

Amish.org

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [May 3, 2000](#) issue

On a recent trip to the University of Notre Dame to speak at a conference on “Religion, Spirituality and Business,” I stopped at a toll-road fast-food, fast-fuel station. A theme of my address was to be that “the market has won,” that it is all-enveloping, all-embracing, intrusive, unavoidable. And that people of faith must recognize this as they set out to be faithful in a world marked by words like “globalization,” “the Internet” and “free enterprise.”

That toll-road stop gave me new evidence of the all-encroaching power of the market. I have seen such evidence everywhere. A recent example is the magazines advocating the simple life—luxurious-looking journals printed on complex glossy paper. My toll-road evidence that day came from some tracts I scooped from a wall marked “Amish and Mennonite Country.” There were 29 little marketing tracts and one large magazine titled *Amish Country*.

I yield to none in my admiration for the “peace churches” and the people in them who make strenuous efforts not to be overwhelmed by the market and its goods. But let them speak. A section in *Amish Country* attempts to answer the familiar question, “Why do the Amish people choose to forego modern amenities?” Answer: “They are a people of faith. Their practices represent an attempt to reflect their faith. Amish people forego modern amenities, such as electricity, automobile, and telephones for two reasons: 1) they desire to be separate from the world to obey the biblical mandate to be ‘in the world but not of this world’; 2) modern conveniences detract from the solidarity of their community.”

But inside the magazine’s foldout cover is an index of up to 200 advertisers grouped under “Attractions,” “Dining,” “Lodging,” “Shopping,” “Museums” and “Furniture.” I count 41 ads for shopping sites and 11 listing furniture places—highly recommendable, by the way. People are invited to visit “Country Craftsmen” who provide “a glimpse of the Amish way of life—up close and personal.”

Admittedly, some Amish resent all this marketing and intrusion by outsiders who represent “the world.” But even many of those are dependent upon the people who

bring the world's tourists "up close and personal."

Next to the long listings of advertisers is a glowing half page portraying the smiling face of a Travel Information and Services person. She invites you to "a day or week [spent] exploring Amish Country." Below her portrait, to make things easy, is a picture of a cell phone and a computer, right there providing access to the "forego-modern-amenities" country: "We're on the Web: www.AmishCountry.org." And the advice: "When you surf the Web, stop in and visit us."