

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner. *New York Amish: Life in the Plain Communities of the Empire State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010). Pp. 240. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$24.95.

"As long as there is farmland to be had at affordable prices, the Amish and their other plain counterparts will come here to find respite from internal and external difficulties and a safe and productive neighborhood in which to raise their children" (179). Even this providential statement by Karen Johnson-Weiner, made near the end of the her fascinating and much-needed book on the New York Amish, could not have anticipated what has happened in the Empire State over the past few years. Johnson-Weiner's list of twenty-six Old Order settlements (thirteen of which were founded only since 2000) ends with the settlement of Poland in 2007. After a short period in 2008 with no new settlements, Amish expansion into New York exploded at a pace unprecedented during their nearly 300-year history in North America. Four settlements were founded in 2009, six in 2010, another six in 2011, and at least one in 2012. This accounts for about one-third of over fifty new Amish settlements established throughout the United States and Canada during this brief period of time (see David Luthy, "Amish Migration Revisited: 2012," *Family Life* [July 2012]: 19–21).

One might think that growth of this magnitude makes Johnson-Weiner's book prematurely out of date. Quite to the contrary, her book is all the more valuable because it is a scholarly accounting of the Amish push into New York, both in the past and in more recent times. It has a considerable number of positive merits. It provides a condensed, easy-to-read history of the Amish, from their origins in Europe during the early days of the Protestant Reformation to their immigration and development in North America. It describes Amish society and culture in a way that is understandable to the reader who knows little about the Amish, though it does so within the context of the ways that the Amish, through their strong sense of community, have met the challenges of settling in the rural places of New York. It shows the geographic, social, and cultural inner-connectivity of the Amish in New York with the Amish in other states, principally Ohio and Pennsylvania. It accounts for diversity among the Amish by describing how settlements in New York were founded by Amish from different fellowships (somewhat like different denominations among Protestant groups) at these other places. Finally, it specifically

addresses the diversity of New York Amish by deftly organizing the book's content according to various rural regions of New York, with maps showing the points of origin of founding or first families to new settlements in the state.

Of particular note in Johnson-Weiner's book is her description of the Swartzentruber fellowships of Amish. The Swartzentruber Amish groups are among the most conservative of all Amish, and they have a significant presence in New York, especially in St. Lawrence County. Her account of their differences from other Amish is well done, and worth a slow and careful reading by both those who are learning about the Amish for the first time and those whose knowledge of this religiously based, rurally located subculture is more advanced. She is able to explain the key differences between three fellowships of Swartzentruber Amish by contextualizing her narrative within the history of their divisions in other states and their subsequent movements into New York. As well, she accounts for other Amish fellowships that are more conservative than the mainstream Old Order Amish, including groups known as the Troyer Amish and Byler Amish in the far western counties of Cattaraugus and Chautauqua. She successfully describes how the Amish from all the various fellowships maintain their distinctiveness from each other, while at the same time cooperating in a number of significant ways to build and sustain their communities. Furthermore, the author provides for the reader an in-depth accounting of the ways all the various and diverse Amish settlements in New York, both large and small and young and old, deal with the non-Amish world that surrounds them. She demonstrates how subcultural boundaries are kept intact, even as the Amish engage in many forms of economic and social exchange with their non-Amish neighbors.

New York is the "go-to" state for the Amish today, and Johnson-Weiner's book could not have been better timed for publication, even though the list of settlements in appendix A only goes up to 2007 (185–86). I truly hope that Karen Johnson-Weiner is given the opportunity to publish an expanded second edition that accounts for the incredible growth of settlements occurring in recent times, and the ways this illustrates the ability of the Amish to both resist and accommodate change and the influences of contemporary, mainstream American society.

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