

The Amish Code
by
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They are an enigmatic group yet we are fortunate to have them in our midst. They often go unnoticed as we zip past them on country roads yet they stand out in stark contrast to what we are. They are simple people by conventional standards yet they may hold the answers to society's most complex problems that we have failed to conquer.

While we don't always quite understand the Amish, we often find ourselves admiring what they are. What they are is an amazing testimony to faith and hard-work. But it might be their sense of conduct and community that is most illuminating to us.

The "Ordnung" or their remarkable code of behavior is not written down. The people just somehow know it. It is the fabric of their lives.

While the rest of us fret about the future of the social security system or whether we will have a decent pension, the Amish have no such worry. The Ordnung has seen to it that everything falls in place.

Self-employed Amish do not pay Social Security tax. Section 310 of the Medicare section of the Social Security act has a sub-section that permits individuals to apply for an exemption. If someone is a member of a religious body that is conscientiously opposed to social security benefits but makes reasonable provision of taking care of their own elderly or dependent members, he/she is exempt.

Do any of us belong to a religious body that can claim this exemption? No. Even the most rudimentary understanding of Scripture would suggest that we in churches should be knocking ourselves out to make this claim but we know we realistically cannot.

The Amish have a long history of taking care of their own members. They do not have retirement communities or nursing homes. Usually each family takes care of their own, and the Amish community gives assistance as needed. It is almost reminiscent of the Biblical 2nd Chapter of Acts.

Today making a commitment to our older family members has become a daunting task. Imagine making a commitment to take care fellow church members for life. Perhaps we should all slow down and ponder just how the Amish do it.

If we did, we would quickly discover that the Amish phenomenon does not end with social security. They also do not collect unemployment or welfare funds. Self-sufficiency is the Amish community's answer to government aid programs. When I audited financial institutions in Amish areas, I never found a bank that had a delinquent Amish loan. Amazing? I am referring to all Amish loans made in the history of the

institution. I'm sure there are some bad loans somewhere but I can rattle off the names of banks that never experienced one problem ever.

Equally impressive was something called Amish insurance. The Amish would guarantee a bank that if a mortgaged house burned down, they would have the lumber delivered in two weeks and the house rebuilt in a month.

I'm sure the Amish have their problems. I'm sure it is far from being a perfect society within a society. But the strength of their living testimony is undeniable.

How do we bring their kind of values back to our society? Is there a way to apply their simple principles to society at large or can these principles only exist in isolation?

Within their simplicity the Amish have found profound answers to our societal problems. Their quiet, unassuming faith has somehow ricocheted away moral decadence and government dependence.

Perhaps they make us all a bit uncomfortable because we know they have something we lack. Maybe we have to take a few steps back before we can ever take that step forward to a society that truly cares for one another. The urgency of today, the preoccupation of self, the pursuit of being better than our neighbors, the accumulation of material possessions often obstructs the beauty of each moment and diminishes the value of those around us.

We should listen closely to the Amish. Their example has much to say. A voluntary national code of behavior just might be the ticket.



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