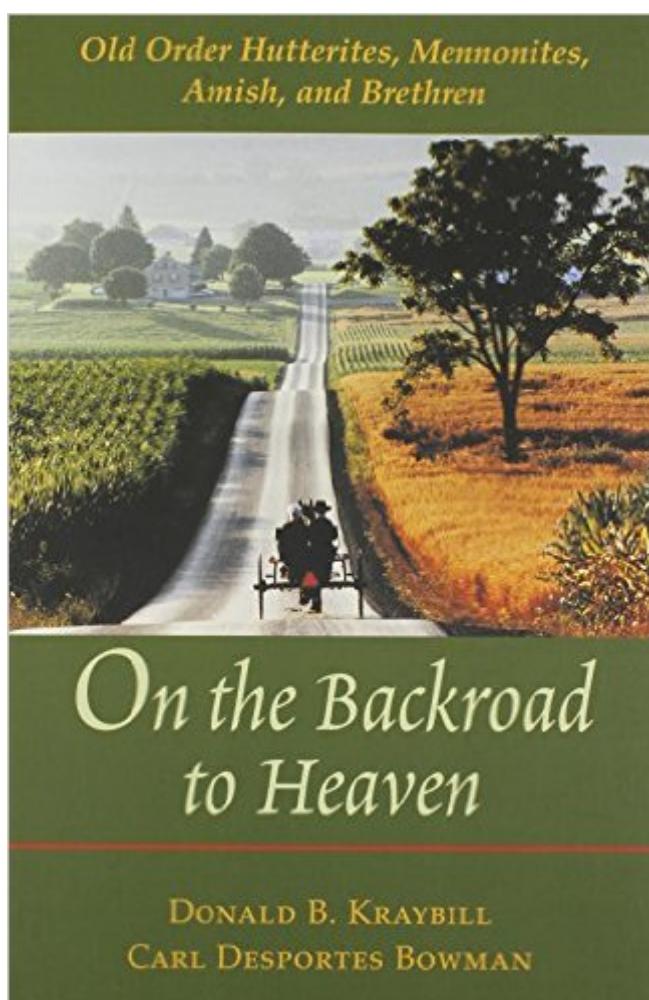


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On The Backroad To Heaven: Old Order Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, And Brethren (Center Books In Anabaptist Studies)



Synopsis

On the Backroad to Heaven is a unique guide to the world of Old Order Anabaptist groups. Focusing on four Old Order communities—the Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren—Donald B. Kraybill and Carl Desportes Bowman provide a fascinating overview of their culture, growth, and distinctive way of life. Following a general introduction to Old Order culture, they show how each group uses a different strategy to create and sustain its identity. The Hutterites, for example, keep themselves geographically segregated from the larger society, whereas the Brethren interact more freely with it. The Amish and Mennonites are more alike in how they engage the outside world, adopting a complex but flexible strategy of compromise that produces an evolving canon of social and religious rules. This first comparative study sketches the differences as well as the common threads that bind these groups together.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Whereas the beliefs and practices of the Old Order Mennonites and Amish have been the subject of many books, the Old German Baptist Brethren and the Hutterites have received far less press. "On the Backroad to Heaven" performs a valuable service in filling in this gap. After devoting a chapter to each of these four Old Order groups, the last four chapters of the book note the differences between them as well as their commonalities. There is just enough depth in the description and analysis in this book by Donald Kraybill and Carl Bowman to provide a decent overview of these fascinating

people. This is enough to make it a worthwhile read for those who are not already familiar with one or more of these groups. (Prior to reading this book I had studied the Old Order Amish and Mennonites fairly extensively and had learned something about the Hutterites by having lived in an area where there were a number of Hutterite colonies. I knew next to nothing about the Old German Baptist Brethren. I found the chapter devoted to them to be quite helpful in giving me a sense of who they are.) The one major drawback is that in describing four separate groups, "On the Backroad to Heaven" might be trying to do too much. As a result, each group appears to be far more monolithic than it really is. For example, personal research has taught me that there are widely different practices among the Amish, in part because the local *ordnung* governs so much of what is and is not considered acceptable. Thus, the practices of the Swartzentruber Amish of Ohio are far more restrictive than those of, say, the Amish in Lancaster County, PA.

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