

[PDF] Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Redeemed A Tragedy

Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, David L. Weaver-Zercher
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. When a gunman killed five Amish children and injured five others last fall in a Nickel Mines, Pa., schoolhouse, media attention rapidly turned from the tragic events to the extraordinary forgiveness demonstrated by the Amish community. The authors, who teach at small colleges with Anabaptist roots and have published books on the Amish, were contacted repeatedly by the media after the shootings to interpret this subculture. In response to the questions why—and how—did they forgive? Kraybill and his colleagues present a compelling study of Amish grace. After describing the heartbreaking attack and its aftermath, the authors establish that forgiveness is embedded in Amish society through five centuries of Anabaptist tradition, and

grounded in the firm belief that forgiveness is required by the New Testament. The community's acts of forgiveness were not isolated decisions by saintly individuals but hard-won countercultural practices supported by all aspects of Amish life. Common objections to Amish forgiveness are addressed in a chapter entitled, What About Shunning? The authors carefully distinguish between forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation, as well as analyzing the complexities of mainstream America's response and the extent to which the Amish example can be applied elsewhere. This intelligent, compassionate and hopeful book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on forgiveness. (Sept. 21)

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From *Starred Review* The crime—shooting innocent schoolchildren in a one-room schoolhouse—was shockingly vicious. More shocking, virtually incredible, was where it happened, in the heart of Pennsylvania's Amish country, commonly associated with bucolic tranquility, not gun violence. This remarkable book explains, exceedingly well, Amish reaction to the horrific Nickel Mines shootings. The outside world was gravely taken aback by the Amish response of forgiveness. Some in the media criticized the Amish as naive and hypocritical (didn't they shun members of their own community?), but most simply couldn't understand the Amish concept of forgiveness as unmerited gift. How could they forgive humanly embodied evil? The authors, all authorities on Amish culture, emphasize that the Amish response reflected the sect's heritage and deeply embedded faith. They distinguish forgiveness from pardon and reconciliation. Forgiveness relinquishes the right to vengeance, while pardon forfeits punishment altogether, and reconciliation restores the relationship of victim and offender or creates a new one. They discuss the shooting mercifully straightforwardly before exploring the broader perspectives of forgiveness and concluding with reflections on the meaning of forgiveness. At times difficult to read, this anguished and devastating account of a national tragedy and a hopeful, life-affirming lesson in how to live is itself a marvel of grace. Sawyers, June --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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