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Review of: *Till Sunday Comes Again*—D.E. Martin

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Review of: **Martin, D.E. 2020. *Till Sunday Comes Again*. Smithsburg, MD: Self-published. Pp. 119. Softcover. \$11.99.**

By Cory Anderson
Pennsylvania State University

Bob Weaver owns one of those “Dutch Bucket” restaurants, that giant palace of Amish country, tourist-sustained eateries serving buffets of fried chicken, mashed potatoes mixed with heavy loads of sour cream, oily vegetables, and gooey gluten rolls. Bob has done an incredible business, and now he is opting to open on Sunday. He makes this move in the context of the ever-more-brittle convictions of his local conservative Anabaptist church. His piety juices out as he explains to his “buddy Dave” (p. 20), whom he hired to print out a new banner announcing Sunday brunch hours:

My purpose in opening for Sunday lunch is not for business reasons [...] I’ve found there are a lot of people in our community who don’t take time for a good family meal. You know, Dave, the whole concept of family time is falling apart in this world. So what I’m doing is using my resources to feed these families [...] We really encourage them to go to church on Sunday morning. In fact, we give 5% discount if they bring their church bulletin along. (p. 27)

With the sign ordered on Monday, by the week’s end, Bob had raged when a church brother in the dairy business was struggling to get a replacement dairy part. He had also fired a woman in Dave’s church for being unwilling to work the new Sunday hours. Crying from her car parked outside Bob’s restaurant, the fired woman observed several from church, including Dave, bringing in their orders to help Bob open on Sunday.

Numerous characters ask, “What does the Lord’s day mean to me?” as author D.E. Martin walks through a typical week in a large, economically developing community. Across eight days, from Sunday to Sunday, each chapter provides

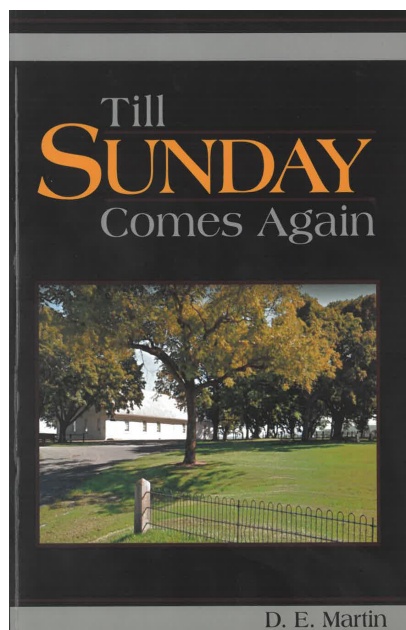
a window into the lives of church members and what sounds like ex-members, including young adults, parents, businessmen, homemakers, elderly, and ministers. Encroaching on understandings of Sunday observance are large dairy farms, medical needs, extensive travel, frivolous shopping, trucking and towing, softball games,

Intended for a plain Anabaptist audience and aimed at conscientious Sunday observance, this account does so much more. I find two interesting dynamics. First, Martin has done a fantastic job

caricaturing a rising class of power brokers among plain Anabaptists. These are primarily big business owners—be they in the service, industrial, or agricultural sector. Because they provide support for smaller operations, those further down the socio-economic pyramid hesitate to challenge their moral hegemony, even as these power brokers are encroaching on (at least) one area of religious conviction. Certainly the relocation of power from church institutions to business institutions does not end with matters of Sunday observance.

Second, as several researchers have poignantly noted, plain people are in a constant game of rationale and dialogue about what “we” consider acceptable. The game focuses on how ideas are framed. “Family time” Dave pondered after getting off the phone with Bob. “Interesting how the right words can change the way you look at things” (p. 28). At times, characters are caught in their own contradictions—what, for example, they demand of others on Sundays but not for themselves. True to human nature, the characters feel uncomfortable pondering their contradictions and take no further action. This is the ambivalent position Martin leaves the characters in come the last chapter, when “Sunday comes Again.” This chapter is basically a transcribed sermon articulating the meaning of Sabbath observance. The book then ends, and as in real life, readers are left wondering what each individual plans to do with the teaching, if anything.

What I love is how this book captures many personalities and dynamics among plain people



today. That said, character development is somewhat uneven, and the sheer number of characters—some with follow-up on subsequent days, others permanently disappearing after their introduction—leaves the reader wondering whom he or she should follow closely. Then again, I recently heard the same critique leveled at Charles Dickinson's books. I recommend researchers ap-

proach this book as a lay-level ethnographic study that could productively suggest research questions about changes in power, rhetoric, and institutions among the plain people.

For order information, send a SASE to Dean E. Martin, PO Box 388, Smithsburg, MD 21783.

Review of: **Stavisky, Judith. 2022. *In Plain View: The Daily Lives of Amish Women*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press. Pp. 191. \$20.99.**

By Barbie Stoltzfus
Old Order Amish

This book is an accurate snapshot of the Amish lifestyle. It is almost uncanny how Stavisky picked up on the inner mechanisms of the lifestyle of the largest and most progressive Amish settlement in the United States. Stavisky portrayed the lifestyle with respect and, for the most part, truth. The simple fact that the Amish allowed Stavisky into their lives and homes speaks much about the author's tact and poise.

Stavisky describes the typical Amish woman and her lifestyle well. The author takes us into their homes as they get ready for house church and prepare the traditional church meal of snitz pies. We grin in sympathy as an Amish grandmother frowns as her married daughter serves her guests watermelon instead of the traditional snitz pies. We gape with fascination at the mammoth garden an Amish woman plants, then sweat with her as she corrals her seven children into helping with the hoeing and weeding. As she puts up hundreds of jars of canned goods using the pressure can method for meats raised on the property, and cold-water bath for fruits and vegetables, we sigh with relief when the last of the garden's bounty is resting in sweet repose on the cellar's shelves. As our Amish friend sews dresses, shirts, pants, and coats we

wonder at her professional looking buttonholes and feel the satisfaction as the garment is ironed and hung in the closet waiting to be worn by one of her eight children. The oneness she has with her biological sisters and church sisters as they quilt or have workdays is felt deep in our hearts. The weight, as an Amish woman's husband, ordained by lot, sacrifices much of his free time to study the Scriptures while his wife tries to keep their lively brood of eight quiet, bogs us down. The restraint required by a two-year-old while he sits quietly through the three-hour sermon amazes us.

The spotless house and large manicured yards suggest that Amish women like order and neatness. Even though our Amish friends shop at Costco, and many aren't totally organic, they could outdo the crunchiest of crunchy granola moms. The Amish woman is oblivious to the fact that her achievements are Instagram-worthy because of the simple fact that she never heard of social media. And even if she had, she would be puzzled as to why you would want to post your ability to milk a cow, make yogurt, or bake bread, cookies and

cakes, and effortlessly make mammoth amounts of granola, a known fact. All her friends and relatives, according to Stavisky, are equally talented.

But as is typical in any culture, no matter how well studied, there are many mannerisms that will only be felt or noticed if you grew up in the culture. A good example of this is the photos in the book. They are outdated and not consistent with the way the Amish dressed in 2022 when the book was published. Not noticeable to mainstream so-

