and meant the quality of work would not be the same. They also included how bus time would consume time during the day that could be spent completing chores, or something of the sort. “Our children should be in our homes at the age of fourteen years to learn farming, housekeeping and other duties, that become us people, and to live a quiet, peaceful life in humility and meekness in Christ” (Huntington, 81) This take on the age of fourteen is important as by age sixteen the Amish youth are to begin considering baptism and voluntary membership to the fold.

In Delaware and Pennsylvania the legal age for permits rose from fourteen to fifteen in 1937, and although legal ground was gained in getting Amish schools built in 1938 (totaling three in Pennsylvania) instances where a student had finished eighth grade but was not yet fifteen arouse. (Meyers, 87-90) In 1941 a petition was presented to the Pennsylvania legislature:

In order to perform the duties of our calling, we shall “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the lord” –Eph. 6:4, also to educate them for farm and domestic work-homemaking-by practical training under Christian supervision in compliance of a general need for the “staff of break”-spiritual and natural-Psalms 105:16-“ that we might not be changeable to any of you”-2 Thess, 3:8.

 We resent the idea of the public teaching a Christian’s youth, especially after they have achieved the primary studies in elementary schools. To surpass the equivalence of the 3 Rs as well as wasting priceless time in school under the world’s nurture and environment, conflicts with the dictates of our conscience-“ for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” -1 Cor. 3:18-21; we conscientiously object to any excessive compulsory attendance of the public’s instruction-James 4:4 (A.E. Bailer 1941) (Meyers, 91)

This effort failed. Compromises were eventually created to place children who had completed the eighth grade yet not turned fifteen were created. The compromise dictated that said students would attend a “vocational school” for several hours a week until their birthday. (Meyers, 92)

Huntington cites that the most successful compromise was this concept of a “vocational school”. The vocational school plan consisted of children being allowed to work at home, whether on the farm or in the home and keep a diary of what they did, then for a few hours a week they would meet with an Amish teacher to work on whatever subjects were required, often being language and math. (Huntington,83).

 This conflict represents but one of many throughout many states. In 1973 *Wisconsin* v. *Yoder* a case which made it all the way to the Supreme Court finally declared it unconstitutional for the Amish to be forced to attend school past eighth grade, as it was not necessary for them to become a successful member of their community. Furthermore, it could actually be harmful, by suffocating their ability to practice their religion freely to a full extent.

 Along with exceptions such as general aid and Social Security, and education the Amish require exemptions from military service to adhere to their beliefs. “For the Amish, war best illustrates a sinful world acting in violation of God’s fundamental will and purpose. War is sin. The Amish are biblical literalists: they believe that Jesus’ words to enjoin love and nonviolence are to be practiced. …From such a vantage point, participation in war is simply impossible.” (Keim,44) Beginning with the Revolutionary War and continuing until present, the Amish’s relation to the state in terms of adhering to beliefs of nonviolence by refusing participation in war and military service has gone through a lot. As will be explored later, it even led to an organization known as The National Amish Steering committee which has become one of the Amish’s single greatest assets in maintaining religious freedom to be a separate people. The first big test of faith with the Revolutionary War proved mostly successful, a very small number of Amish compromised their faith to participate. Mostly, they would pay the fines incurred by their resistance to participation and sometimes have to hire substitutes. The next round was the Civil War; Keim explains “In Ohio, Governor Tod was advised that he should avoid trying to draft the Amish in Holmes County because of their stubbornness in refusing to enlist. Not only that, if drafted they would not fight. Better, his advisors told him, to let them find substitutes.” (45) Other states would allow the substitutions and commutation fees to cover the exemptions. A glimpse into the troubles war brought to the Amish is explained by James O. Lehman “For **Mennonites** and **Amish, the Civil War** was a theological and social problem. How could they maintain their nonresistance or their two-world theologies--of primary allegiance in God's kingdom but active life in this world--with secession, military combat, conscription, partisan politics, taxation for **the** machinery of combat, and marauding armies demanding food, money, and help?”

 The First World War brought with it the draft which acknowledged conscientious objectors. However, this status only allowed those drafted to hope for noncombatant assignments. It was difficult for the COs to decide where to draw the line for their cooperation. Was it too much to be suited up if they didn’t take up arms? How much help was enough to seem condoning? Because of their “stubbornness” COs were often treated poorly. Sometimes they were even separated in hopes of shaming them into cooperation. This was still problematic for Amish men however, because their belief system required them to not participate in the war machine whatsoever, combatant or not. “On 16 March 1918, Congress passed the Farm Furlough Bill, ostensibly releasing soldiers needed in agriculture. In fact, however, the new law offered a means of moving absolutist COs out of army camps and onto farms for the duration of the war.” (Keim, 48) These COs furloughed to farm work were not welcomed by the communities to which they were moved. The public was upset with the wages they would be earning while not having to be in battle like others making the same amount. As one can see, there was some progression in the issues of being a conscientious objector, but for the Amish the biggest changes occurred with World War II.

 World War II was different from the previous wars in that it seemed more “good versus evil” which led to less people applying for a CO status. The CPS- Civilian Public Service emerged which was an alternative developed for those who did not accept noncombatant action and did not want to face jail time for noncompliance. This alternative allowed them to do work of national importance, away from the war machine. Then came a program was often referred to by the name given to COs in the military- I-W. This helped give the men a better chance to witness against the war instead of being moved to some out of the way camp for working. (Keim 57-8) Despite the progress, the Amish still struggled with the options available, because many men seemed to be assigned to hospitals and the like where they were constantly immersed in the “English” world. Olshan quotes from “Steering 1996-72,1”

“Many boys go with good intentions but by having so much idle time, become involved with amusements, with the nurses, or in other ways are led astray to the extent that when they could return home and become church members there are so many that no longer prefer to, or are in a position where they find they can hardly do so, with maybe a nurse of a different faith for a wife or similar circumstances.”

Here’s where the Old Order Amish Steering committee came into play.

 With more about the committee itself later, Keim cites from (Steering 1966-72, 15-16) “The Steering Committee, chaired by Andrew Kinsinger, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, created guidelines to ‘Govern appeals’ to the committee for [farm] deferments. The applicants must (1) be baptized members, (2) have worked on a farm a year, (3) agree to inform the draft board of all job changes, (4) request a farm deferment before coming to the Steering Committee, (5) channel appeals through the committee, (6) desire farm work and oppose hospital work, (7) have a strong reference from their home church, and (8) behave in ways that would not offend neighbors with sons in the military.” (Keim,62)

 The Steering Committee was born when NSBRO (National Service Board for Religious Objectors) wished to speak with a few Amish “leaders”. Basically the meeting led to a decision that the Amish as a whole needed a form of representation, to be able to present themselves to the government. The Amish curbed the sense of bureaucracy by choosing three laymen as their representation, who are not actually paid but do receive compensation for any costs. The men served in the positions of chairman, secretary, and treasurer. They became the Old Order Amish Steering Committee. They presented their case on behalf of the Old Order Amish as a whole, and were granted farm deferments over hospital work and such by General Hershey. Most importantly, they were then given the responsibility of looking over the sincerity and appeals of those seeking such exemptions and had been refused. (Olshan,70) After the CO accomplishments, the Old Order Amish Steering Committee expanded its functions to aid protection of their beliefs in other ways. They sought exemption from the Occupational Safety and Health act of 1970 which would have forced Amish men to wear hard hats rather than their traditional ones. Following that, they achieved extensions for school houses being inspected for asbestos in 1986 when fines were being issued for every day not taken care of if asbestos was found. (Olshan 73-4)

 Today, the Old Order Amish Steering Committee consists of four ranks according to Olshan- “(1) the chairman, (2) other members of the committee who formally constitute the committee, (3) state directors, and (4) local home community “committeemen”. Annual meetings are held and the committee is the single most important asset in defense of the Amish’s religious freedoms. So although organizations of the like are not usually of Amish ways, the representations by the Old Order Amish Steering Committee today allows the Amish to battle Caesar in all realms in which they need exemptions to remain a separate people and avoid assimilation to popular culture. For the most part, the Amish comply with the laws of the land. In this way they subject themselves to Caesar, but by consciously choosing to abstain from the society as a whole to maintain their own separate values they do not become citizens. Except for general protections from invasion and the like they do not enjoy the other benefits of being a citizen, like federal aid or insurances. By renouncing these things they keep their citizenship for the Kingdom of God.

 Previously, the Amish were described as being organized into informal settlements, districts and affiliations. Informally organized is a key concept. The Amish do not generally seek to employ forms of bureaucracy or hierarchy to their communities. This is most strongly exhibited in the way that Bishops-important figures in the society are still laymen. They are not formally trained or ordained. Because of this, the Old Order Amish Steering Committee makes for a specifically interesting case. Hence, the big deal about finally acquiring a representative group to present themselves as a whole to the outside world-specifically the American government. The Old Order Amish Steering Committee is the closest thing to a bureaucratic organization the Amish have to offer. Mark A. Olshan explores the Amish position and environmental factors that led to the necessity of such an organization. This very much relates to their ability to “negotiate with Caesar”. With negotiations, comes compromise.

“Certainly the phrase ‘formal organization’ is not part of Amish demonology, nor is it a term with which many Amish would be familiar. However, a brief inspection of some o f the values fundamental to Amish culture reveals them to be profoundly antithetical to the establishment of formal organization. This normative stance derives from valuing:

1. an opposition to any ecclesiastical hierarchy beyond the local community,

2. a severing of all ties between the political and religious realms,

3. an untrained and unpaid clergy selected from within the community,

4. a separation from worldly (i.e., non-Amish) institutions to the extent possible, and

5. a glorification of simplicity.” (Olshan,692)

As we saw before, the Old Order Amish Steering Committee developed as a necessary response to issues pertaining to military conscription, and as that issue dissipated, grew into a defense against legislature- or even impending legislature that would be injurious to the Amish way of life. Although it seems to have bureaucratized a group that was just shown to hold values contradictory to such a state, it was a defensive mechanism necessitated by growing environmental stresses of outside, worldly society. The committee still doesn’t shorts itself on all attributes normally considered to such an organization. Olshan cites “…the chairman of the Steering Committee has felt it necessary to issue several disclaimers essentially denying the heirerarchical character of the organization. ‘Some people may think that the Committee is trying to run the churches but this should not be so. *The Committee is only the voice of the churches combined’*” (Old Order Amish Steering Committee 1972L58; emphasis in original). As American society continues to be more regulated and standardized, it is more that the Amish have to stand against as a separate people. (Olshan, 612) Before regulations such as standardized formal schooling and the like, the Amish didn’t have to butt heads with the government because they could do their own thing. The problems arise when American society continues becoming more regimented on the books because Amish society doesn’t coincide with these ways that may not seem like a big deal to anyone else. A few voices aren’t really enough, so the Old Order Amish Steering committee serves to provide a voice for many.

 In summary, the Amish have had to struggle to maintain their religious freedom and still maintain their principles of non-resistance. In treading lightly to find the footing as a subject rather than citizen of the land, they have had to make some compromises but in general their core values stand as strong as ever. The more American society becomes regulated and standardized, the more they will have to hold their ground, but since the creation of the Old Order Amish Steering committee they have had more success in finding a voice to defend their way of life. They separate themselves from the worldly society in methods of education, pacifism, certain taxes, insurance and welfare programs, and use of technology. Although they seem to be stuck in centuries of old, they aren’t frozen. They change and adapt with the times just as everyone else does, but in a significantly different way. This different way is less about pace and more about conscious regulation of necessities over wants and possible consequences derived from each step forward in an effort to remain a self sufficient successful entity. In this way they have been able to be in America, but not of it; to live in America and not obtain an American identity.

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