



Church and State at Home and Abroad: The Evolution of Seventh-day Adventist Relations with Governments*

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THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST Church is known in the U.S. for its defense of the First Amendment and its espousal of religious liberty. Its Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) lobbies for or against relevant legislation, files *amicus* briefs in court cases, and works closely with other groups concerned with protecting the “wall of separation,” while its bimonthly magazine *Liberty*, which is distributed widely among “thought leaders,” in its “declaration of principles” proclaims that “the God given right of religious liberty is best exercised when church and state are separate.” It is also involved internationally with religious liberty issues. PARL is represented at all levels of church structure and in all geographic regions of the global church; it sponsors the International Religious Liberty Association, and the latter’s congresses attract participants representing many other organizations, both religious and secular, as well as governments.

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However, there are anomalies in the practice of the Adventist Church: while it continues to uphold the separation of church and state in the U.S., it has increasingly in recent decades pursued exchange relationships with other governments, especially with authoritarian regimes of both Left and Right. Indeed, it has also cultivated a close cooperative relationship with the U.S. government, and this in an area—military service—which is surprising, given its original pacifist position and expectations of persecution from this government. This divergence between principle and practice cannot be explained simply as different national units going their own way, for this is a centralized, hierarchical church.

This paper shows that the pattern of relationships between the Adventist Church and governments has been transformed, and with increasing speed, in the years since the church was formally organized in 1860–63. It explores the dynamics of the evolution of church-state relations in the Adventist context with the help of a recent reformulation of church-sect theory.

Church-sect theory, which was originally put forward by Ernst Troeltsch in 1911 and amplified by H. Richard Niebuhr in 1929, has been used extensively by sociologists to explore the evolution of religious groups, especially in the U.S., with its multitude of sects and denominations. However, there has been confusion because the theory's polar opposites, "sect" and "church" or "denomination,"¹ have typically been defined in terms of multiple characteristics, but there has been no agreement on which characteristics to use. Consequently, competing typologies have multiplied, and the theory's usefulness has been limited. In their recent reformulation Stark and Bainbridge proposed defining the polar opposites in terms of a single characteristic. This proposal built on two earlier isolated suggestions. In 1946 J. Milton Yinger noted that a "church" (or, to be more accurate, a "denomination")² 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" (18–19, 21). In 1963 Benton Johnson suggested that "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" (542). Subsequently, in 1985, Stark and Bainbridge proposed a continuum from church to sect "representing the degree to which a religious group is in a *state of tension* with its surrounding sociocultural environment." For them three elements marked "subcultural deviance or tension:

¹ Since the U.S. had no established church but a number of "mainline denominations," "denomination" became the preferred term among researchers here, especially those exploring the dynamics of change from "sect" towards "denomination."

² Yinger distinguished a "church" from a "universal church," and thus used it as the equivalent of what others would identify as a "denomination."

difference, antagonism, and separation”—which together described “a single concept” (23, 49–50).

The Stark and Bainbridge framework has proved an excellent vehicle for analyzing the evolution of Seventh-day Adventism in the U.S., as this quotation from an earlier paper of mine exemplifies:

Several decades ago Seventh day Adventism . . . was highly sectarian and in considerable tension with society. Marked differences from society, such as its insistence on observing a Saturday Sabbath in a society where a six day week was almost universal, its focus on the imminent return of Christ and end of the world as we know it, diet restrictions (vegetarianism, no coffee, tea, or alcohol), social life style prohibitions (no theater, dancing, gambling, card playing, smoking, or reading of fiction), a commitment to “dress reform” and abstinence from jewelry and makeup, and a refusal to bear arms if conscripted, set Adventists apart. Its view of itself, as God’s Remnant people, the true church bearing God’s final message in the last days, and its declarations that other religious groups were “apostate” and had become “the whore of Babylon,” its brazen challenges to clergy of other denominations in its evangelistic meetings, and its expectation of persecution from other churches in collaboration with the state, all tended to create bitter antagonisms. These barriers were reinforced by the close ties that developed among Adventists, whose lives usually centered around their church, the subculture it created and fostered, and its mission, who attended church schools, often worked for church institutions, and were frequently drawn by educational opportunities and economic and social ties to live in what became known colloquially as ‘Adventist Ghettos’ or ‘New Jerusalems.’ They were also strengthened by rules, such as endogamy, and practices, such as their dietary and social prohibitions, that made it extremely difficult and/or uncomfortable to associate with others. Not only did Adventist differences attract scorn, but their Sabbath observance caused problems with employers and their refusal to bear arms had legal repercussions. . . .

However, the level of tension between American Adventists and society has lowered markedly and at an increasing pace in recent decades. The growth and accreditation of their educational and medical institutions has encouraged participation in society and provided opportunities for upward mobility; Adventist medicine has become increasingly orthodox, and many of its hospitals have prospered and won friends; the coming of the five day week has removed most of the major problems surrounding Sabbath observance; and Adventist dietary and smoking prohibitions have won increasing credibility as a result of medical research. At the same time, Adventism has lowered levels of antagonism toward others: it has sought good relations with governments, switched its position on military service, allowed its expectations of persecution to diminish, and begun to build better relations with other churches. (Lawson, 1995a)

This does not mean that Adventism has achieved denominational status in the U.S. but merely that it has traveled a considerable distance from sect towards denomination.

This pattern of reduced tension over time between Adventism and its sociocultural environment has not been limited to the U.S. I have shown that this has become the pattern not only in many of the countries of the developed world where Adventism is active but also in much of the developing world (Lawson 1995b).

This paper focuses on one facet of the tension between the religious group and its surrounding sociocultural environment: its relations with governments. While its relationship with the U.S. Federal Government is prime, since Adventism was born in the U.S. and expected that the U.S. government would persecute it severely before the apocalypse (see below), the paper also considers the patterns of church-state relations that evolved as Adventism spread internationally and grew rapidly in many countries.³

RESEARCH METHODS

The research reported here is part of a large study of international Seventh-day Adventism, which included over 3,000 in-depth interviews in 54 countries in all eleven of the Adventist "divisions" of the world. The countries were chosen to represent the diversity of the international church, paying greater attention to those where it is more established and/or experiencing rapid growth. In general, interviewees were chosen to fit key categories, such as administrators at different levels of the church hierarchy, college and academy teachers, administrators, counselors and students, hospital administrators and medical personnel, pastors representing different kinds of congregations, and leading laypersons. Some were chosen because of their specialized knowledge, including oral history. The research effort also gathered questionnaires from respondents and from students at Adventist colleges around the world, and also from a sample of church members in North America. A wide array of church publications (both official and independent), statistics, and secondary sources was also mined.

This paper has culled its data concerning earlier decades largely from secondary sources. Considerable relevant historical research has been

³ In 1994 Adventism was active in 208 of the 236 countries recognized by the United Nations. Its world membership increased from 1.2 million in 1960 to 8.4 million in 1994. Its outreach was so successful, especially in the developing world, that at the end of 1994 only 9.25% of its members were in the U.S. (General Conference 1995:26, 42; Yost:28).

completed, in part because Adventist universities and colleges have strong history departments (dating from the early Adventist concern with prophetic fulfillment), and is available in books, dissertations, college papers, and articles in such journals as *Adventist Heritage*, and in part because of interest beyond Adventism in the Millerites and religion under the Nazis and in the Soviet Union.⁴ I also used original documents available in the General Conference Archives and the “Heritage Rooms” at Adventist universities, and oral history interviews. Much of the data concerning more recent decades comes from my interviews; the paper also draws extensively on periodical articles to explore more recent pronouncements, practices, and attitudes.

In order to keep the confidentiality of interviewees, as was promised them, the convention adopted by the study is to refrain from citing the names of interviewees when they are quoted except when they are major figures in the church.

DATA

Early Tension with Society: The Millerite forebears of Seventh-day Adventism in their premillennial expectation of imminent cataclysm rejected the American Dream—a dream that Niebuhr argues was itself a millennial vision, rooted in postmillennialism, with its optimistic expectation of 1000 years of peace, progress, and prosperity culminating in the establishment of the Kingdom of God (1937). In sharp contrast with this, premillennialism evaluated society pessimistically and thus created tension with it. 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. This view had the effect of encouraging apolitical withdrawal. Consequently, many followers withdrew from reform associations, whose agendas hoped to rid America of social evils such as slavery and intemperance, in which they had previously been active. Instead, they became totally absorbed in preparing for, and warning others of, the pending “day of the Lord” (Butler: 173–177).

Following the “Great Disappointment” of 1844, 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.” Bull

⁴ On the other hand, social science departments at Adventist colleges are typically weak, so that there has been little sociological research.

and Lockhart have suggested that this unique interpretation was included in Adventist eschatology because of "the perceived conflict between Adventist and American expectations," for "the American dream threatened to undermine the Adventist hope." To retain hope Adventists "transformed that dream into a nightmare" (48). They cherished the foundation of America with its Constitution and Bill of Rights, seeing this 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 in expelling the Millerites and the jailing of (Saturday) Sabbath keepers who had violated state blue laws, they held that America was betraying both principles. It was already, and would increasingly become, a dragon in lamb's clothing (Morgan 1994:238). 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.

Although Adventist publications now addressed these contemporary political issues, they were totally pessimistic about any form of political action: "Initially, the Adventists' apocalyptic expectation was of such immediacy and intensity that it overrode any impulse toward social activism. They employed a Radical Republic critique of slavery on behalf of their apocalyptic judgment of America, but in the 1850s and 1860s they believed that political action for liberty would be a futile distraction from the supremely urgent task of preparation for their Lord's return" (Morgan 1994:239–240). The editor of their *Review and Herald* wrote that slavery would last until the slaves were freed by Christ at His second coming (Smith:124).

The American Civil War forced the Adventist Church to grapple with the issue of military service just as it was organizing formally and creating its highly centralized structure between 1860 and 1863. The extent to which opinions among members were divided was revealed by a long debate in the columns of the *Review and Herald*, which was now the official church paper, in the second half of 1862. Many were reluctant to volunteer: not only were they pessimistic about human politics, but they had embraced pacifism through the Abolitionist Movement and regarded military combat as a violation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" and of the nonviolent teachings of Jesus. Moreover, since it was their responsibility to spread God's last warning message before the imminent return of Christ, this warning must take priority. On the other hand, since Adventists were at that time concentrated in the north and since key church leaders had spoken of the evils of slavery, many also felt sympathy for the Union side. Some of these favored active participation in the military struggle.

The issue became urgent when conscription was instituted in March 1863. The infant church eventually took a position against military service—but on practical rather than ideological grounds. It was agreed that

participation in war was impossible, because it would make it unfeasible for Adventists to observe their Sabbath or their diet restrictions and would expose them to a multitude of evil influences such as drinking, smoking, gambling, and cursing (Brock:23; Graybill: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. In the army they cannot obey the truth and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers” (White 1885 [1863]:361).

While their position placed them among a small deviant minority and subjected them to scorn and questions concerning their loyalty, it did not result in legal punishments. This was because they were able to take advantage of the loopholes in the military draft designed for the Quakers. Consequently, while their position potentially risked conflict with the state, it actually generated relatively little antagonism or tension.

Adventists initially avoided the draft by utilizing a provision that allowed draftees to pay a commutation fee of \$300: churches helped poorer members gather this sum. When provision for noncombatant service was passed in February 1864, they initially made no attempt to gain recognition under the act because they were already protected by the general availability of the commutation fee. “Only in July of 1864, when the privilege of buying commutation was restricted to those recognized as conscientious objectors, did the church act to secure such recognition for itself” (Graybill:6). In order to accomplish this, Adventists fudged the record by declaring that their membership had always been united in believing that war was wrong, and gained the necessary recognition, first from state governors and then from federal authorities.

Given the internal debate, a comment by the editor of the church paper 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), and the pragmatic reasons put forward for the position taken, it is not clear whether Adventists would have adopted this position if it had meant facing major conflict with the state. Nevertheless, once adopted it was framed in terms of principle and enforced: members who participated in the war were disfellowshipped (Graybill: 26). The third annual session of the General Conference,⁵ held in May 1865, shortly after the end of the war, affirmed the new Adventist 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” (cited by Wilcox:234).

⁵ Because the *General Conference in session* is the broadest-based constituency meeting, it has the highest authority. This should be distinguished from the *General Conference*, the church headquarters, at the apex of the bureaucratic structure.

Apocalypse Postponed: in the years following the Civil War and the end of slavery, significant changes appeared in Adventism. Its evangelistic task, which it had seen as restricted to other Millerites for several years after 1844 and then to America,⁶ became international. Adventists entered into this task with zeal, and, as a result, their membership increased from 5,440 in 1870 to 75,000 in 1901. At the same time, they set about building institutions: by 1901 they had built sixteen colleges and high schools, a medical school, seventy-five "sanitariums" or hospitals, thirteen publishing houses, and thirty-one miscellaneous institutions. Adventism was putting down a stake in the societies where it operated (General Conference 1901; General Conference 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, and the tension with the state was beginning to relax. However, the interpretation remained fundamentally pessimistic, especially as Adventists themselves had replaced slaves as the minority whose abuse would undo the Republic (Butler: 193–194).

In the meantime, however, 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:193). That is, Adventists found themselves in the anomalous situation where they wished to delay the end of the world 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, so that they remained apolitical on most matters, some issues were now regarded as vital, and here, in a sharp reversal of policy, they became heavily involved. 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 fifty Adventists had been convicted under the state laws and thirty of these sent to prison. Despite the fact that their rehoned 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, the *American Sentinel*, devoted to religious

⁶ Since "all nations" were represented in America, Adventists reasoned for a period that by preaching there they were fulfilling the commission to take their message to "all the world."

liberty, in 1883; in 1888 and 1889 they participated in the lobby that helped defeat Senator H.W. Blair's Sunday Rest bill; in 1889 they founded the National Religious Liberty Association. By 1892, when they entered the debate over the Sunday closing of the Chicago World Exposition, their involvement included petitions to both Houses, the reading of papers before congressional committees, and the presentation of legal briefs in court (Butler:196–198; Morgan, 1994:241–242).

While Adventist political involvement during these years focused mostly on Sunday laws, which they interpreted as the betrayal of the lamb-like beast's horn signifying religious freedom, the Spanish-American War of 1898 elicited a protest against what they saw as the betrayal of the horn that represented political freedom. Adventist leaders responded to the widespread jingoism of the time with strong expressions of pacifist sentiment and trenchant criticism of the mainline churches' support for the war. Interpreting the seizure of territory, and especially the annexation of the Philippines, as imperialism, editorials in both the *Review and Herald* and the *American Sentinel* repeatedly condemned this as "national apostasy," citing Ellen White's statement in 1885 that the United States would "repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and Republican government." "Now, in annexing the Philippines, the United States had forsaken republicanism as utterly as it had Protestantism only a few years earlier" (Morgan 1993:25, 26).

In 1902 the administrative headquarters of the Adventist Church were moved from Battle Creek, Michigan, to Washington, DC. One of the officers was quoted as suggesting that this was part of a grand new design for the denomination. "A presence in Washington afforded an opportunity to sustain the American Republic against the subversiveness of Sunday legislation" (Butler:196). Nevertheless, within Adventism there was a tension between its preaching of the end of the world and its emerging plans for the long haul. Moreover, their eschatology left Adventists at the periphery of the political process, since "if America did not fail, the end would never come" (Butler:201).

The Adventist defense of religious liberty in the U.S. as the best way of fending off the persecution that they had predicted for themselves there continued into the twentieth century. Adventists fostered religious liberty in three main ways: they helped raise the profile of the issue and give it credibility by sponsoring organizations focusing on it and by publishing a magazine, renamed *Liberty* in 1906, which they targeted at "thought leaders"; they became involved in instances where religious liberty issues impinged on church members, giving them advice and occasionally helping them seek relief in courts; and, most important politically, they gave first priority to protecting the First Amendment, which they saw as the basic guarantee of religious liberty in the U.S., through such activities as lobbying against what was deemed to be threatening legislation, building

coalitions to support or argue against legislation as needed, and becoming involved in court cases. The initial issue of *Liberty* in 1906 was devoted to "the complete separation of church and state"; its "declaration of principles," published in every issue from 1914 to 1956, began with the "separation of church and state, as taught by Jesus Christ" (Morgan 1992:265). With time, Adventists became widely identified with this issue.

Noncombatancy Redefined: The questions associated with military service faded from view for several decades following the end of the Civil War. Meanwhile, the wave of missionary activity beginning in the 1870s planted Adventism in some countries whose political traditions and views of religious freedom differed greatly from those of the U.S. Nevertheless, because these were years of peace, no major issue erupted until the emergence, with the deepening of international tensions in the new century, of military training in peace time. Because America seemed very far from the threat of war, Adventist leaders gave little direction to these situations. The reactions of local Adventist leaders were shaped by their perceptions of their government's tolerance of religious diversity. For example, when Australia and New Zealand introduced compulsory military training in 1909, the local Adventist Religious Liberty Committee petitioned successfully for noncombatant status. In Argentina, however, Adventists chose not to request special privileges for fear of severe punishments—that is, they typically trained with weapons and on the Sabbath (Wilcox:367).

Meanwhile, German Adventists who faced conscription in the years prior to 1914 were imprisoned and subjected to scornful press coverage because of their refusal to train with arms or on the Sabbath. However, when taken to court they did state that the Bible would permit them to serve if their country were actually at war. Consequently, when war broke out suddenly in 1914, their leaders, focusing on the passages in the New Testament epistles that assert the primacy of government authority, agreed that German Adventists would bear weapons in the service of the Fatherland. Moreover, their announcement stated explicitly that "under these circumstances we will also bear arms on Saturday" (cited by Sas:14; Sicher:12). This decision resulted in a bitter schism, which concluded with the members making up the pacifist opposition—the "two percent"—being disfellowshipped from the official church and forming the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. The patriotism of the official Adventists, together with their realization that Imperial Germany would not countenance a noncombatant option, led them to reduce their tension with society and discard those who insisted on maintaining high tension.

Because of the late entry of the U.S. into the war, the American church had more time to prepare its position. In April 1917 the North American Division, declaring that "we have been noncombatants through-

out our history," adopted the 1865 General Conference declaration of noncombatancy as principle and filed this with the War Department (Wilcox:113; Syme:70–71). However, "noncombatant" was now redefined in a manner that allowed Adventists to express their patriotism: they would be unarmed soldiers doing good while refraining from killing. This, then, represented a considerable shift from the pacifist position adopted during the Civil War.

In 1916, expecting a possible draft, the North American Division had established Red Cross training schools at its colleges and several hospitals and academies. Young men liable to a draft were thus able to undertake training that helped prepare them for, and made them attractive to, non-combatant 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 would thus provide Adventist draftees a noncombatant role within the military and at the same time remove the difficult problem of service on the Sabbath.

Unlike the Quakers, Adventists sought to avoid only the use of weapons. They did not see it as a contradiction to help the wounded to recover and so fight again: they were helping people, and what those they helped did afterwards was up to their own consciences. Their patriotism made them proud to offer service to their nation that was compatible with what their consciences allowed. Adventist leaders even urged members to purchase war bonds.

However, the embrace of patriotism failed to erase all potential problems with the American military, for being part of the armed forces subjected Adventist soldiers to punishments because there were no special provisions in place to protect their observance of the Sabbath, which was especially problematical 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 thirty-five in prison, with sentences ranging from five to twenty years, for disobeying officers on this account. They were then released by proclamation (Wilcox:151).

With the end of the war the General Conference was faced with the problem of how to deal with the rift in Europe, which had already spread through several countries. Finally, in 1923, it made an incongruous decision to side with the official church in Germany, which had the effect of leaving the schism in place, while, at the same time, establishing that the official position of international Adventism towards war was noncombatancy (Wilcox:346; "Noncombatancy":979).

In this context, the impact on the Adventist Church of the Stalinist crackdown on religious freedom, which followed soon after these events, was especially traumatic. Its beginning was signaled at the church's 1924 All Russian Congress, when Adventist leaders were forced to sign a state-

ment that military service was a matter of private conscience. This statement was strengthened considerably at the next Congress in 1928 with the proclamation that military service was a Christian duty and that anyone teaching otherwise was a heretic and should be disfellowshipped. Meanwhile, new laws proscribed proselytizing activity and charitable work by religious groups. By accepting these conditions the Adventist church was able to function openly but in a very compromised situation. However, this capitulation caused another schism: some of the Russian Adventists broke away from the officially recognized church and went underground, thus placing themselves in a position where they attracted persecution. The schismatics called themselves the True and Free Adventists: "true" because they were faithful to the commandments to observe the Sabbath and refrain from killing, which they accused the official church of breaking, and "free" because they refused to be registered or connected to the government (Sapiets:52–57; Alexeyeva:25).

Thus, two positions concerning military service had emerged within international Adventism. One, which was declared to be the official position, was noncombatancy, redefined to mean unarmed military service. However, its observance was largely confined to the English-speaking world. The second option—serving in the normal fashion, with arms—was invoked where the first was not available. That is, in both cases tension with governments was kept relatively low. Indeed, in two cases the Adventist church had chosen to cut off minorities whose resistance to government military policies caused high tension with the authorities.

As the international situation began to heat up again in Europe following the rise of Hitler, the General Conference reconfirmed the church's noncombatant position. A 1934 pamphlet urged youth to prepare for noncombatant service by graduating in medicine, nursing, dietetics, or some other medically related field, or to at least get experience as cooks, nurses' aides, etc. It endorsed again the concept of the church providing medical training for members liable to be drafted (reprinted in Wilcox:383–395). This was followed in 1936 by the publication of a book detailing the history of the Adventist noncombatant stance (Wilcox 1936). By omitting accounts of heated debate over the position and references to its failure and neglect in many countries, it gave the impression that noncombatancy was universally accepted within Adventism. In fact, the book focused almost totally on the English-speaking world.

Conscientious Cooperation: In 1939, as war broke out in Europe, the U.S. church again established a program to provide medical training to members who were potential draftees. This time, however, the program was much more sophisticated than in its previous incarnation. Called the Medical Cadet Training Program, it was directed and supervised, through cooperation with the armed forces, by regular army officers. Both stu-

dents at Adventist colleges and others potentially eligible for the draft were trained (Dick 1974:20).

When conscription was about to be introduced in 1940, C.S. Longacre, head of the Religious Liberty Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, appeared before hearings of the Military Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives to explain the Adventist position: "Seventh Day [sic] Adventists . . . are not pacifists nor militarists nor conscientious objectors, but noncombatants. . . . [A noncombatant] merely believes that he should not take human life. But he is willing to cooperate with his government in any capacity that he can, without having to violate his conscience in regard to taking a life. . . . They are perfectly willing to lay down their lives in defense of their country" (U.S. Congress:71). His testimony, which included ringing support for conscription so long as it did not transgress on the consciences of those conscripted, was received with enthusiasm by committee members. The official church paper commented: "Refusing to be called conscientious objectors, Seventh day Adventists desire to be known as conscientious cooperators" (Editorial, 1941:4).

The position adopted by Adventists was different from that of the other major religious groups who had conscientious scruples concerning military service: ". . . the largest single group of conscientious objectors who entered the Army and Navy as noncombatants were the Seventh Day [sic] Adventists. Among those who rendered alternative civilian service (C.P.S.) [Civilian Public Service], members of the Historic Peace Churches constituted about 60 per cent of the total. As for the objectors who on various grounds were imprisoned, more than three-quarters were Jehovah's Witnesses" (Sibley and Jacob: 85). Inevitably, the Adventist position was received much more favorably by the military authorities than those of the others, especially the Witnesses. Indeed, the cooperation of the Adventist church and the military in medical training became so close that some members criticized it for having become part of the national war machine (Syme: 73).

Some 12,000 American Adventists served during World War II as noncombatants in medical branches of the services, where they could observe the Sabbath conscientiously, with official government recognition. Church leaders were proud of their military heroes, especially Desmond Doss, whose bravery earned him a Congressional Medal of Honor in 1945 (Sibley and Jacob: 86; Schwarz: 443; Goldstein: 2).

However, the official noncombatant stand had been compromised again in Nazi Germany, where the Adventist accommodation went further than it had earlier, for most conscripts bore arms willingly even though they had been accorded the right to opt for orderly or medical duties. German Adventists also went out of their way to express support for the regime, praising Hitler and his National Socialists with enthusiasm and reporting

the pacifist schismatic Adventists to the authorities in order to clearly separate themselves from them.⁷ In so doing they sharply reduced tension with the regime, so that they survived almost unscathed in spite of the similarity of several of their beliefs and practices to Judaism. Their experience was in marked contrast to that of the Reformed Adventists, who faced imprisonment and death because of their unwavering commitment to their pacifist position (Sicher: 14–22; King 1982b: 97–98, 110–119).

The American Medical Cadet Corps, which had lapsed after World War II, was revived at the time of the Korean War. Once again conscripted Adventists served in large numbers in medical units. The major innovation during this time was the appointment of Adventist military chaplains, who were paid by the armed forces and had military careers. The General Conference had refused to endorse Adventist clergy for such posts during World War II, which had kept them from being appointed. There were two exceptions, who somehow found loopholes in the military process (Dick 1976: 35–36). However, it now not only agreed to endorse them but also to give financial aid to some would-be chaplains in order to help with their ministerial training. It also agreed to ordain them immediately on graduation, since this was necessary for their appointment as chaplains, rather than have them wait several years, which was the normal procedure with Adventist clergy (Dick 1976: 42–45). American Adventism thus took another step in normalizing its relationship with the military.

By this time the Adventist noncombatant position no longer separated them but encouraged closer relations with government and military leaders. On numerous occasions church leaders equated the 1-A-O noncombatant position with “conscientious cooperation,” and, indeed, signs of cooperation with American authorities multiplied.

In 1954 the U.S. Army established a special camp at Fort Sam Houston in Texas where all noncombatants could receive their basic training. This removed them from regular units where their refusal to bear arms had been a regular source of confusion. Over half the men trained there were Adventists (Davis: 222). “It was a program engineered for the needs of conscientious cooperators” (Knight: 17).

That same year the U.S. Army Surgeon General contacted the General Conference seeking approval for the Army to ask Adventist draftees to volunteer for a research program designed especially for them which would “contribute significantly to the nation’s health and security.” Theodore Flaiz, Secretary of the Medical Department of the General Conference, responded positively: “If any one should recognize a debt of loyalty and service for the many courtesies and considerations received from the Department of Defense, we, as Adventists, are in a position to feel a debt

⁷ In 1989 the Adventist Church in Germany issued a public apology for its toadying to the Nazis (interviews).

of gratitude for these kind considerations" (cited by Thompson:6). The upshot was the creation of "Project Whitecoat," under which volunteers from among drafted Adventist noncombatant servicemen spent their periods of military service as guinea pigs in biological warfare research for the U.S. Army at Fort Detrick, Maryland. Thanks to the enthusiastic encouragement of the General Conference, 2,200 Adventists participated in the program between 1955 and 1973 (Thompson Smith: 35; interviews). In taking this position church leaders subordinated a church doctrine, healthful living, to cementing relations with the U.S. military.

Since the draft was continued during the years between the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the church continued to urge young men at Adventist schools to take medical training through participating in the Medical Cadet Corps before draft age. The most enthusiastic of these did intensive field training at a roving Camp Desmond T. Doss, which was usually located at Adventist campgrounds. The military staffed this camp and spent large sums setting up a field hospital (interviews).

Changing Relations with U.S. Civil Society: The Adventist church maintained its eschatology and view of history in spite of the profound religious, social, and political changes of the twentieth century. (It proved to be extremely difficult to alter interpretations blessed by Ellen White after her death in 1915—despite her own flexibility during her lifetime.) Thus, regardless of the revolution of Vatican II and the threats emanating from the multiplication of totalitarian states in many parts of the world, Adventists continued to view the Papacy and the U.S. as the "beasts" destined to persecute the faithful. However, the eschatology "became less an impetus for critiquing and taking a costly stand against political and religious opposition in the present and more the basis for a forecast about a slightly more remote future. The commitment to liberty remained strong, but somewhat less a challenge to the status quo. . . . After 1900 little attention was directed toward specifically civil issues, making for less direct engagement with American political life. . . . In most ways and at most times after World War I, the American republic at present seemed to Adventists safe and benevolent, lamb-like enough" (Morgan 1992:156). The narrowness of their focus "fed into a tendency toward cultural disengagement and relatively uncritical affirmation of the status quo" (Morgan 1994:236). American Adventists remained so preoccupied with the prospect of Sunday laws, even after that issue moved from the public stage, that they ignored the broader range of threats to liberty and human rights, standing aloof from many issues that became foci of concern for other religious bodies, such as racial justice, economic justice, the arms race, and attempts to legislate values.

Instead, Adventists adopted a conspiratorial outlook, nervously anticipating threats to their liberty that could be fitted within the narrow

confines of their eschatology. Since they were small in number and lacking in power, they needed allies when they addressed First Amendment issues. Because they stood in their own corner, their allies tended to vary from issue to issue. Thus, in the 1920s they worked with Jews against a renewed push for Sunday laws, with Roman Catholics on the right to parochial schools, and with fundamentalists against the teaching of evolution in public schools. In the 1930s and early 1940s they took an unpopular stance, supporting the right of Jehovah's Witnesses to proselytize and to refuse to salute the flag, because they feared that negative decisions might restrict their own activities. In the 1940s and 1950s they joined with liberal Protestants in their opposition to state aid to religious schools and the appointment of a presidential envoy to the Vatican but worked against ecumenically supported plans for religious education in public schools (Morgan 1992:207–264).

In spite of their eschatological expectations the situation of Adventists in the U.S. clearly became more comfortable. After they had helped to defeat all of the nearly 150 Sunday observance bills introduced into Congress between 1888 and 1933, such initiatives largely disappeared (Morgan 1994:246). During World War II Supreme Court decisions addressing Jehovah's Witness issues strengthened religious liberty, and Roosevelt included freedom of religion as one of his four basic freedoms. The editor of the *Review and Herald* commented at that time that what Adventists had prophesied clearly lay further in the future (Editorial, 1943:4).

As time passed, Adventists found it increasingly difficult to define precisely the wall of separation which they were committed to defending. Between 1944 and 1972 there was considerable conflict and debate within Adventism—primarily between religious liberty staff and school and hospital administrators—over to what extent to accept the government aid that had become available to private institutions. Adventists began by approving vaccinations for school children. Then in 1949 they agreed that their hospitals could accept war surplus and capital funds. The ensuing debate over the funding of church schools was especially bitter. A compromise was eventually reached in 1972. The background to this decision was enrollment decline and financial distress among Adventist schools, a situation that led church leaders to admit the educators' case that quality affordable education had become increasingly difficult to achieve without government help. The compromise allowed Adventist educational institutions to accept a broad range of government aid—for new buildings, equipment, salaries, and other operating costs—as long as the independence of the schools and their purpose of inculcating religious principles were maintained and the "historic position" that religious liberty was best achieved through the separation of church and state was not undermined (Morgan 1992:271–284; Syme:120–143).

In 1956, in the midst of this long debate, *Liberty* symbolically revised its long published declaration of principles. Religious liberty replaced

separation of church and state as the first principle, although separation was still affirmed as the best way of achieving liberty. However, there was no doubt that the Adventist decision to accept government aid for its institutions had compromised its stand on separation. It was no longer able, for example, to denounce government aid to Catholic schools as a step toward the establishment of religion and the end of religious freedom.

Nevertheless, the Adventists' conspiratorial outlook continued to re-surface from time to time, and at each instance they invoked the First Amendment as their defense. Fears of Sunday laws reappeared when organized labor supported, for secular reasons, state blue laws in the 1950s—especially as these now gained Catholic support. Such fears were again expressed in 1961 when the Supreme Court found the blue laws constitutional for secular reasons and in the 1970s, when gas stations in some states were closed on Sundays during the oil crisis. On each occasion Adventists proclaimed that the prospects for a national Sunday law had increased considerably and lobbied accordingly. However, the editor of *Liberty* later interpreted Chief Justice Warren's 1961 decision as a step away from such a law because of its secular basis (Morgan 1992:284–295; Syme:94–104).

In the early 1980s, when church leaders discovered that vast sums in government aid, mostly from USAID, were available for distribution and that it was possible for the Adventist Church to plug into this, they transformed the church's disaster relief agency into the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). These leaders saw this as a new "entering wedge," which could penetrate regions where there was little Adventist presence and where conventional missionaries were often unwelcome—a role their hospitals had played in earlier years. However, the source and restrictions placed on the use of most of its funds in many ways transformed ADRA into an arm of American foreign policy: for example, during the Contra War in Nicaragua ADRA distributed a great deal of aid in Honduras but nothing in Nicaragua (interviews).

Adventist eschatological expectations concerning the persecuting role of America prevented them from merging their eschatology with American anti-Communism, as most other premillennial groups had done. As the New Christian Right rose to prominence in America in the 1980s, some of its "pro family" attitudes resonated with the views of Adventist leaders. However, the fears of the latter that the separation of church and state was threatened by the agenda of the Right led them to be very wary of it (Syme:94; interviews). In 1995 as the Christian Coalition "increased its stranglehold on Congress," Adventists were listed among several other diverse religious groups mobilizing against them under the banner of "The Interfaith Alliance" (Rich).

Backing Away from the Noncombatant Position: The South Korean Adventist Church was taught through its interaction with American

Adventists during the Korean War that it was the Adventist position not to undergo military training with arms—a position that was reinforced by visiting General Conference officials. Consequently, following the American model, the Adventist college there gave basic medical training to those expecting to be drafted and then asked the authorities to assign them to medical units or other noncombatant positions where they did not have to bear arms. However, because the Korean government made no official accommodation to this stance, not all Adventist draftees were able to obtain such positions, and the unlucky ones sometimes found themselves with an unsympathetic commander who refused to respect their religious restrictions. Two of these were executed at the front line during the war when they refused to bear arms, and about 100 Adventists were sent to prison for as long as seven years during the 1950s and 1960s for failure to obey orders concerning arms or Sabbath activities; many more were beaten or otherwise mistreated (interviews).

However, internationally there was, in fact, considerable variation in Adventist practice. In almost all cases, unlike South Korea, this was governed by what was possible without conflict. So, in the U.S., other English speaking democracies, and also in most of Western Europe, where the option of alternative civilian service was now law, Adventists were noncombatants. However, in the majority of countries with conscription—Communist Eastern Europe, Latin America, Franco's Spain, and parts of Asia—where there were no provisions for alternatives to military service, Adventists trained and, when necessary, fought with arms rather than face severe difficulties. In some countries, such as Argentina, the church provided youth with some medical training, hoping again that the possession of these skills would shape their paths when they were conscripted. However, the main focus of national church leaders was usually on the preservation, if possible, of Sabbath observance for conscripts rather than the avoidance of training with weapons. They frequently concluded that the General Conference did not understand their circumstances, so that its statements reflected an American situation that could not be applied to them. In this way they avoided the tension with the state over military service experienced by the South Koreans (interviews).

The most remarkable involvement of Adventists with weapons and military conflict, however, was emerging among the Karen rebels against the Burmese government, who went on to declare an independent state of Cawthoolie along the Thai border. Adventists are the third largest religious group among these Karens, behind Buddhists and Baptists, but they have provided much of the military and political leadership during this extended war. The longtime head of state, Bo (General) Mya, three of his top deputies, and several other leading military figures are Adventists. Since the Adventist churches and schools there cannot be linked to the denominational structure through Burma, they have been linked instead to the Thai structure. A missionary was stationed there for several years,

and church leaders in Thailand have visited frequently to nurture, evangelize, collect tithes, and pay the salaries of clergy. Several of them reported having been asked to pray with soldiers before battles. Neither they nor leaders from the church's Southeast Asia Union have taken a stance on the military issue—"We have not made bearing arms an issue at all, have not said they should not be shooting"—but have kept their role spiritual: "Our hearts are with them, but officially we cannot take sides—it would jeopardize missionaries elsewhere." They have not had advice from the General Conference or the Far Eastern Division on how to handle this unexpected situation, and leaders from these higher levels of the church structure have not visited Cawthoolie. Indeed, the church leaders at these levels seem nervous about the situation. They want to dissociate the church from Cawthoolie and to keep missionaries and tourists away from there in order to prevent stories of Adventist-led armed struggle from surfacing (interviews).

In spite of this diversity in practice, the General Conference Session in 1954, following the Korean War, which included delegates from around the world, voted a major statement that not only confirmed the traditional noncombatant position but provided for it to be included in the *Church Manual* as a fundamental belief throughout the world. However, when the next edition of the *Church Manual* was being readied for printing in 1959, the General Conference Committee voted to omit this statement from it. Church leaders were becoming more aware of the problems of observing noncombatancy within many portions of the world church, and some felt it would be inhumane to discipline members caught in such a bind—a likely result of including the position among the fundamental beliefs of the church (General Conference Session, 1954; interviews). Notwithstanding this, when the Executive Committee of the General Conference voted a statement that was intended to inform military officers of the Adventist position as American involvement in Vietnam was increasing, it affirmed once more that "Seventh day Adventists . . . are noncombatants."

Meanwhile, many American Adventists had become militant patriots. They scorned conscientious objectors, who refused to be involved with the military in any manner and opted for alternative service when drafted. The director of the General Conference National Service Organization was quoted by *Time* in 1950: "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" (Haynes:68). Consequently, when the ideology surrounding the antiwar movement of the late 1960s led to a spurt in the number of Adventists choosing the 1-0 classification (conscientious objector choosing alternate service), this caused dismay in many quarters. However, since evidence for religious belief was vital to this classification being accepted in individual cases, the Adventist

Church was obliged to deal with them. The Annual Council of the General Conference voted in 1969 that such Adventists should be told that the historic teaching of the church was that members should choose the 1-A-0 (noncombatant) classification and be urged to consider this first; however, if they persisted in pursuing the 1-0 classification, pastors should provide the needed help if the draftee's wish were consistent with his religious experience (National Service Organization:29).

However, deep disagreement and debate on the military issue persisted among American Adventists during the Vietnam War, and this, rather than the growing awareness of the incongruity of diverse practice within international Adventism, finally triggered a major shift in the church's official position. In 1971 the General Conference responded to the continuing conflict by forming a Study Committee on Military Service. This large committee received and debated many papers, but it remained deeply divided (interviews). When the Annual Council of the General Conference took up the matter in 1972, it chose to embrace both the militant patriots and the pacifists, declaring that military service was a matter of individual conscience. Its vehicle in this was the statement on military obligations voted by the General Conference Session in 1954, which it transformed by adding a new ending: "This statement is not a rigid position binding church members but gives them guidance, leaving the individual member free to assess the situation for himself." The document then interpreted this by confirming that for members in the U.S. the statement was best reflected in the traditional 1-A-0 (noncombatant) classification but that the church would also facilitate members applying for a 1-0 (conscientious objector) classification. However, it then added: "For those who conscientiously choose the 1-A classification (military service as a combatant), pastoral guidance and counsel should be provided in ministering to their needs since the Church refrains from passing judgment on them." This decision, then, represented a break with the position that had, as recently as 1954, been declared a fundamental belief.

The new flexibility was tested and confirmed the very next year in South Korea, where during the 1950s and early 1960s young men had endured beatings, imprisonment, and death rather than renege on their commitment to noncombatancy. 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 non-combatant 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 contacted the General Conference seeking advice, the latter reversed the position it had fostered there in the 1950s, 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 govern-

ment's demand that it train students with weapons and left the choice of whether they would comply to the individual consciences of the students, not urging them one way or the other: "If the College had refused to do the training, the Ministry of Education would have closed it, unless the Lord performed a miracle . . . We decided that the college was more important than noncombatancy" (interview). The result of this decision was that almost every student and conscript thereafter trained with arms (interviews).

Meanwhile, Adventism in America had backed away from the serious teaching of noncombatancy through Sabbath Schools, youth programming, and the church school system. When the U.S. switched to a volunteer army in 1973 and recruiters began emphasizing educational and vocational benefits that appealed to lower socio-economic strata racial minorities, Adventists began to volunteer for military service in unprecedented numbers. This represented a significant shift in the choices made by Adventist youth, for, unlike draftees, volunteers do not have a non-combatant option available to them. The church responded by directing its main effort into chaplaincy. The National Service Organization, which was originally staffed by pastors and evangelists and whose object had been to solve draftees' problems with noncombatant status and Sabbath observance, was taken over by chaplains socialized into military values, who now tried primarily to serve the spiritual needs of the Adventist volunteer soldiers. Its new focus was confirmed when it was renamed the office of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (interviews).

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: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:2). In contrast with earlier generations, many young Adventists have enlisted, thereby agreeing to kill America's enemies if so ordered. 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 6,000–8,000 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:10). This mood was matched by the majority within the General Conference headquarters. An official there who was troubled by President Bush's decision to launch the Gulf War told of feeling isolated because of widespread enthusiasm among his colleagues for American participation, for "sending in the missiles and the bombs" (interview).

The Adventist message concerning military service has become blurred and confusing. A pamphlet available from Adventist Chaplaincy

Ministries warns that "The Adventist Church strongly counsels its members NOT to enter military service voluntarily if they have conscientious beliefs that they either cannot bear arms or be available for routine military training or duty during Sabbath hours," but it then adds that views on these questions are a matter of individual conscience (Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries:2). Similarly, an article in a church periodical reviewed the biblical evidence:

"The attitude of the Christian should always be of loyalty to his government," says Charles Martin, director of the National Service Organization of the Adventist Church. "But when the government conflicts with the requirements of God, he must obey God, at whatever cost. . . ."

"Whether defensive or offensive, just or unjust, war means killing," says Martin.

"It's hard for some to believe that a soldier who shoots, stabs, shells, napalms, or bombs another human being is in harmony with One who said 'Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' . . . Many Adventists and other Christians agree with Tertullian: Christ, in disarming Peter, ungirt every soldier."

However, it then concluded: "The Adventist church recommends that its youth, if drafted, enter the armed forces as noncombatants. But the church also recognizes the right of individual conscience. An Adventist bearing arms is in no way a second class church member" (Goldstein:3). In contrast, any Adventist found to be smoking or drinking alcohol would be at least censured and possibly disfellowshipped. But none of the Ten Commandments bears directly on either of these!

Advance publicity for a special Servicemen's Fund Offering in 1990, which quoted Calvin Rock, a Vice President of the General Conference, put forward an unusually favorable view of the new generation of Adventist volunteer soldiers: ". . . we can give our dollars to support and supply Adventist military personnel stationed around the world. As representatives of Caesar, they guard our borders, scan our skies, search our oceans, protect our investments, staff our embassies, transport our leaders and aid our allies; in short, help secure the precious freedoms we so easily take for granted. As Adventists they preach, teach and live the gospel of Christ . . . Adventists at bases, forts and camps around the world . . . pledge to continue their noble and necessary service . . ." (Rock:16).

The evidence supports the conclusion that "on the question of military service, the anything-goes school, under the banner of 'individual conscience,' has pretty much taken over in North America" (Scriven:10).

Relationships with Political Regimes Abroad: As it expanded internationally, Adventism exported its concern for religious liberty. It has supported

the United Nations Convention on Religious Tolerance; its International Religious Liberty Association has promoted world congresses; it has published magazines that address liberty issues in a number of languages. That is, it has helped raise consciousness concerning religious liberty in situations where there are often far fewer players than in the U.S.

However, Adventists made no attempt to raise the issue of separation of church and state outside of the U.S. This left them free to foster relationships with political leaders that would facilitate their missionary endeavors. They were often especially successful in developing exchange relationships with authoritarian governments of the Left and Right.

The Adventist response to the Nazi regime in Germany became the prototype of such relationships. Here their cooperation was designed to ensure their survival, for the danger was real. Adventists successfully distinguished themselves from Jews, with whom they shared their distinctive day of worship and various dietary restrictions, and, by making their welfare program useful to the authorities and publishing pro-Nazi materials in their magazines, they were able to convince the regime of their loyalty and usefulness (Sicher: 15–18; King 1982a: 127).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the wife of a missionary who held the post of housekeeper in the royal household in Ethiopia was able to establish ties between Emperor Haile Selassie and her church. As a result, he built hospitals and schools for Adventists (interviews).

Exchange relationships have multiplied in recent years in many parts of the international church, following the model that evolved in the U.S. Adventists have 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, have been willing to help legitimate or otherwise assist regimes. Such relationships became especially numerous among the military regimes of Latin America, from Guatemala to Argentina. For example, in Pinochet's Chile Adventists became known as friends of the president, providing him with legitimacy 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, Adventists 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 also established 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. They also cooperated in issuing patriotic appeals to vote in the rigged elections. In return for their assistance they were allowed to publish so freely that in a seven year period the amount of Ellen White's material published was exceeded only by the Bible and the works of Lenin.⁸ They were also allowed to sell their material freely on the streets and in government book kiosks and to secure public halls for evangelism (interviews). These privileges were extended to them even though their membership stood at only 4,700 members in a total population of 38 million.

The original decisions in these countries to compromise by training and serving with weapons and, later, to pursue close relations with governments seem to have been largely a matter of local initiative. However, church leaders took increasing pleasure in such relationships and the legitimacy and status they afforded to the Adventist Church and intervened directly to further them.

Neal C. Wilson, President of the General Conference 1979–1990, personally took control of building one such exchange relationship with the authorities in the USSR. In 1979, at a time when the latter were anxious to silence the antigovernment propaganda of the schismatic True and Free Adventists, who were bitterly opposed to such ties, 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:46). During a subsequent visit to the Soviet Union, Wilson established a close relationship with Konstantin Kharchev, chair of the USSR Council on Religious Affairs. During two visits to the U.S. in 1986 and 1987 Kharchev visited church headquarters and several of its major educational, medical, and publishing institutions. These contacts resulted in approval from the Council on Religious Affairs for the creation of an Adventist seminary outside Moscow (Editorial 1988:44). 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 cooperation in areas of 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

⁸ This included large quantities of *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, which is strongly anti-Catholic in tone.

"Spokesman for Human Rights, Promoter of Religious Freedom" at a time when Gorbachev was seeking to liberalize the Soviet image (Hegstad:2-6; Wilson 1987:8; Nixon:7). Subsequently, they also received permission to establish a publishing house, and church headquarters and a medical clinic in Moscow.

When some of the Hungarian laity felt betrayed and shamed by the overt domination and manipulation of their church by the state, they too formed a schismatic group and appealed to the General Conference for recognition. However, Wilson, after meeting with Imre Miklos, the head of the state Office of Religion, in 1984 declared again that the General Conference would recognize only groups with government recognition. The church president underlined the relationship which the official Adventist church had established with the regime when he brought Miklos to the General Conference Annual Council as a special guest in 1987 ("Small Committee" Correspondence; Reiners, n.d.; interviews).

Wilson fancied himself as something of a traveling 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:9). His successor, Robert S. Folkenberg, boasted of a similar reputation: he told proudly that when he was located in Guatemala City as the leader of the Adventist Church in Central America, he knew General Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia, the President of Guatemala, so well that he would visit him in the presidential palace and that he was the first Protestant leader to be given a state farewell reception when he was about to move to a new position (interview).

A TRANSFORMED RELATIONSHIP

Over the past 130 years the Seventh-day Adventist church has moved far from its initial position of apolitical withdrawal and rejection of military service. As it gradually became accommodated to society in the U.S., seeing America as still "lamb like" and not yet a "dragon," it sought first to "extend the time" by becoming involved in issues that it saw as related to religious liberty and the separation of church and state. This trend towards accommodation to society was quickly copied in other countries where Adventism became active. By World War I American and other English speaking Adventists chose to express their patriotism through unarmed military service, while those in countries without this option compromised further, serving with weapons and often on the Sabbath. These two strands continued in the years after the war, as Adventists accepted Stalin's restrictions and supported the Nazi regime in order to

ensure their survival. In both countries they rejected those who advocated refusal of military service and apolitical withdrawal, forcing them into schism.

During World War II American Adventists built a close exchange relationship with political and military authorities through their noncombatant Military Cadet Corps. The extent to which this had been achieved became clear in the 1950s, with Fort Sam Houston, "Operation Whitecoat," and the acceptance of government financial aid for Adventist hospitals and educational institutions. Adventist leaders in Eastern Europe and the Developing World then increasingly followed the example set in the U.S. and Germany as they too built exchange relationships with their own governments. All these relationships, whether they were with democratic governments or authoritarian regimes of Left or Right, brought both exchanges of favors and a sense of acceptance, of being no longer isolated, odd, and sectarian. The culmination of this process of accommodation to society came with the events of the last two decades, when Adventists abandoned their long held official position of noncombatant military service and ceased to give it emphasis even in America, and the General Conference declared, when churches in Eastern Europe divided over the issue of control by Communist regimes, that it would recognize only the segments approved by the state.

In sum, church leaders chose to pursue positive relations with governments and have had considerable success in reaching this goal. This is not to say that the Adventist Church has become an important influence on any regime, but it has often received symbols of acceptance: its state of tension with governments, both in the U.S. and in many of the other countries where it is active, has, in general, been greatly reduced.

This shift in Adventist-state relations has paralleled and flowed from the changes in Adventist relations with the broader society that were listed at the outset. That is, the shifts in Adventist-state relations reflect and illustrate Adventism's movement, as measured by the Stark and Bainbridge reformulation of church-sect theory, from near the sect pole of the continuum towards the denominational pole. As Adventists, through their institutions, gained a stake in many societies, their leaders identified increasingly with corporate executives and professionals and, with their upwardly mobile members, coveted a positive image for their church. This paper shows that they gave this pursuit high priority.

As church-sect theory would suggest, the sharp shift in relations with governments described in this paper inevitably caused internal strains. The membership includes a vocal minority, often economically and socially isolated, which retains a radical apocalyptic view that leads it to continue to expect persecution and to interpret benign legislation and judicial decisions as evidence that a national Sunday law is in the offing in the U.S. Such members frequently accuse church leaders of abandoning "historic Adventism" (Folkenberg:5-6). Nevertheless, a sign of the gen-

eral shift in the concerns of church members has been the decline in the circulation of *Liberty*, whose complimentary subscriptions are financed by a special offering in Adventist churches each year, from a peak of 500,000 in 1975 to 190,000 in 1994 (interview).

The basic principle governing Adventist involvement in political issues has been self interest: the motive in focusing on religious liberty was self protection, and exchange relationships with military and political authorities were pursued in order to gain favors and bolster the Adventists' public image. Adventists do, on occasion, champion the religious liberty issues of others, but few of them are deeply concerned with such applications of their principle—the more common motivation is to attract support and win credibility for their own cause. Recent court cases, in which the General Conference has invoked a supposed breach of the trademarked name of the church to sue schismatic and gay Adventists to enjoin them from using "Seventh-day Adventist" as part of their names, and the widespread use of a legal loophole that allows Adventist institutions, because they are church-run, to discriminate in hiring on religious grounds, suggest a basic lack of commitment to the principle of religious liberty. When I asked Adventist leaders in Argentina, after they had boasted of their closeness to the previous military regime, how they felt about that relationship once the extent of the "disappearances" under that regime had been confirmed, their unanimous response was "Adventists did not disappear!"

It was observed above that their urgent eschatology and premillennialist theology distracted Adventists from a broader, longer view of political issues. This pattern has been reinforced by their toadying to whatever regimes held power. Consequently, the Adventist church, where it is active, has rarely adopted positions on major current political issues. For example, it was not until 1985 that it expressed any opposition to apartheid in South Africa, and then it did so very gingerly—a total of one sentence within a statement on racism—and only because significant numbers of black North American members had demanded such a statement (Wilson 1985).

Underlying Adventist relations with governments is a political naivete that causes church leaders to focus on short term benefits while being oblivious to likely ultimate outcomes. For example, Adventists lost considerably when Emperor Haile Sellassie of Ethiopia was overthrown: the new regime regarded them as enemies because they had benefited greatly from his largess. Such a pattern of actions rooted in short term interests has had serious repercussions for the Adventist church. In many places it has involved major compromises—agreeing to send children to school on the Sabbath⁹ or to serve in the military with arms and without freedom to observe the Sabbath—in order to avoid conflict with the state.

⁹ This has been widespread in eastern Europe, the former French and Belgium colonies of Africa, and parts of Asia (interviews).

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