

SECT-STATE RELATIONS: Accounting for the Differing Trajectories of Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses

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Abstract

Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses shared common roots; both began as apocalyptic sects with premillennial expectations; both rejected political participation as contaminating and distracting from their God-given purpose; both expected to be the object of persecution from the state; and both held theological positions that put them out of step with demands of the state, such as a refusal to bear arms in wartime. However, over time they followed very different trajectories in the matter of relations with governments. While the Witnesses increased their intransigence and endured considerable conflict, Adventists increasingly compromised their original positions, prizing governmental approval.

If, following Stark and Bainbridge, the degree of tension with state and society is invoked as the measure of a religious group's position on the church-sect continuum, Witnesses are found to be an "established sect" while Adventists have traveled a considerable distance from sect towards denomination.

This paper sets out to account for these differing trajectories. In doing so, it focuses on the evolution of the relationships of these two sects with governments, paying particular attention to times of war and heightened nationalism. The data lead to an interpretation that finds several related, interacting factors. These include the degree of social mobility experienced by the groups, the proportion of members who have inherited their faith, the degree of organizational openness, ideological rigidity, and apocalyptic urgency, the intensity with which they indoctrinate converts, and the extent to which they have faced persecution. These factors together shape the group's relations with the state and society, and consequently also its position on the Sect-Denomination continuum.

The Issue

Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses share common roots. Adventists grew directly out of the Millerite movement: they were one of several fragments which survived the "great disappointment" of October 22, 1844, the date which Baptist lay preacher and biblical chronologist William Miller had set for the Second Coming of Christ (Judd 1987: 33). Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the International Bible Students, later renamed Jehovah's Witnesses, was heavily influenced by members of other Millerite fragments, especially Advent Christians. He began his religious journey in 1869 as a result of the preaching of Advent - Christian James Wadell. He adopted the doctrine of conditionalism or annihilationism¹ from George Storrs, a former Millerite. And from Nelson H. Barbour, another former Millerite, he drew his biblical chronology, his rules for interpreting prophetic time periods,² and a historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation (Penton 1985: 14-20; Beckford 1975: 3). The similarity of these to the positions held by Adventists reflected their common heritage.

Their similar chronologies, both of which shared several highlighted dates (for example, 1798 and 1843-44), led both Adventists and Witnesses to radical millenarianism: both believed that they were living at the denouement of the world's history. This belief made both movements intensely evangelistic and led them to mount international missionary endeavors: they saw it as their God-given task to warn the world of the imminent events and to call people to join their group, which each identified as God's special people.

The millenarianism of both groups created tensions with society. Initially this was especially the case with other churches, whom they portrayed boldly as false, corrupt, and "the whore of Babylon." Both were notably antagonistic to the Roman Catholic Church, which they identified with some of the most fearsome prophetic symbols. Their beliefs also contained the seeds of severe tensions with the state: their prophetic interpretations led both groups to expect persecution from the state, which would thus act as the instrument of Satan; Jesus was - returning to judge and overthrow "the nations", and since this was expected so soon, government and politics were otherwise not worthy of attention. The specter of severe conflict with the state was raised when each group was faced for the first time with wartime conscription, for "the relationship of religious groups to the society in which they are found is sharply revealed against the background of war" (Yinger 1946: 176).

¹ This view rejects the innate immortality of the soul, asserting instead that faith brings conditional immortality, that following death the soul sleeps until the Resurrection, and that the souls of the wicked are ultimately annihilated rather than suffering eternal torment.

² The "year-day" principle, the 360-day "prophetic year", the 30-day "prophetic month", a "time" equals a prophetic year and "times" two years, etc.

J. Milton Yinger, setting out in 1946 to elaborate on Troeltsch's (1931 (1911)) "church-sect" classification, noted that a "church" (or to use more recent parlance, "denomination")³ unlike a "sect", "accepts the main elements in the existing balance of power" and "the legitimacy of the prevailing societal structure, " and supports the "existing powers...in peace and war" (1946: 18-19, 21, 19). He observed that while sects sharply attack the powers of society, churches (denominations) become "incapable of making a basic challenge to the existing society, with its injustices" (1946: 27, 34). In 1963, Benton Johnson focused on such insights when he suggested replacing the long and varying list of correlates used by sociologists invoking the church-sect - typology to define "church" and "sect" with a single attribute:

"A church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists.
A sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists"
(1963: 542).

Stark and Bainbridge clarified and reactivated this insight: "Johnson postulated a continuum representing the degree to which a religious group is in a *state of tension* with its surrounding sociocultural environment" (1985: 23). For them, three elements marked "subcultural deviance or tension: difference, antagonism, and separation" – which together described "a single concept" (1985: 49-50).

By this measure, both Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses were initially strongly sectarian. However, over time they have followed very different trajectories. While Adventists, craving official approval, increasingly compromised their original positions – and thus became an excellent example of the typical shift from sect towards denomination – Witnesses actually increased their intransigence and endured harsh conflict with many states, especially in time of war. They thus became, and have remained, what Yinger defined as an "established sect."⁴

This paper sets out to account for these differing trajectories in sect-state relations. It thus focuses on a question raised by Bryan Wilson: "We need to know just what factors in the organization and circumstances of sects promote or retard" their development into churches or denominations (1967: 22). The question is especially interesting in this instance because not only were the two groups initially very similar, but on other measures also, such as

³ Yinger distinguished a "church" from a "universal church", and thus used it as the equivalent of what others would identify as a "denomination."

⁴ Yinger distinguished between new sects and those which seem to have settled permanently into sectarian status. He suggested that although "established sects" may make some modifications in the direction of a church (denomination), they remain basically sectarian and continue to be regarded as separate (a key variable for Stark and Bainbridge) (1946: 22-23).

international spread, growth rates, and total membership, they have remained remarkably alike.⁵

In tracing the diverging trajectories of the two groups, this paper focuses on the evolution of their relationships with governments, with particular attention to times of war and heightened nationalism.

Research Methods

I have been engaged in a massive study of international Seventh-day Adventism for the past ten years. During this time I have traveled in 54 countries in all eleven of the church's world divisions, completing over 3,000 long, in-depth interviews with church administrators, pastors, teachers, hospital personnel, college students, and leading laypersons; I have also assembled questionnaires completed by interviewees and samples of college students and laity, gathered field notes from observation at church services and key meetings, and culled data systematically from Adventist periodicals, statistical reports, and secondary sources. The convention adopted in this study is to refrain from citing the names of the interviewees quoted, except when they are major figures in the church.

In 1991, while preparing papers on Adventism and church-state relations and Adventism and military service (Lawson 1991; 1992), I became familiar with Christine King's work comparing the experience of five sectarian groups under the Third Reich (1982a, 1982b).⁶ I was fascinated at the contrast between the Adventist and Witness responses, and desired to compare their relations with governments more generally and to account for their differences. This led me to review the secondary literature on Witnesses. I have supplemented this with statistics from the *Witness Yearbook*, data from recent issues of *Watchtower* and *Awake!*, and phone interviews with two authors who were previously prominent Witnesses.

⁵ In 1992, Adventists reported a presence in 204 countries out of 233 recognized by the United Nations; Witnesses reported activity in 229 "countries and territories," a list which separated out Alaska, Hawaii, and Pacific and Caribbean islands which the U.N. list would have linked with other entities. That is, the international representation of the two religious groups is very similar. Worldwide Adventist membership stood at 7.5 million, while Witnesses, who do not list total membership, reported almost 4.5 million active publishers (persons engaged in regular witnessing) and 11.4 million attendees at their annual memorial (communion) service (a number which would include many people with whom they are studying and relatives and friends of members specially invited to this particular service, as well as more peripheral (non-publisher) members (see Beckford 1975: 88)). Adventists reported a 5.6% increase in membership over the previous year, Witnesses a 5.3% increase in publishers; Adventists reported 601,000 baptisms and other additions to church membership, and Witnesses 301,000 (neither baptizes infants). Adventism, however, is now much less concentrated in North America (10.6% of members compared with 22.7% of Witness publishers), and it has become much more concentrated in developing countries (84.2% of members compared with 48.0% of Witness publishers (derived from General Conference 1993; Watch Tower, 1993).

⁶ I have since become aware that King drew much of her material on Adventists from Erwin Sicher, "Seventh-day Adventist Publications and the Nazi Temptation," *Spectrum* 8: 3 (March 1977), 11-24, without citing her source.

Data: Diverging Trajectories

(i) The Governmental Relations of Seventh-day Adventists.

The Millerite forebears of Seventh-day Adventism rejected the American Dream, for their premillennial expectation of Imminent cataclysm led them to view society pessimistically. William Miller's preaching focused closely on the apocalyptic visions of the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, where he saw governments portrayed as wild beasts which hurt God's people. His message had the effect of encouraging apolitical withdrawal: many followers withdrew from reform associations, and became totally absorbed in preparing for, and warning others of, the impending "Day of the Lord" (Butler 1974: 173-77).

Following the "Great Disappointment," the nucleus of those who were to become Seventh-day Adventists took the Millerite rejection of the American Dream a step further when, beginning in 1851, they denounced the Republic, identifying it with the second beast of Revelation 13, which "had two horns like a lamb" and "spoke like a dragon." Adventists cherished the foundation of America, with its Constitution and Bill of Rights, which they saw as symbolized by the beast's lamb-like appearance, with the two horns representing the two principles of political and religious freedom. But, pointing to slavery and to the religious intolerance shown by the churches' expulsion of the Millerites and the states' jailing of (Saturday) Sabbath keepers who had violated blue laws, they held that America was betraying both principles. It was already, and would increasingly become, a dragon in lamb's clothing. That is, Adventist eschatology enshrined tension with the state, reflecting the problems members faced adhering to the tenets of their faith in a hostile society.

The American Civil War forced Adventists to grapple with the issue of military service just as they were creating their centralized form of government. Their political pessimism, concern for keeping all of the Ten Commandments, including both the 4th (Sabbath) and 6th ("Thou shalt not kill"), and the priority they gave to the spreading of their message, made them reluctant to participate (Brock 1974: 23; Graybill, 1978: 4-8). The Adventist prophet, Ellen White, as was her wont, clinched the decision: "I was shown that God's people...cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith" (1885 (1863): 361). While this decision earned them scorn, Adventists were able to avoid legal punishments once conscription was instituted through using the loopholes created for Quakers. They gained recognition as noncombatants from state and federal authorities and, having adopted a position, then enforced it, disfellowshipping members who heeded the call to arms (Graybill 1978: 7; Brock 1974: 26). The 1865 general church session, held shortly after the war's end, affirmed the new position: it declared that while Adventists "recognize civil government as ordained by God, "

they were "compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed" because this was inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus, the "Prince of Peace"(Wilcox 1936: 234).

In the years between 1870 and 1901, Adventism's evangelism became international, its membership increased steeply, and it built 16 colleges and high schools, a medical school, 75- "sanitariums" or hospitals, 13 publishing houses, and 31 miscellaneous institutions. Adventism was putting down a stake in the societies where it operated (General Conference 1901; 1901-1902: 596, 597). These changes were accompanied by a reshaping of Adventist eschatology. While America continued to be identified with the two-horned beast, it was no longer portrayed as already in the dragon phase, but as still lamb-like, and its demise was thus seen as less imminent. That is, the time believed to be remaining before the second coming of Christ was lengthening. However, the interpretation remained fundamentally pessimistic, for Adventists themselves had replaced slaves as the minority whose abuse would undo the Republic. Ellen White now counseled rapprochement with civil authorities in order to facilitate missionary work; indeed, she urged Adventists to help prolong the future of America "so the Adventist message could go forth and flourish" (Butler 1974: 193-94). That is, Adventists found themselves in the anomalous situation of wishing to delay the end in order to have greater opportunity to preach that it was at hand.

Although Adventists continued to see politics as unsavory and as a distraction from their primary purpose, they now became involved in some issues which they regarded as vital. Prime among these was the campaign by the National Reform Association to extend the Sunday sacredness "blue laws" already in effect in some states to the national level. By 1892 about 50 Adventists had been convicted under the state laws, and 30 of these sent to prison. Despite the fact that their re-honed eschatology saw the passage of a national Sunday law as the culmination of the prophecy concerning the two-horned beast, and thus a sure signal that the Second Coming of Christ was at hand, they felt obliged by Ellen White's counsel to "extend the time" to respond boldly to this threat. They established a magazine devoted to religious liberty, founded the National Religious Liberty Association, lobbied before congressional committees, presented legal briefs in court, and helped defeat Senator H.W. Blair's Sunday-Rest bill (Butler 1974: 196-98). Adventists continued this array of activities into the twentieth century, when they became widely known as defenders of the First Amendment, which they saw as the basic guarantee of religious liberty in the U.S. (Syme 1973; Morgan 1992).

The issue of military service, which had faded from view after the American Civil War, reappeared in the new century as international tensions deepened. This became the focal point in the evolution of Adventist relations with governments during the next several decades. Although the structure of international Adventism was centralized, practice on this point diverged considerably, with two distinct positions emerging. The first of these was developed

most fully in the U.S. Since this was the location of church headquarters, it was declared repeatedly to be the official position. However, it was confined largely to English-speaking democracies.

When the U.S. entered World War I, the Adventist church there reaffirmed its earlier noncombatant position, and filed this with the War Department (Wilcox 1936: 113; Syme 1973: 70-71). However, it transformed its interpretation of "noncombatancy" from nonparticipation in war to unarmed military service. Adventists could now express their patriotism: its members became unarmed soldiers doing good while refraining from killing. In 1916, anticipating a draft, the church established Red Cross training schools at its schools and hospitals, where potential draftees undertook training that helped make them attractive to noncombatant medical units within the armed forces. Such postings were considered particularly desirable because helping people medically was defined as suitable activity for the Sabbath. They thus provided Adventist draftees a noncombatant role within the military and at the same time removed the difficult problem of service on the Sabbath. However, many still faced punishment because of problems with Sabbath observance during basic training. Although Adventist leaders were eventually able to arrange for their members to be excused from all unnecessary military activities on that day, at the end of the war there were still 35 in prison, with sentences ranging from 5 to 20 years, for disobeying officers on this account. They were then released by proclamation (Wilcox 1936: 151). Adventists were also successful in gaining noncombatant status in other English-speaking countries during World War I.

The new Adventist policy of noncombatant participation in war subsequently became a vehicle for creating close ties with the U.S. government. In 1939, as war broke out in Europe, church leaders in the U.S. again established a medical training program for potential draftees. This time, however, it was much more sophisticated, for they had secured the cooperation of the armed forces: called the Medical Cadet Training Program, it was directed and supervised by regular army officers (Dick 1974: 20). The official church paper commented: "Refusing to be called conscientious objectors, Seventh-day Adventists desire to be known as conscientious cooperators" (Editorial 1941). Such a position was inevitably viewed much more favorably by the military authorities than those of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the traditional peace churches. Some 12, 000 American Adventists served during World War II as noncombatants in medical branches of the services. Church leaders were especially proud of their military heroes such as Desmond Doss, whose bravery earned him a Congressional Medal of Honor (Sibley and Jacob 1952: 86; Schwarz 1979: 443; Goldstein 1985: 2).

The major innovation during the Korean War was the appointment of Adventist military chaplains, who were paid by the armed forces and had military careers. The General

Conference⁷ switched its earlier stand, now endorsing Adventist clergy for such posts and providing financial aid to help with the ministerial training of some would-be chaplains (Dick 1976: 42-45).

Americans taught South Korean Adventists the official church position on military service during the Korean War. Consequently, the Adventist college there gave basic medical training to those expecting to be drafted, who then asked the authorities to assign them to medical units or other noncombatant positions. Because not all were successful in getting such appointments, two Adventists were executed at the front line during the war when they refused to bear arms, and about 100 others were sent to prison for as long as 7 years during the 1950s and 1960s - (interviews).

In the U.S., the Adventists' noncombatant position no longer separated them, but in fact fostered close relationships with the government and military leaders. Signs of cooperation multiplied during this time. In 1954 the U.S. Army established a special camp at Fort Sam Houston in Texas where all noncombatants received their basic training. This removed them from regular units where their refusal to bear arms had been a source of confusion. Over half the men who received their basic training there were Adventists (Davis 1970: 222). The following year the U.S. Army Surgeon General created "Project Whitecoat, " a program especially for drafted Adventist noncombatant servicemen. Under this the latter were given the option of spending their periods of military service as guinea pigs in biological warfare research for the U.S. Army. Thanks to the enthusiastic encouragement of church leaders, 2, 200 Adventists participated in the program between 1955 and 1973 (Thompson 1991; interviews).

Many Adventists became militant patriots. The director of the General Conference National Service Organization, the church department created during World War I to respond to the needs of Adventist noncombatant conscripts, was quoted in *Time*:

“We despise the term 'conscientious objector' and we despise the philosophy back of it... We are not pacifists, and we believe in force for justice's sake, but a Seventh-day Adventist cannot take a human life" ("Conscientious Cooperators" 1950: 68).

The alternative Adventist response to military conscription was invoked by local church leaders where the first was deemed not available. Under this Adventists served in the normal fashion, with arms. It thus completely reversed the position established during the American Civil War – but it kept tension with governments relatively low.

Germany was central to the development of this policy. When war broke out suddenly in 1914, Adventist leaders there, moved by both patriotism and a realization that Imperial Germany

⁷ The central Church administration.

would not countenance a noncombatant option, agreed that their members would bear weapons in the service of the Fatherland; moreover, they stated explicitly that "under these circumstances we will also bear arms on Saturday" (Sas n.d.: 14; Sicher, 1977: 12). This decision resulted in a bitter schism, which concluded with the members making up the pacifist opposition – the "two percent" – being disfellowshipped and forming the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. The position of the official church in Germany became typical of non-English-speaking countries where conscription was imposed.

Although the General Conference reaffirmed after the war that noncombatancy was the official Adventist position, the Stalinist crackdown on religious freedom in the Soviet Union confirmed that the two practices continued. Church leaders there conformed to the demands of the state, proclaiming that military service was a Christian duty and that anyone teaching otherwise was a heretic and should be disfellowshipped. By accepting this and other laws proscribing proselytizing activity and charitable work by religious groups, the Adventist church was able to function openly but in a very compromised situation. This stance resulted in another schism, with the formation of the True and Free Adventists (Sapiets 1990: 52-57; Alexeyeva 1988: 25).

In Nazi Germany, Adventists expressed enthusiastic praise for Hitler and the National Socialists, and most conscripts bore arms willingly even though they had been accorded the right to opt for orderly or medical duties. Through such actions the Adventist Church there successfully reduced tension with the regime, so that it survived untouched in spite of the similarity of several of its beliefs and practices to Judaism.⁸ Their experience was in marked contrast to that of the Reformed Adventists, who suffered greatly because of their unswerving commitment to their pacifist position (Sicher 1977: 14-22; King 1982b: 97-98, 110-119).

In many other countries without provision for alternatives to military service, ranging from Franco's Spain to Communist Eastern Europe and from Latin America to Taiwan and Thailand, Adventists also trained with arms. The national church leaders there concluded that the General Conference did not understand their situation, so that its statements reflected an American situation which could not be applied to them. In this way they avoided the tension with the state over military service which the Korean Adventists experienced. While many of them tried to arrange for conscripts to be able to observe the Sabbath, others also compromised when this issue became a source of tension – in civilian as well as military life (interviews).⁹ Armed service thus became the norm among Adventists in many countries – indeed, it was much more widespread than noncombatant service.

⁸ In 1989 the Adventist Church in Germany issued a public apology for its toadying to the Nazis (interviews).

⁹ For example, Adventist children typically attended school on Saturday in Communist Europe and the former French colonies in Africa.

The extent of the shift in Adventist practice concerning military service was finally recognized in 1972, when the General Conference adopted a new policy. The prime reason behind this switch was conflict within the American church during the Vietnam war between militant patriots, some of whom favored armed involvement, and youthful conscientious objectors, who needed church support in order to be so classified; international issues – the incongruity of the two practices and awareness of the problems caused in South Korea by the noncombatant position – were secondary. By declaring that military service was a matter of individual conscience, the new position encompassed both the patriots and the pacifists. Henceforth noncombatant participation, armed participation, and refusal for conscience' sake to participate in war were all officially accepted among Adventists.

The new flexibility was tested and confirmed the next year in South Korea. When the military situation in South Vietnam deteriorated in 1973, the Park government panicked and insisted that all conscripts train with arms (which thus removed the noncombatant alternatives previously available to some Adventists) and that such training be included within college curricula. The latter demand placed the Adventist college in a dilemma: should it conform to the new policy or reject it and face closure? When Korean leaders sought the advice of the General Conference, the latter reversed the position it had held in the 1960s, arguing that it was not worth risking serious trouble with the government: training with arms should be a - matter of individual conscience. The college consequently conformed to the government's demand that it train students with weapons (interviews).

Since this time Adventism in America has backed away from the serious teaching of noncombatancy to its youth. When the U.S. switched to a volunteer army in 1973, and recruiters began emphasizing educational and vocational benefits that appealed to lower-SES racial minorities, Adventists began to volunteer for military service in unprecedented numbers. This represented a significant shift, for volunteers, unlike draftees, do not have a noncombatant option available to them, and are therefore agreeing to kill America's enemies if ordered to do so. The church responded by directing its main effort into chaplaincy: its prime concern was now to serve the spiritual needs of the Adventist volunteer soldiers.

Within the U.S. in the 1990s, "military recruiters come to Adventist school campuses, and school and university bulletin boards display posters advertising the benefits of service in the armed forces" (Thomas 1991: 2). It is not surprising, then, that "most young Adventist adults are unaware of the strong pacifist thread in the fabric of Adventist history" (Zork 1991: 2). In 1991, the office of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries estimated the total number of military personnel listing Seventh-day Adventist as their "religious preference" – that is, of Adventist - background – as 6-8,000, and that 2,000 of these participated in the Gulf War (interviews). Adventist attitudes became much more openly jingoistic during the Gulf War: "Not only have

[the Adventist volunteer servicemen] been to the Persian Gulf and back; they have come home to welcoming applause in Sabbath worship services and patriotic accolades in the church's - publications" (Scriven 1991: 10).

It has been shown that the creation of their noncombatant Military Cadet Corps during World War II enabled American Adventists to build a close exchange relationship with U.S. political and military authorities. This was firmly established by the 1950s, as the establishment of Fort Sam Houston and the launching of "Operation Whitecoat" demonstrated. This relationship was then extended to other areas: for example, from the 1950s to the 1970s the General Conference made incremental decisions to permit the acceptance of government financial aid for Adventist hospitals and educational institutions — something which heretofore would have been regarded as dangerous and wrong (Morgan 1992: chapter 5; Syme 1973: 120-143). The same process was repeated in Australia and the British colonies of Africa.

A new opportunity for cooperation emerged in the early 1980s, when church leaders discovered that vast sums in government aid, mostly from USAID, were available for them to distribute, and realized the potential of this becoming an "entering wedge" in regions where there was little Adventist presence — a role their hospitals had played in earlier years. Consequently, they transformed their disaster relief agency into the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, which happily became what was tantamount to an arm of American foreign policy: for example, ADRA distributed a great deal of aid in Honduras during the Contra War but nothing in Nicaragua (interviews).

This pattern of seeking close relationships with political and military authorities has recently spread throughout the international church. During the last two decades Adventist leaders in many countries, who were by this time typically citizens of those countries, increasingly sought to facilitate their endeavors by building exchange relationships with their governments. They were especially successful in developing such relationships with authoritarian governments of the Left and Right in Eastern Europe and the Developing World.

Adventists sought liberties (freedom to evangelize, to observe the Sabbath, protection of their institutions) and favors (for example, accreditation of schools, facilitation of projects through duty-free import of equipment) and, in return, were willing to help legitimate or otherwise assist regimes. Such relationships were especially numerous among the military regimes of Latin America. For example, in Pinochet's Chile Adventists were known as friends of the president, providing him with legitimation from a religious source when he was under attack from the Catholic Cardinal for torture and disappearances. In return they received accreditation for their college. In South Korea, rather than protesting against the military regimes of Presidents Park and Chun, they were cooperative and loyal, appreciating the stability and social control imposed by the regimes, and their campus remained extraordinarily quiet. This was

appreciated by the presidents, who accredited the college, which then expanded dramatically (interviews).

Adventists were also successful in establishing exchange relationships with several Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. For example, Polish Adventist leaders accorded first priority to achieving and using popularity with the government. They were useful to the regime because they were willing to attack its prime enemy, the Catholic Church: for example, they published one such issue of their magazine to coincide with Pope John Paul II's first visit home. In return for their assistance, although their membership stood at only 4,700 members in a total population of 38 million, they were allowed to publish so freely that during the last seven years of the Communist regime the amount of Ellen White's material published was exceeded only by the Bible and the works of Lenin.¹⁰ They were also allowed the privileges of selling their material freely on the streets and in government book kiosks, and of securing public halls for - evangelism (interviews).

Adventists also established an exchange relationship with the authorities in the USSR. In 1979, Neal C. Wilson, then President of the General Conference, helped to cement this relationship when, at a time when Soviet leaders were anxious to silence the antigovernment propaganda of the schismatic True and Free Adventists, he intervened with an open letter to Soviet Adventists:

"The General Conference can recognize only one Seventh-day Adventist organization in any country. This would normally be the one recognized by the authorities. ...we encourage all who consider themselves to be Seventh-day Adventists to identify with the recognized body of believers" (Wilson and Lohne 1979).¹¹

During a subsequent visit to the Soviet Union, Wilson established a close relationship with Konstantin Kharchev, chair of the USSR Council on Religious Affairs, who visited church headquarters and major educational, medical, and publishing institutions during two subsequent visits to the U.S. These contacts resulted in approval from the Council on Religious Affairs for the creation of an Adventist seminary outside Moscow. Adventists returned the favor by participating in and reporting favorably on Gorbachev's International Forum for a Non-nuclear World and the Survival of Humanity in 1987, by disavowing President Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire, " by offering co-operation in areas of

¹⁰ This included large quantities of *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, which is strongly anti-Catholic in tone.

¹¹ Wilson took a similar position during the 1980s concerning a schism in Hungary triggered by ties between the church and the Communist regime, when he declared again that the General Conference would recognize only groups that themselves had government recognition ("Small Committee" Correspondence; Reiners, n.d.; interviews).

science, education, and medicine, by praising Soviet religious liberty in their respected *Liberty* magazine, and by awarding Kharchev, at their Third World Congress on Religious Liberty in 1989, a citation honoring him as "Spokesman for Human Rights, Promoter of Religious Freedom" – at a time when Gorbachev was seeking eagerly to liberalize the Soviet image (Editorial 1988: 44; Hegstad 1987: 2-6; Wilson 1987: 8; Nixon 1989: 7). Subsequently, they also received permission to establish a publishing house, a medical clinic, and church headquarters.

Wilson, who was President of the General Conference from 1979 until 1990, increasingly fancied himself as a diplomat, and reveled in "photo opportunities" with political leaders. When he was asked about his dream for the church, he replied that it should "grow numerically and financially, and in terms of world acceptance and influence" (Coffin 1986: 9).

The relationship between Seventh-day Adventists and secular governments has been transformed to a great extent, and with increasing speed, as time has passed: both tension and separation have been greatly reduced. The pursuit of such a result has increasingly become the conscious policy of church leaders since World War II. Using the Stark and Bainbridge dimension, then, Adventists have moved a considerable distance towards the denomination pole of the Sect-Denomination continuum.

(ii) The Governmental Relations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Since Pastor Russell, founder of the Bible Students (later the Witnesses), was a premillennialist preoccupied with the imminence of God's kingdom and believed that secular governments would be destroyed by Christ at the Battle of Armageddon, he, like the founders of Adventism, taught that his followers should regard themselves as strangers and pilgrims, keeping themselves "separate from the world" (Penton 1985: 138). This meant practising "absolute political neutrality," which was defined as avoiding "involvement in any political aspects of the world" (Bergman 1990b). They would therefore avoid voting, holding public office, or enlisting for military service. But since Russell interpreted the "higher powers" of Romans 13: 1 to mean secular governments and held that God had granted the nations a temporary right to rule pending the setting up of His kingdom, he advocated that civil authorities should be obeyed except as their expectations contravened duty to God (Penton 1985: 138).

These views were initially put forward during a period of peace, and therefore precipitated little conflict. However, following what Russell believed to be the close of the "gentile times" in 1914 and the beginning of the unseen millennial reign of Christ, his apolitical apocalypticism increased sharply—an impulse that was strengthened by the outbreak of World War I (Bergman 1990a). Russell saw the nations involved in the war as demonically controlled, and attacked other churches bitterly for acting as recruiting agents for the military. His followers, when conscripted, refused to serve. Bible Student attacks on the churches, together with their high

profile preaching and their opposition to the war, resulted in waves of hate literature from the churches accusing them of sedition. Penton sees these as important in stirring up political problems for Bible Student conscientious objectors (1985: 134, 141). Consequently, they faced imprisonment in the U.S., Canada, Britain, Germany, and Austro-Hungary, and some of them were executed by the Axis powers. The Canadian government banned their publications, and once the U.S. entered the war Witnesses were "arrested, mobbed, tarred and feathered, and harassed throughout the country" (Penton 1985: 55). Eight Watch Tower directors, including J.F. ("Judge") Rutherford, the new president, were arrested on charges of sedition in 1918 and sentenced to terms of 10 and 20 years.

With its leaders imprisoned, the Watch Tower Society¹² tried to improve its public image through compromising its political neutrality. It called on Bible Students to participate in a national day of prayer for victory, and permitted them to buy war bonds. However, this switch of position had no positive impact on their situation, and when the Watch Tower directors were released from prison following the end of the war, having served nine months, they repudiated the compromising statements (Penton 1985: 147).

This experience with the American system of justice strengthened Rutherford's insistence on maintaining political neutrality. He bitterly attacked the powers of politics, commerce, and religion, "the three chief instruments of the Devil" (Penton 1985: 70), and finally, in 1929, announced a new interpretation of Romans 13 which broadened the gulf between Bible Students and civil authorities. Under this interpretation the "higher powers" were no longer identified as secular rulers, but as Jehovah God and Christ Jesus. Consequently, governments were seen as having no basis in divine authority, but were demonic. Members were no longer obliged to obey human laws unless they were in harmony with God's (Penton 1985: 139). That is, under Rutherford's leadership tension between the Watch Tower and the state was heightened. Persecution of members increased in many countries.

Nevertheless, as the political situations in Europe and America changed against the background of depression, a resurgence in anti-Semitism, and the rise of the Nazis, the leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses (as they were now called) compromised anew with the hope of blunting opposition. Because of their belief that biblical prophecy predicted that the Jews would return to the Holy Land before the end of the world, Russell and Rutherford had earned reputations as sympathetic with Jews and strong supporters of Zionist causes. Rutherford published three pro-Jewish books between 1925 and 1930. Then, in 1932 he suddenly proclaimed that "fleshy Israel" had no role to play in salvation history, for Witnesses were the "true Israel of God" (Penton 1990: 34-35). This shift became the linchpin in an attempt to curry favor with the new Nazi regime the following year.

¹² The corporate name of the Bible Students.

Witnesses had been the objects of hostility and abuse, and had been accused of being linked to Zionists and subversives in Germany since World War I, and were already banned in some German states when the Nazis assumed power. The Nazi regime moved quickly to take over Witness headquarters, but then pulled back following diplomatic representation from the American government. Thus warned, Rutherford and his deputy hastened to Germany and prepared the text of a "declaration of facts" for presentation to an emergency congress of Witnesses in Berlin. Delegates arriving at the congress were amazed to find it bedecked with swastika flags, and that the program included the singing of a hymn, not sung by them in Germany in years, set to the music of "Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles" ("Konrad Franke's Testimony" 1990: 50). The "declaration" and an accompanying letter to Hitler, "were nothing short of self-serving statements which attempted to ingratiate Jehovah's Witnesses with the Nazis" by criticizing Jews, Great Britain, the U.S., and the League of Nations, declaring that Witnesses and Nazis shared goals and ideology, and falsely asserting that Watch Tower leaders had been imprisoned in the U.S. in 1918 because their president had refused to use their magazines for war propaganda against Germany ("Declaration" 1990; Hitler Letter 1990; Penton 1990: 37-38). Although many members were unhappy with the declaration, they - distributed 2.1 million copies of it, with special coverage of high government officials (Penton 1985: 147).

Witness leaders had shown that they were willing to compromise their neutrality in order to continue their work of publishing and preaching. But the Nazis were not impressed, for they were already convinced that the Witnesses were enemies, and two days after the congress they stepped up persecution. At this point Rutherford reverted to an intransigent stand, being determined to continue with literature distribution, and thus threw his followers into the most bitter persecution they had encountered. Witnesses faced losing their children and their jobs and, after they collectively refused to do military service upon the introduction of conscription in 1935, a law was promulgated making such refusal or incitement of others to such a position - punishable by death. By the later years of World War II more than half of the Witnesses were in concentration camps. But still the daring distribution of literature, smuggled in from Switzerland, continued – literature which increasingly took on a tone critical of the regime. One in four German Witnesses lost their lives during the Nazi period (King 1982b: 154-167; Penton 1985: 142).

A decision in Germany – to refuse to give the Nazi salute, "Heil Hitler", or to salute the Swastika because this was interpreted as idolatry – had important repercussions in the U.S. and elsewhere. In an effort to be both truly international and consistent – the more important because the Witness structure had become very centralized and authoritarian under Rutherford's leadership – it was decided that Witnesses everywhere should henceforth refuse to salute flags or stand for national anthems. When applied in the U.S., this decision resulted in

harassment of the children of Witnesses within their schools, a Supreme Court decision in 1940 that they must salute the flag when required or face expulsion from public schools, and, subsequently, a sharp increase in mob violence against Witnesses – until the Supreme Court reversed its ruling in 1943 (Bergman 1990a, 1990b; Penton 1985: 143; Beckford 1975: 35).

When conscription was reintroduced in the U.S. in 1940, Witnesses again refused to serve, insisting on exemption on the ground that they were ministers. Local boards usually denied them this classification, even when they could prove that they were "pioneers" who spent at least 150 hours per month on ministerial responsibilities. Such rulings flew in the face of a ruling by General Hershey that persons with 80 hours of such service per month were eligible for ministerial exemptions: within the system for processing conscientious objectors, "It was in the classification of Jehovah's Witnesses that local prejudice was probably most pronounced" (Sibley and Jacob 1952: 71). When offered assignment to alternative service in the Civilian Public Service, Witnesses were instructed to refuse this option on the ground that this was still conscription. Acceptance of such an assignment was regarded as compromising one's integrity with God, resulting in automatic dissociation from the religious community (Franz 1983: 101-102). Three-quarters of the draftees claiming conscientious objection who were sent to prison were Witnesses. Here discrimination continued, for the Board of Parole refused to grant parole to Witnesses unless they were willing to promise not to engage in preaching activities – a promise which most refused to make (Sibley and Jacob 1952: 354-55, 385-86). Consequently, - they served full sentences – an average of 30.6 months (Beckford 1975: 35).

Witnesses continued to go to prison for refusing military or alternative service during the draft that extended from the Korean through the Vietnam wars in the U.S. They have faced the same situation in many other countries over the years. The policy against alternative service continued even though a worldwide survey in 1977-78 showed that substantial numbers of Witnesses had difficulty finding a scriptural basis for the stand taken, and despite majority votes of the Governing Body in favor of changing this stand – votes which failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority of all members of the Body whether present or not (Franz 1983: 102).

One measure of the extent of the problems Witnesses had with the state was the number of them who were arrested. During the period 1933-1951, 18, 866 were arrested in the U.S. alone. They also had much to fear from street justice, for in this same period there were about 1, 500 cases of mob violence against them in the U.S.: "Because they were regarded as unpatriotic slackers who would neither salute the flag nor fight for their country, [Witnesses] were subjected to mob violence unexperienced by any religion in America since the Nineteenth Century persecution of the Mormons" (Penton 1985: 77).

Confronted with such negative experiences, Witnesses decided to take the issues relating to their religious freedom into the court system. Between 1938 and 1953 they fought 45 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and won 36 of these. The last of these, which exempted full-time publishers from the draft, "heralded a gradual improvement in their relationship with the American government" (Beckford 1975: 56). These successes encouraged them to follow the same route in Canada and Australia, again with success. These positive experiences led them to re-examine their thinking concerning secular authority and their relationship to it. Consequently, in 1962 *The Watchtower* published a series of articles which abandoned Rutherford's exegesis of Romans 13, with its extreme hostility to the state, and in essence returned to Russell's view that they should obey all secular laws not directly in conflict with God's (Penton 1985: 88, 142). However, their beliefs continue to separate them from any political activity or military service.

Severe tensions and problems persisted – and often continue to persist – in many countries. Witnesses have frequently been seen as subversive to the faith in those countries where there are established religions, be they Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or Islam. They were regarded as a particularly dangerous "opiate" in Marxist countries. In Malawi, Africa, they endured great privations because of their refusal to purchase the membership card of the ruling political party (Franz 1983: 113-117). When international tensions and the specter of war increase nationalism, their internationalism and refusal to participate in military training often results in their being damned as enemies of the state.

Thus, the separation and tensions between Jehovah's Witnesses and secular governments and societies continue. Rather than decreasing over time, as they did among Seventh-day Adventists, they actually increased sharply under the leadership of Rutherford, in spite of two attempts to compromise neutrality under his leadership. Many Witnesses endured considerable persecution and showed great tenacity to their faith as a result. While successful court actions in several democratic countries have led to a degree of relaxation of tension there, it has merely returned to about its level under Russell's leadership. Tension remains high in many other countries where Witnesses are without judicial protections, and they are still banned by several governments. They are also estranged from most other religious groups because of their eagerness to attack them as corrupt and their doctrinal claim to be the "*discreet slave*" – God's one true church. Using the Stark and Bainbridge dimension, then, Witnesses remain in a strongly sectarian position. This tends to be especially evident in time of war.

Interpretation: Accounting for the Different Trajectories

What factors shaped such dramatically different trajectories in sect-state relations? Since I earlier accepted the Stark and Bainbridge definition of *sect* and *church* as measured by their

degree of tension with society, this question is akin to that raised by Bryan Wilson, which was quoted above: what factors promote or retard the movement of a religious group from sect to denomination (1967: 22)? That is, what factors caused one religious group to remain separate from and hostile to society – and thus to become an established sect – while another initially very similar group accommodated to society, and was thus transformed, moving towards the "denomination" pole of the sect-denomination continuum? I begin by considering some answers suggested by others.

Wilson, in seeking to answer his question, divided sects into four categories – conversionist, adventist, introversionist, and gnostic – and found that conversionist sects tend to -denominationalize much more rapidly than the other types (1967: 44-45). However, this finding is not helpful in solving the present puzzle because both Adventists and Witnesses initially fell within the same category – adventist – in Wilson's classification.

When Yinger raised this question, he noted that if a sect, such as the Quakers, is opposed and persecuted more vigorously, it will become more isolated and its group morale increase. - Witnesses have been the object of oppression much more than Adventists: at its peak, during Rutherford's presidency (1917-1942), "the Witnesses were severely persecuted in virtually every country in the world and banned in many" (Bergman 1990a: 1).¹³ Yinger then rightly asks why one group is persecuted more than another. However, his answer, that groups which emphasize the evils of society are more likely to be persecuted, and groups that focus on decreasing individual anxiety (guilt, confusion) less likely (1957: 150-52), is not helpful here because both Witnesses and Adventists fell initially into the first category, and thus were very similar to one another on this dimension.

An anonymous reviewer asked whether the "substantial African American membership" of the Witnesses could help explain the street violence directed against them in the U.S. during the 1930s and 1940s. This seems highly unlikely since much of the violence occurred in small towns in northern states (interview). Moreover, the racial variable does not distinguish Witnesses from Adventists. Although both were slow to try to evangelize African-Americans, they began to do so before the end of the nineteenth century and since then have far surpassed most -mainline denominations. Data comparing Witnesses and Adventists directly in this respect proved difficult to obtain. Penton cites an old estimate of 18% of American Witnesses being black (1985: 358n); Roof and McKinney name Adventists and American Baptists as the "two denominations [reporting] large numbers of black members, " and list Adventists as 27.0% (1987: 141-42) – they omitted Witnesses from their study. By 1992 the Adventist figure had climbed to over 29% (Beaven 1994: 23). Kosmin and Lachman found that the Witnesses were the only religious family in the U.S. with a "minority majority, " with only 48% "non-Hispanic

¹³ The different experience of Witnesses and Adventists in this respect is elaborated upon below.

whites" in 1990 [1993: 118]. The comparable figure for Adventists stood at "just under 60%" in 1992, and was predicted to fall to less than 50% by the year 1998 (Beaven 1994: 23; Branson 1994: 2).

McGuire suggests that a key variable is the extent to which a sect organizes its internal and external social arrangements towards the perpetuation of its distinctiveness – that is, the extent to which it is able to create physical, symbolic or ideological boundaries between its members and the threatening world (1992: 155-59). In the case of Witnesses and Adventists, this variable has worked contrary to what McGuire would expect. Adventist ideology created separating behavioral standards such as Sabbath observance, dietary and entertainment restrictions, and heavy demands on the time of members, while its educational and medical institutions, which were founded in what were initially rural areas, drew many members to live, work, and go to school in shared isolation in what became known as "Adventist Ghettos" or "New Jerusalems" – a pattern which still persists. In contrast, the few peculiar norms of Witnesses – their nonobservance of birthdays and holidays such as Christmas and their refusal of blood transfusions – were much less isolating; nor did they create their own institutions or otherwise encourage members to live separately (Penton 1985: 280). While their expectation that members "publish", or witness on the streets or door-to-door, and attend multiple weekly meetings also placed a great burden on their time, it does not seem that this should have created as strong social boundaries as those faced by Adventists. The ideological boundaries between Witnesses and the world – their radical eschatology and sense of being God's special people – were initially similar to those held by Adventists. However, they have sustained them over time much more than have Adventists, a divergence which needs to be accounted for.

Again, numerical growth and geographic spread, which are likely to result in diversity, bureaucratization, and reliance on staff, can be expected to bring changes. These could provide the needed explanation if it were not, again, for the similarities here between Witnesses and Adventists¹⁴ (Wilson 1967: 33).

An analysis of the Adventist and Witness data leads to an interpretation that finds several related, interacting factors. These are summarized in Table 1.

¹⁴ See note 4 above.

TABLE 1: Factors Shaping Sect-State Relations

<i>Religion Group</i>	<i>Group Social Mobility</i>	<i>Organisational Openness</i>	<i>Ideological Rigidity</i>	<i>Apocalyptic Urgency</i>	<i>Proportion of Hereditary Members</i>	<i>Indoctrination of Converts</i>	<i>Extent Persecuted</i>	<i>Relations with State and Society</i>	<i>Position on Church-Sect Continuum</i>
Seventh-day Adventists	Considerable Upward Mobility	Leadership concerned with public image, pursue status	Growing tolerance of doctrinal diversity	Reconciled to delay; avoid date-setting	Retain more hereditary members	Reduced intensity	Isolated cases; usually avoided	Marked decrease in tension over time	Denominationalizing sect
Jehovah's Witnesses	Little upward mobility	Leadership isolated, value separation from world	No tolerance of doctrinal diversity	Remain urgently; set dates	Very high turnover; fewer heredity members	High intensity	Widespread persecution from govts and mobs	Tension often high; little change over time	Established sect

1. Patterns of social mobility experienced by group members

The first real clue is provided by Yinger: "When the members of sects gain wealth, the sects turn from radical challenge to acceptance of the social structure" (1946: 221). Adventists opted for a professional ministry, and created a network of institutions – hospitals, schools and colleges, publishing houses, and health-food factories – first in the U.S. and then - internationally.¹⁵ They encouraged their members to attend their schools in order to provide the trained staff they needed. This emphasis on education resulted in considerable and increasing upward mobility among members who had been raised in the church, especially in the U.S. A recent survey of Adventists in America found that two out of three men hold professional, managerial and white-collar jobs, and that the proportion who have completed some level of higher education is almost double that of the general population (Sahlin 1991: 17-18).¹⁶ Schwartz concluded, from his study of their ideology and social status, that Adventists have embraced social and economic upward mobility with religious zeal (1970: 194-210).

In contrast, Witnesses have neither educational institutions nor a professional clergy, and they actively discourage their members from pursuing higher education. The survey by Kosmin and Lachman found that they had the lowest proportion of college graduates (4.7%) of all 30 "religious families" (1993: 258). Moreover, while they work in the world and often gain reputations as diligent, honest workers, their careers take second place to their witnessing (Penton 1985: 255-57). Witnesses have consequently experienced much less upward mobility than Adventists: Kosmin and Lachman rank them in the lowest position on their "aggregate social-status ranking on 'Protestant Ethic' variables" (1993: 262).

2. Organizational Openness

As Adventists achieved increasingly higher levels of education, independence of thought and intellectual diversity were promoted. Although those who climbed to leadership positions

¹⁵ In 1993 they operated 148 hospitals, 79 nursing homes and retirement centers, 85 universities and colleges, 953 secondary schools, 56 publishing houses, and 35 food factories worldwide. Of these, 43 hospitals, 15 nursing homes and retirement centers, 15 universities and colleges, 96 secondary schools, and 3 publishing houses are in North America (General Conference 1993: 28-38).

¹⁶ When *all* church members are included, Adventists rank somewhat lower. For example, the huge national survey conducted by Kosmin and Lachman places Adventists 21st in a list of 30 "religious families" in both median income and the percentage of members who are college graduates (1993: 258, 260). One reason for this is that Adventist membership in the U.S. is predominantly female and is graying--and older people, and especially older women, are segments of the population that tend to be less educated and of relatively low income; Adventism is losing large numbers of its young, better educated, members (Kosmin and Lachman 1993: 216, 213-214). A second reason is that Adventism continues to attract large numbers of poor, little educated converts, in the U.S. as well as the Developing World. However, my data indicate that one of the factors that draws these people to Adventism is their perception that "God blesses Adventists" – that is, they hope, as a result of converting, to experience upward mobility (interviews). They are thus of a mind-set that is ready to put down roots in society rather than focus only on their "heavenly citizenship."

within the highly centralized, pyramidal Adventist structure were not those with the highest education, in recent decades they have been typically hereditary members with college degrees. These leaders have identified increasingly with corporate executives and professionals: for example, they moved the headquarters of the church to a corporate park in Silver Spring, Maryland, during the 1980s, and at the 1994 Annual Council of the General Conference they proposed that the General Conference President be known as the "chief executive officer" of the church (Medley 1994: 6). The Adventist leadership has exhibited a strong and growing desire for broad acceptance and recognition by the powerful in society, and considerable concern for the public image of their church. The data reviewed above suggest that these concerns have made them willing to accommodate with society in ways which have changed Adventism dramatically.

In contrast, the presidents and members of the Governing Body of the Witnesses, which is also a highly centralized structure, have tended to be less educated and much more isolated, intellectually, psychologically as well as physically (since these elderly men have typically lived together at Witness headquarters for decades). They continue to value "separation from the world, " and give no indication of any yearning for acceptance and recognition. They have maintained a rigid, controlling structure which has allowed no room for transforming changes (Penton 1985: 216-223, 154-156, 89).

3. Ideological Rigidity

The education of many Adventists has helped to reduce their sense of isolation from the world, especially (and unexpectedly) when they live together in "ghetto" communities surrounding - Adventist institutions – because of the concentration of professionals there (Lawson and Carden 1983). These communities, which wield considerable political influence within North American Adventism, often contrast sharply with the most conservative Adventist congregations, which are often more isolated geographically (Lawson, 1995). Although the range of doctrinal and behavioral diversity makes Adventist leaders somewhat uncomfortable, they are learning to cope with it, just as they are accommodating to the cultural diversity that is the natural result of being active in almost every country and of becoming a predominantly Third World church. As Adventists have become increasingly accustomed to their own diversity, congregations have softened discipline, and there has been a marked decline in disciplinary proceedings.¹⁷

¹⁷ One of the most celebrated cases is that of a theologian who was defrocked and fired in 1980 because he repudiated a key Adventist doctrine, and who has remained prominent, with his own ministry of radio and TV programs and meetings. Although church leaders would dearly love to be able to declare that he is not an Adventist, the congregation at the college where he formerly taught refuses to disfellowship him. In the realm of breached behavioral norms, divorce and remarriage without discipline is now common, so long as the parties know

Since few Witnesses have received higher education, and therefore been exposed to challenging concepts and information, the Watchtower has been able to maintain strong discipline, which it has reinforced by demanding that members attend many meetings,¹⁸ meet targets for time spent witnessing,¹⁹ and read a heavy load of their own literature.²⁰ There is little room for independence of thought and no toleration of doctrinal diversity: those seen as deviating are readily expelled, and all members, including relatives, are then expected to shun them (Penton 1985: 125).

4. Apocalyptic Urgency

Although Adventists continue to teach that the return of Christ will occur "soon", there is much less urgency now than even fifty years ago, when some mainstream Adventists chose not to have children because of the warning attributed to Jesus: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!" (Matt.24: 19 NRSV) (interviews). Indeed, the leadership of the church, together with most members, now seems reconciled to the delayed eschaton. For example, the 150th anniversary of the "Great Disappointment," the failure of Christ to return when predicted by William Miller, was celebrated rather than grieved on October 22, 1994. They have also embarked on an ambitious, and necessarily lengthy, program designed to plant at least one Adventist congregation in each of 2,285 "population segments" which had a population of about one million persons in 1989 but no established Adventist presence (General Conference 1994: 39-43).²¹ Moreover, the Adventist Church continues to work diligently, through its Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, to postpone events that its prophet predicted would occur before Christ's return – the end of the separation of church and state in the U.S. and the passage of a "Sunday law." However, there are strains within Adventism because some conservative members, who are often deeply immersed in the writings of Ellen White, remain urgently apocalyptic. Some of these are drawn to dissident groups, both within and without the official church, which focus eagerly on fulfilling "signs" of Christ's Coming and sometimes set dates for the event.²² Church leaders, who have steadfastly refused to set a date since Miller's fiasco, have increasingly been at pains to distance their

how to do it inoffensively, and no member of SDA Kinship, the organization of gay and lesbian Adventists, has been disfellowshipped since the late 1970s (interviews).

¹⁸ Five per week in Britain in the 1970s (Beckford 1975: 70).

¹⁹ They are required "to submit a weekly analysis of the hours spent in field-service, magazine sales, making back-calls and conducting Bible studies with newly interested people" (Beckford 1975: 71).

²⁰ Witnesses were expected to read 3,178 pages of Watch Tower literature in one year (Penton 1985: 231).

²¹ Out of a world total of 5,257 such segments in 1989, Adventists were established in 2,972.

²² Some are now preaching that it will occur in the year 2000, because this purportedly marks 6,000 years since Creation (e.g., Reid 1994). Earlier, others had focused on 1964, 120 years after the Great Disappointment, because Noah preached for 120 years and Jesus is quoted as saying that "for as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24: 37 NRSV). Others have eagerly pinpointed several dates since then (interviews).

church from "fanatics" whose radical apocalyptic could make it seem cult-like. A striking example of this was the hiring of a public relations firm during the standoff outside Waco, Texas, in order to divert the media from identifying the Adventist Church with David Koresh's Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists (Lawson 1995).

In contrast, the urgency of the Witness's apocalyptic has changed very little over time. The intellectual isolation of the Witness leaders has allowed them to retain their traditional position, and it is they who continue to be the chief purveyors of the radical eschatology. This has included the official embracing of several dates over the years, followed by the pain of disappointment (Penton 1985: 99-101, 197-201; Franz 1983: 198-210).

5. Hereditary Members as a Proportion of the Total

Since Adventists and Witnesses are both highly evangelistic, and are experiencing considerable global success in their quest to "win souls," both groups have many members who are converts. The Witnesses, because of their greater turnover in membership – a phenomenon which has made Watch Tower officials increasingly anxious and which was especially high following each of their several false dates for the Second Coming of Christ (Beckford 1975: 88; Penton 1985: 254, 257) – have a smaller proportion of hereditary members, especially in the Developed World. This, together with their much more limited upward mobility, has helped keep them more sectarian. On the other hand, while Adventism also experiences high member turnover, it has retained a larger proportion of the members born into the faith, who have been the main beneficiaries of its educational institutions. The influence of the latter in the Developed World, and especially in the U.S., has helped make Adventism more open to change.

6. Indoctrination of Converts

When H. Richard Niebuhr developed Troeltsch's sect-church dichotomy and applied it to religious groups in America, he argued that sects tend to become churches, or denominations, rapidly – usually within the space of one generation (1929: 19). Bryan Wilson has argued that Niebuhr focused on what he defines as "conversionist sects," which he shows, as noted above, tend to be transformed most quickly. Other categories of sects – including those he dubbed "adventist," under which both early Adventists and Witnesses would fall – typically change much more slowly, with some persisting as sects for several generations (Wilson 1967: 22).

While both Witnesses and Adventists have experienced fast growth, Adventist leaders succeeded in effecting a major increase in the growth rate in the early 1980s, when they made growth their first priority.²³ As a result, the world membership of the Adventist church -

²³ One of the motivations behind this shift seems to have been an attempt to demonstrate, in spite of growing laxity and disunity among members, that God was still leading and blessing His "Remnant Church" (interviews).

increased by 117.1%, from 3.6 million to 7.9 million, in the 12 years 1981-1993 (General Conference 1991; 1993). This was achieved through setting high goals for new converts and creating competition between the regional "divisions" of the world church, which ultimately placed great pressure on evangelists and pastors. These responded by baptizing converts much more quickly than earlier (for example, after three weeks of evangelistic meetings rather than two years of classes in Africa) and by neglecting post-baptismal nurture, with the result that new converts are now typically socialized much more poorly than in former decades (interviews). This change has had the effect of moving Adventism from Wilson's category of "adventist sect" to "conversionist sect, " the category which transforms from sect to denomination most rapidly (Wilson 1967: 22). This change has increased the speed of the metamorphosis of Adventism during the past two decades.

Witnesses, however, continue to practice high intensity socialization, with studies of their beliefs presented by publishers in the home, attendance at meetings, and a reading regimen. That is, the Witnesses remain an "adventist sect, " which means, according to Wilson, that change from sect towards denomination is likely to be slow.

7. Persecution

It was noted above that Yinger hypothesized that groups that suffered greater opposition and persecution would maintain a sectarian spirit (1957: 150-52). Of all Christian groups during this century in the U.S., Witnesses have endured the greatest persecution: they have been the victims of both intolerance from government bodies towards their beliefs and of mob violence, both of which were often whipped up by other religious groups. They also rank as one of the most persecuted groups worldwide. There have been many instances where Witnesses have chosen to die rather than compromise, for reasons ranging from refusal to engage in military service to rejection of blood transfusions. Adventists have also met with oppression and can list martyrs: members (mostly farmers) in the U.S. and Canada during the nineteenth century were occasionally arrested when they broke laws forbidding work on Sunday, and some evangelists had their tent ropes cut; several pastors, booksellers, and their converts in the Philippines and various parts of Latin America met with mob violence or were arrested, usually at the instigation of the Catholic Church; some members in Tsarist Russia were sentenced to exile or prison, and peasant members faced severe hardship during the Soviet collectivization of the farms when they were excluded for refusing to work on Saturdays (Adessa 1970). However, unlike the Witnesses, Adventists have rarely faced sustained oppression.

What explanation can be adduced for the disparity in the persecution targeted at the two groups? While differences in the level of repression among states could be an important factor, this is not relevant here because Adventists were also active in the countries where the

Witnesses were oppressed. The explanation, therefore, must be sought in the differences between the two groups.

The Witness response to their urgent eschatology – persistent witnessing bearing publications that pugnaciously attacked other churches, the state, and patriotic symbols – created images among neighbors, churches, and governments that were so negative that they attracted opposition, especially when war heightened nationalism. Their negative image was so strong that they were disbelieved when on two occasions they attempted to compromise with the state. Adventists, on the other hand, in spite of causing ruffled feathers as a result of blunt evangelistic sermons in earlier decades, proved eager to avoid conflict from their earliest days, when the editor of the *Review and Herald* suggested during the Civil War that it would be better ultimately to accommodate by bearing arms than to face a firing squad if those were the options (White 1862: 84). They have often acquiesced to government demands concerning military service or school attendance on Saturdays; in some countries they hold special church services on Saturday afternoons for members obliged to work in the mornings (interviews). They also learned to be politically astute. As a result of building coalitions with other diverse groups around their conflictive issues and compromising freely whenever they smelled danger, they rarely attracted the same negative attention that Witnesses endured. Indeed, most of the exceptions to this were intransigent schismatic groups or individual members whose "fanaticism" led them to act more boldly than church leaders would have recommended.

Thus, the Witnesses' attitude toward society remained so negative that when their expectations of persecution were confirmed, this encouraged them to stand firm in their - convictions. In contrast, Adventist expectations of persecution were rarely realized, so that the utility, and comfort, of their policy of ready compromise was recognized.

8. Group Relations with State and Society

The data presented earlier suggest that Adventists developed political and public relations skills over time, and that conflict avoidance became the central theme of their external relations. Their success in this is demonstrated by the marked relaxation of tension with governments, other churches, and societies in general.

In contrast, Witnesses have been politically clumsy,²⁴ pugnacious, especially to other churches, and generally alienated from most of society. Tension between them and governments, churches, and society has often been high, especially when nationalism has been heightened, as in time of war. Although court decisions in some democracies have reduced tensions there, they continue to be high in many countries.

²⁴ This was illustrated by the two ungainly attempts at compromise with states when under great pressure (Penton 1985: 216-17)

9. Position on the Church-Sect Continuum

In terms of the measure put forward by Stark and Bainbridge, which locates a religious group according to "the degree to which [it] is in a *state of tension* with its surrounding sociocultural environment, " using "difference, antagonism, and separation" as indicators (1985: 23, 49-50), Adventists are best characterized as a "denominationalizing sect." On the other hand, the Witnesses remain an "established sect."

Jehovah's Witnesses have demonstrated a remarkable commitment to principle and to their radical apocalyptic throughout their history. This commitment was bolstered by their organizational isolation, intense indoctrination of converts, rigid internal discipline, and considerable persecution. Seventh-day Adventists, on the other hand, have shown considerable willingness to compromise their positions whenever external threats or opportunities to gain acceptance have made this auspicious. Their expediency is correlated with their greater ideological diversity and organizational openness and their diminishing concern for indoctrinating converts. These flowed from their experience of upward mobility, which led them to relax the urgency of their apocalyptic and to claim an increasing stake in society.

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