

The Amish deserve no mocking

Opinion Piece by Bryan McKenzie, Daily Progress staff writer

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Long have I mocked the religious for their “our way or the highway to hell” interpretations of the Bible, the Koran, the Tao Te Ching and various other texts, interpretations often delivered with fiery fervor that borders on the pathological.

I’ve mocked Pat Robertson almost as mercilessly as he deserves to be. I’ve mocked Jerry Falwell. I mock all television preachers who wear Armani suits and pinkie rings, but there is one group I will mock no more.

I will not mock the Amish.

While the Amish come to grips with the shootings of 10 schoolgirls and the subsequent deaths of five, we in the mainstream are coming to grips with the Amish.

Most of us have chuckled at their quaint, backward ways; cooing and giggling at the cute little buggies and the odd beards and funny clothes and how they survive without stocks, bonds, 401(k) retirement plans and health club memberships.

Unlike us

Those silly Amish. Look at everything they give up for their queer religious beliefs: cell phones, stereos, Toyota Corollas or any car for that matter, Harley-Davidson Softail Deluxe motorcycles.

They’re nonpolitical, so how can they be “true” Christians? They don’t actively oppose gay marriages. They don’t protest abortion clinics. They don’t grab signs and protest the Iraq War and they don’t march on Washington to protest cuts in welfare programs.

The Amish shun our society, perhaps for good reason. They don’t wield credit cards so they don’t buy themselves into slavery to the banks. They don’t hang out in bars. They don’t make good soldiers because they don’t believe in killing.

They are unlike us and the recent tragedy in their Lancaster County, Pa., school proves it. According to experts, the Amish believe that as Jesus preached forgiveness, so must they forgive. Therefore, they invited to the funerals the widow of the man who killed their daughters.

Paying respects

Jesus replaced the Roman soldier’s ear, the one whacked off in the garden by a disciple: The Amish dropped by the shooter’s widow’s home to pay respects and express forgiveness and sorrow for her family.

Experts told the Associated Press that the Amish believe they should accept and absorb hostility by turning the other cheek. When I turn the other cheek, I find it gets slapped as well and I start slapping back. Not the Amish.

When we “English” saw their plight and their reaction, we started sending money to help with the medical costs of the wounded girls. By their rules, the Amish couldn’t ask for help, but accepted it with humility. Then they asked that a special fund be set up to help the shooter’s widow and children.

They have been tested very publicly in a way that would make Job cry and they have proven their merit. I will no longer mock them. They are different but they are people who practice the peace they preach.

The world could use more people like them.

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