
Multiculturalism in the United States of America: Amish Community as a Model

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Abstract

Since its founddation, The USA emerged as a Pluralisties society, whether religiously or culturally, and other. manifestations of diversity that were the result of immigration to the New World for several reasons, foremost of which were religious reasons, so the United States of America embraces groups of diverse ethnic and cultural origins coexisting side by side, and among these groups that immigrated to the United States to escape religious persecution is the Amish sect. The Successive migrations from several nations and cultures led to political, economic turmoil, in addition, toother so on As a result of this cultural diversity and in an attempt to find common ground for this multiculturalism, the Amish community was able to maintain its social fabric away from all the challenges that formed the demographics of the United States of America, as there are many challenges it faces in terms of organizing its life according to its beliefs, which sometimes pushes it to withdraw from society in order to maintain the cohesion of its society.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Religion, Amish, United States of America.

Introduction

Pluralism in the United States of America represents a manifestation of life, and despite raising the slogan of citizenship and fusion in one crucible, but until now there are still groups that maintain their social and religious fabric cohesive, one of these groups is the Amish sect that immigrated to the United States as a religious

group coming from Europe in the early eighteenth century, whose lives are characterized by simplicity and family and community cohesion based on the integration of their daily life practices with their religious rites, and their commitment to maintaining separation from the outside community. The Amish are characterized by the individualism of the United States of America, and they are characterized by a tendency to peace, avoiding resorting to violence, lack of political participation and involvement in government functions.

Therefore, the study will review some aspects of the community's life according to a structure that includes sections: the first section includes an overview of the concept of cultural pluralism, while the second one presents a review to the historical roots of the Amish community, and the third section examines the political, socio-economic and religious manifestations of the sect, and finally the study concludes with the most important findings.

The importance of the study

The study derives its importance from shedding light on the life of the Amish community, one of the isolated components of American society, as well as the ambiguity that surrounds it, as the United States of America is a country based on pluralism in general, but what governs all its components is the concept of American citizenship. However, there are still groups that maintain their independence within the framework of this society, namely the Amish sect, which preserves their secret and conservative lives away from all aspects of life recognized by other groups.

The problem of the study

The problem of the study stems from the fact that although the United States is a country of pluralism and integration into the concept of American citizenship, the Amish community enjoys independence and privacy in all aspects of its life, religious, education, and social, which makes it difficult to know the life and

characteristics of this community. and several questions branch out of it:

1. Do the Amish represent a religious or social sect?
2. Are Amish part of the American society?

Hypothesis of the study

Based on the problem, the study is based on the premise that: The Amish sect, although it is one of the components of the social fabric in the United States, but it has a peculiarity that stems from its closure to its society, which makes it a group unique from the social fabric of the United States of America. This privacy creates difficulty in studying the social and religious characteristics of the Amish.

Study Methodology

The study relied on the inductive methodology dealing with the Amish community as part of a larger society based on pluralism, as well as the historical approach in referring to the history of the emergence of the sect.

The first section: The concept of multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism in the United States of America is one of the most important issues as the United States of America is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, and the most important difficulties in it are the issue of cultural assimilation of these groups, as it seems that the United States of America does not have a personal culture because the number of immigrants who came to the country has affected the cultural destinations of Native Americans, so the entire culture of the United States of America is a mixture of different cultures present in society, and from these cultures the Amish sect is unique as being ethnic group is represented by independence and isolation from other ethnic and religious groups.

First: the concept of pluralism:

The concept of pluralism in general is a liberal concept that views society as

consisting of multiple political and non-political links, with legitimate interests, and those who believe in this principle argue that pluralism prevents the centralization of governance and helps to achieve participation and distribution of benefits, and the liberals regard the United States of America as an example of pluralism, but both the new left and the new right in the United States of America reject the concept and oppose it¹.

Second: The concept of culture:

The British anthropologist Edward Barnat Taylor was the first to provide an ethnological definition of culture: "A "Culture" or "civilization", in its broadest ethnological sense, is this complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs, and all other abilities and customs acquired by Man as a member of society².

Culture is also defined as a set of beliefs and behaviors, involving deeply rooted assumptions and deep-rooted behaviors practiced by people. culture reflects people's history and level, and cultures change over time³.

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that respect and recognize the existence of diverse groups in a society or organization, and recognizes their cultural and social differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution in an inclusive cultural context that empowers everyone in a society or organization. Multiculturalism recognizes cultural diversity and seeks to promote it, such as encouraging minority languages while focusing on the unequal relationship between minority and dominant cultures. Pluralism is obvious in the United States because

1 Abdul Wahab Kayyali, Encyclopedia of Politics, Volume 1, Dar Al-Huda, Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1979, p 768.

2 Dennis Koch, The Concept of Culture in the Social Sciences, translated by : Mounir Al-Saidani, 1st Edition, Arab Organization for Translation, Beirut, 2007, p 31.

3 Amish grace; How Forgiveness Transcends Tragedy, Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt & David L. Weaver-Zercher, First published January-2-,2007, P74. Pdf

American society consists of an immigrant community with multiple cultural backgrounds, so multiculturalism in the United States has become a social philosophy influenced by the ideas of its thinker William James⁴.

Multiculturalism: means coexistence within the same political community for a number of large cultural groups that wish to preserve their distinct identity⁵. The Amish are therefore part of this cultural diversity that makes up the United States of America.

The second section: A summary about the origin of the sect

In order to get acquainted with the social life and other aspects of life of any ethnic or religious group, it is necessary to return to the roots of its historical origin, which we will try to find out with regard to the Amish community, but this community is characterized by several contradictions represented in its practices that challenge human instinct, which makes the social and cultural structure of the Amish more complex,. This pushes towards the need to know the history of the emergence of the sect.

The cult traces its origins to the Anapeast, a radical Christian movement that originated in Europe in 1525, shortly after Martin Luther's declaration of the Protestant Reformation, and Anapeast is the name given to them by their opponents, referring to a derogatory title meaning "Baptists", as they baptized each other as adults even though they were baptized in the church when they were infants in the state church. They sought to create Christian communities characterized by love for each other and love for their enemies, and these morals are based on the life of Jesus Christ and his teachings Two centuries later, specifically in the nineties of the

4 Hossam El-Din Ali Mohamed, The Problem of Cultural Pluralism in Contemporary Political Thought : The Dialectic of Integration and Diversity, 1st Edition, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2010, p139.

5 Raphael Cohen-Almagor, Cangroup rights justify the denial of education to children ? The Amish in the United States as a case study, Journal Spring Sciences, 2021, p2.

sixteenth century⁶ the Amish emerged as a distinct Anapist group in Switzerland and in the Alsatian region of present-day France .They did not believe in government sponsorship of religion or the baptism of children, and that it contradicts the teachings of Christ in the New Testament, they believed that baptism should be for adults and with their consent, and later the group split due to differences in their beliefs, this led to the separation of the Count of what is known as Monanites (and spread throughout the world. The Amish migration came in the early eighteenth century as a reaction to religious wars, poverty, and religious persecution in the continent⁷.

They arrived in America and settled first in eastern Pennsylvania, which is still today the largest settlement of the Amish, but the schisms and tensions that occurred in within their ranks after 1850 divided them into the group of the New order of the Amish, and they were the ones who accepted the social change and technological development that occurred in American life, in return there was a group adhering to the traditional system of the Amish that did not accept it to a large extent, which led in the next fifty years to form separate churches for them or joined a church Mennonite⁸. Later, the Amish migrated out of Pennsylvania, settling in other states including Ohio, Indiana, Missouri and Iowa in the first place, for two main reasons: the search for viable farmland to sustain their collective life, and second, dissatisfaction with progressive orthodoxy imposed by a particular local group⁹.

6 Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt & David L. Weaver –Zercher, Amish grace : How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy, p12.

7 Michael Schmitz, The Amish People – Do they Speak German ? March 17—2017, See : <https://www.thoughtco.com/do-amish-people-speak-german-1444342> Data visit 21 :38pm - 17/9/2022.and Franco Gonzalez & others, Amish in the21st century USA, see: Amish in the 21st century USA final project submission | Franco Gonzalez Zarattini - Academia.edu

8 History and church structure, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Amish> Data visit 10 :2pm- 17/9/2022.

9 Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt & David L. Weaver –Zercher, Amish Grace : How Forgiveness Op. Cit, P12.

Table No. (1) Below is a table showing the distribution of Amish settlements in the United States for the year 2023- Source: The Internet is seen on the following website: Date of visit: 9:44pm- 28/4/2024
<https://groups.etoyn.edu/amishstudies/statistics/population-2023>

Approximate population	Areas	The settlement	Mandate	No.
89,765	603	61	Pennsylvania	1-
84,065	671	69	Ohio	2-
63,645	459	27	Indiana	3-
24,920	190	64	Wisconsin	4-
23,285	175	58	New York	5-
18,445	146	52	Michigan	6-
16,690	134	62	Missouri	7-
15,450	124	50	Kentucky	8-
9,930	76	26	Iowa	9-
7,935	60	20	Illinois	10-
5,210	43	23	Minnesota	11-
3,820	31	14	Tennessee	12-
2,400	22	12	Kansas	13-
2,095	23	12	Virginia	14-
1,915	13	1	Delaware	15-
1,835	12	3	Maryland	16-
1,305	13	11	Montana	17-
1,205	12	10	Meen	18-
895	11	7	Colorado	19-
705	8	4	Oklohoma	20-
615	9	9	West Virginia	21-
445	5	5	Nebraska	22-
330	5	4	Wyoming	23-
315	2	2	North Carolina	24-
260	3	3	Arkansas	25-
165	2	1	Mississippi	26-
110	2	2	South Dakota	27-
105	1	1	Idaho	28-
105	1	1	Vermont	29-
100	2	1	Florida	30-
75	1	1	Texas	31-
30	1	1	New Mexico	32-
378,190	2,860	617	Total	

The Amish follow five basic principles: Adult baptism, separation of church and state, prior church communication with those who break moral law, living according to the teachings of Christ, as well as refusing to take arms, take an oath or hold political office¹⁰.

Third Section: Socio-economic, religious and political conditions of the community

After identifying the historical roots in the emergence of the sect, it is necessary to stand on the social, political and religious life of it, so the social, religious and political system of the Amish sect is distinguished from ethnic and religious groups and sects in several aspects, which we will explain as follows:

First: The Social and economic life:

- 1. Society:** In describing Amish society, sociologists tend to classify the Amish as a sectarian society, as several European scholars have compared the social structure of the sect with the church as a religious institution; the church is described as hierarchical and conservative that exercised social control, while the sect is based on egalitarianism, which is essentially a voluntary religious protest movement, whose members separate themselves from others based on beliefs and practices that reject the authority of existing religious institutions¹¹.

While anthropologists who have relied in their studies of societies on comparison around the world tend to call semi-isolated peoples popular societies, primitives or simple societies, as these societies differ from civilized societies; they are small, isolated societies that are simple and homogeneous in all their aspects¹².

10 Sharon M. Weyer, Victoria R. Hustey, and Others, Alook into the Amish Culture : What Should We Learn ? pdf.

11 Johan A. Hosteler, Amish Society, Third Edition, Printed in the United States of America, 1980, p6.

12 Ibid, p8.

After settling in the United States of America, the Amish people live in local gatherings that exceeded two thousand local gatherings in thirty different states, as well as the Canadian province of Ontario in approximately (470) geographical communities calling their local communities church areas, each area consists of twenty to forty families living in a specific geographical area, they choose a bishop, two ministers, and deacons from among their ranks to take over their leadership, so the Amish gather in their homes to perform their rituals and worship every Sunday because they do not have church buildings, and with the increase The number of family members is divided into two new areas¹³ .

- The concept of the family : as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary: a social unit consisting of a group of individuals who are related to each other, such as: father, mother, and their children. But the family, according to the Amish, It is more than that. It represents something more complex, as its members live and work together, as well as practicing their worship together, and always remain close so that the family is stronger, so it has its own structure, the ancestors are necessary and they are part of the family, It is the most important and strong bond, and the family derives its strength through the relationship that binds them to their religious beliefs. The family is represents all the individuals who share its traditions and culture¹⁴.
- Women and class: If the family is the nucleus of society for the Amish community, this will certainly be reflected in the status of women in Amish society, according to the hierarchy and concept of the family; women are in a lower rank than men. The relationship between a man and a woman within the

13Rose Elder, Fore word by Terry E. Miller, Why the Amish Sing, Song of Solidarity & Identity, Published by Johan Hopkins University, 2014, p5.

14 FrancoGonzalez & others, Amish in the 21st century USA, see :
https://www.academia.edu/31851076/Amish_in_the_21st_century_USA_final_proyect_submission?rhid=27723662928&swp=rr-rw-wc-93608828

framework of marriage is based on cooperation between them in several ways Practically the natural place of the woman is home and its management, including cooking, cleaning and sewing, and the most important work of the couple is to raise and train children, the farm is the kingdom of the husband sows and harvests and so on. The divorce and separation are prohibited according to their teaching¹⁵.

- 2. Education:** Amish children receive their education in Amish private schools, they represent one of three main social areas along with the family and society, aiming to promote areas and processes of socialization, ideologies and social structures Amish children learn Pennsylvania German at home as a primary¹⁶. language, while English is taught at school, in order to participate in community life and everyone must understand English in order to communicate with the outside world, and learn literature, so the school works to teach them to be a primary language besides their mother tongue.¹⁷. The Amish refuse to teach their children science, including the theory of evolution, as it includes ideas that contradict the concept of goodness in the Bible, and do not learn the computer, because they reject modern technology, so teaching their children does not aim to become artists, scientists, musicians and other arts and sciences, but is limited to reading, writing, arithmetic and history (Amish history) specifically. children continue to study until the age of (13) years, after which he they leave the study to start working¹⁸.

15 Randall E. Basham, Technology and Community in a Rural Culture : The Amish, Cultural and Religions Studies, David Publishing, Vol,7, No12, December 2019, p664.

16 Cory Anderson, Amish Education: A Synthesis, Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies, Volume 3, 2015, p2.

17 Ibid, p3.

18 Raphael Cohen-Almagor, Op. Cit, p4.

3. Economy: As for the economic aspect of the life of the Amish, It is also governed by religion, which seems to regulate all aspects of life, including their ways of living, which are based mainly on agriculture as well as some handicrafts. Religious culture mainly affects their economic practices and the stability of their societies, which reflects positively on their productivity . .The Amish are linked to a cohesive social network that emphasizes rural life based on agriculture, which sometimes pushes them to move in search of new suitable lands, as well as to practice some work and handicrafts such as the manufacture of furniture and equipment, and women work in sewing and childcare eek toThe Amish s¹⁹. maintain small farms that are easy for them to deal with by the family, growing a variety of crops that meet their needs²⁰.

Second: The Religious Life:

The Amish, as we mentioned earlier, began their history with the early days of the Protestant Reformation movement in the sixteenth century (1525), and they represent a branch of Annabist. They split from it because of their differences regarding the issue of baptism based on their interpretation of the Bible, they took their name after one of their ministers, who was a leader in the succession movement which was

19Rose Elder, Fore Word by Terry E. Miller, Op. Cit, p9.

20John A. Hostetler, Culture Summary : Amish, see :
<https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/nm06/summary> data visit : 9 :55Pm- 8/4/2024.

forwed from another Anapest group (the Swiss brothers) * Yaqoub Amman*²¹

Religious beliefs represent the basic values of society. It is not limited to the worship of members of the community to a God they understand in Christ and the Bible, but their stereotypical behavior has a religious dimension, which determines their perceptions of self and the universe, as well as the place of Man in it, Amish have their vision of the world that recognizes the value and spiritual dignity of the universe in its natural form, as working hours are determined according to religious considerations, as well as daily, weekly and annual rituals, and everything related to travel and choosing friends and life partner, practical and religious situations are not far from. The Amish consider themselves a divine community "God's chosen people", seeking not to control nature but to work with it²² .

*The Swiss Brothers: They are a branch of Annabest that began in Zurich, Switzerland, from which both the Amish and the Mennonites derive their roots. The Amish and Mennonites appeared as part of the Christian Anapist movement in sixteenth-century Europe, and the Amish today live mainly in North America, while the Mennonites live in several countries around the world, the two groups emphasize the separation between church and state, but they differ among themselves in setting the boundaries that separate the outside world from the church from one society to another. Source see:

FrancoGonzalez & others, Amish in the 21st century USA, Op. Cit,

And Bernard D. DiGregorio & Others, When the Waves Roll High: Religious Coping among the Amish and Mennonites during the COVID19 Pandemic Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland
<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/9/678>

* Jacob Amman: Born in February of the year 1644 near Arlenbach, It is noteworthy that he joined Annabptiste in the year 1679, became a preacher and then a bishop with the authority of baptism, left with his family Switzerland in the north and settled in the Alsatian lowlands (present-day France) near the town of Hajdolsheim, and was subjected with the Amish to harassment forced them to move, called for reforms in the church and the need to distinguish between their church and the state church, which they described as corrupt, and there is no specific information about the date of his death. Source:

Donald B. Kraybill Karen M. Johnson-Wener and Steven M. Nolt, The Amish, The Johns Hopkins University, United States of America, 2013, p 42-43.

21Jana M. Hawley, The Commercialization of Old Order Amish Quilts: Enduring and Changing Cultural Meanings, International Textile & Apparel Association, Vol23, 2005, p103.

22 Johan A. Hosteler, Amish Society, Op. Cit, p 10.

The Amish are devout Christians who show their extreme religiosity by following the Bible's code of conduct in all aspects of their lives, and demonstrating this faith in every action they do. Their goal on a daily basis is to be faithful and committed to the way of Jesus Christ in every detail of their lives, by depriving themselves of many worldly pleasures and living simply in a simple way deliberately²³.

Third: The Political Life:

After dealing with the religious and socio-economic life of the Amish, it is necessary to identify the political aspect of the life of the sect, as it was previously presented that the Amish live in societies that are somewhat closed and far from the aspects of life outside their society, but this does not prevent them from being subject to the authority of the government. This will be the focus of the study addressed in two aspects :

- 1. The relationship between the ruler and the governed:** with regard to the members of the community in terms of their lives within the state, members of the Amish community are taught to respect the authorities of the ruling state, as well as to practice vocations to pray for them according to their biblical texts, but when they go into conflict between civil law and their religious conscience, they cite the verse "obey God more than men" (Acts 29:5) of the New Testament, for according to their belief that followers of Jesus should be far from resorting to violence, so they are forbidden to defend themselves. as well as their refusal to join the armed forces²⁴. In the context of the relationship between the sect and the government, we note that the Amish avoid engaging in everything related to

23 Ashley M. Me'ndez Ruiz, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice Arcadia University, April 29-2017.pdf, Available:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332098148_The_Amish_Rule_of_Order_Conformity_and_Deviance_Among_Amish_Youth

24 Yong Center for Anabaptist Studies and Pietist. See : <https://groups.etaown.edu/amishstudies/social-organization/government/> data visit 6:05pm-2-2-2024.

politics and power as much as possible, in practice the Amish refuse to deal with the government and resort to the law, but some circumstances push them to resort to the courts of states, including the case of fining Amish parents for refusing to send their children to secondary schools, or for refusing to pay fines, forcing them to resort to the court²⁵. The reason why Amish does not deal with government institutions lies in the church's ban on its members joining political institutions for several reasons, including²⁶:

- First: the politician is seen as an arrogant person who does not agree with the Amish values of humility and respect.
- Second: holding office is contrary to the religious principle of separation from the world.
- Third: the civil servant must be prepared to use the law when settling civil disputes, which contradicts the Amish position of non-resistance.

The relationship of the members of the sect with the government is evident in the need to separate religion and government, because according to their belief that the nature of man and his positive laws contradict the divine laws that represent the basis in the course of human life, represented in the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The Political participation: The presence of individuals in a society who have all the rights of citizenship imposes on them in return duties towards it, including participation in political life, belonging to political parties and voting in elections, but the Amish deviates from the rule in this aspect according to their teachings.

Based on their belief, the Amish show a deliberate disconnection from the political

25 Johan A. Hosteler, *The Amish and the Law : A Religious Minority and its Legal Encounters*, Vol.41, Issue1, Washington and Lee Law Reviw, 1984, p 46.

26 Donald B. Keraybill, *Amish*, Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America Edition, Vol. 1, 2014, P110.

sphere, as voting in elections is seen as potentially contributing to or supporting regimes that could lead to violence or conflict, and many Amish community see voting and participation in politics as participation in a secular system that may support policies or measures that contradict their basic beliefs of non-resistance and peace²⁷.

The Amish emphasize the separation between church and state, they prefer not to receive government subsidies, and usually do not work in the government and its committees, but they often cooperate with local officials, as they avoid public office and engage in political activity, and the voting rate is often low, and in recent years there have been many conflicts and friction between the Amish and the growing state power in matters such as: military service, education, social security, health care, division of property, child labor and other issues. an Amish formed national committee with representatives in different states to work with legislators on issues affecting their values²⁸. Therefore, although holding public office is prohibited, voting in local and national elections is not, with voter turnout reaching its highest levels in local elections in particular²⁹.

It seems that participating in voting at the local level aims to ensure their situation and not to impose values and laws that contradict their beliefs, i.e. their vote is for the sake of preserving their community.

Based on what has been discussed above, we note that the Amish represent an isolated society subject in all matters of life to unwritten religious teachings (oral), without the US government exerting influence on the sect or interfering in its affairs,

27 Do the Amish Vote in Elections : Exploring Voting Practices in the Community, visible in <https://electionvote.org/do-the-amish-vote-in-elections-exploring-voting-practices-in-the-community/> data visit 7 :51pm-2-2-2024.

28 <https://groups.etaown.edu/amishstudies/social-organization/government/> data visit 6:05pm-2-2-2024.

29 Johan A. Hosteler, The Amish and the Law : A Religious Minority and its Legal Encounters, Op. Cit, p 46.

which is strange as the Amish sect, as the United States of America is known for its interference in the affairs of other societies and peoples under the pretext of protecting human rights and democracy; the life of the Amish is far from all these slogans promoted by the United States of America.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that we are in the third millennium, and what the world is witnessing of the acceleration of events in all aspects of life in the whole world, specifically the United States of America, the Amish community still represents one of the components of American society that is unique in its culture, living a life closer to life in medieval Europe, indifferent to changes and external pressures, as it is famous for a simple lifestyle derived from their religious teachings, which are the main organizer of their social, political and other aspects of life.

As a result of their presence and settlement in the United States of America, the Amish established a subculture distinct from American society in several aspects, including: special dress, ways of living and education, as well as their use of a special language to communicate with each other, and resistance to modernization and change in all its forms, and the sect is characterized by the growth of their numbers despite the closure of society to itself, and their lack of preaching their teachings, thanks to their traditions based on family formation and emphasis on family cohesion and living within the group, and a limited educational system that enables them to practice their rites, And an economy based on agriculture and handicrafts, and selectively adapting to societal changes in all its forms away from development and modernity.

The most important conclusions are summarized as follows:

1. For the Amish, religion is the institution that organizes and manages all aspects of the lives of its members.

2. The Amish are a distinct group within American society, not living by the standards of a larger society. The Amish believe in the community, so they live in communities linked by family and societal ties derived from their religious teachings.
3. The Amish economy is based on agriculture and handicrafts that are commensurate with not being absent from home for a long time.
4. Although the United States of America was founded on pluralism, based on the idea of assimilation and fusion in one crucible and the concept of American citizenship, the Amish live in isolation away from others without state intervention, which makes the situation even more strange.
5. The Amish do not believe in the principle of retribution against their enemies and worldly accountability, or filing of lawsuits, deriving tolerance from the life of Jesus Christ.

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