# Ghettoization and the Erosion of a Distinct Way of Life: The Seventh-day Adventist Experience

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Seventh-day Adventists developed a distinct way of life and then reinforced it by forming geographically segregated communities, or "Adventist ghettos," around institutions such as colleges, hospitals, and publishing houses established by the church. However, as the external environment became less hostile, and Adventist institutions became themselves less distinctive while at the same time they provided opportunities for upward mobility, a paradox emerged: the ghettos became the loci where the distinctly Adventist way of life was most strongly challenged and significantly eroded.

An examination of data concerning other segregated religious subcultures suggests that, while parallels are relatively few, Adventists do not stand alone in this experience. A model showing under what circumstances ghettoization has the effect of undercutting rather than reinforcing cultural distinctiveness is developed. Fundamental to the erosion of distinctiveness are (1) the prior erosion of those traits that were most significant in setting the group apart from the rest of society, (2) a belief system that allows for change in both belief and practice and that comes to incorporate major societal values, and (3) a situation where likely change agents remain present.

## *Introduction*

The geographic segregation of culturally distinct groups in ghettos has been seen by sociologists as helping to maintain the integrity of the subcultures (Wirth, 1928; Zborowski and Herzog, 1962; Levine, 1982). This is the case whether the segregation is voluntary or is forced upon the group by external forces.[1] Indeed, when it is initiated - voluntarily, part of the motivation for the segregation is frequently a determination to

[1] "Sociologists have employed the concept [of ghetto] in widely disparate ways, rendering its meaning somewhat confused and ambiguous" (Levine, 1982: 17). Some use a narrow definition, restricting ghetto to involuntary residential clusters resulting from either legal codes or social compulsion. Others, for example Wirth (1928), extend the term to include voluntarily segregated subcultures also. It is in the latter sense that ghetto is employed in this paper, where the focus is on geographically segregated religious subcultures. (Seventh-day Adventists commonly use the term in this way when referring to geographically isolated communities of Adventists.) The term is also commonly extended to include slums populated by racial or ethnic minority groups.

preserve the group's cultural uniqueness and separate identity, as with agricultural communities and communes such as the Amish, Hutterites, Mormons, and Bruderhof (Hostetler, 1968; Hostetler and Huntington, 1967: 111; Hansen,1981: 125; Zablocki, 1971: 143-148).

However, we cannot make the assumption that geographical ghettos always help maintain cultural distinctiveness. Indeed, our case study of Seventh-day Adventism leads us to the conclusion that segregated Adventist communities became the centers from which the separate culture and way of life of this people have been most strongly challenged and significantly eroded.

This erosion is, of course, one part of the process whereby Adventism is transformed from a *sect* (or *established sect*) to a *church* (or *denomination*)(Niebuhr, 1954; Troeltsch, 1960: 331-381; Weber, 1963: 60-61; Yinger, 1970:266-273). This process has been elaborated upon at length in the literature on the sociology of religion, but less attention has been given to explaining it. The present paper concentrates upon one explanatory variable in the complex and varied process: the role of geographic segregation. Other factors, such as social mobility of sect members, are drawn into the discussion as relevant, but are not the focus of the analysis.

In this paper we first examine the relationship between geographical segregation and cultural distinctiveness among Seventh-day Adventists. We then develop a theoretical model showing under what circumstances ghettoization has the effect of undercutting rather than reinforcing cultural distinctiveness.

## *Research Methods*

The thesis argued in this paper was derived from data gathered through participant observation in Seventh-day Adventist churches (at religious, business, and social gatherings), families and institutions in urban and rural areas and in "Adventist ghettos" in North America and Australia; at national meetings of Seventh-day Adventist theologians and biblical scholars in 1979 and 1982; at national and local meetings of an organization of Adventist scholars and other professionals, the Association of Adventist Forums, since 1978; and at the quinquennial session of the (world) General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Dallas in 1980; from a search of both official and non-official (both traditional and liberal) publications; and from the lifetime experience as a member of the church of one of the authors--who comes from a family tied closely to church leaders, and has been active personally in local churches, in organizations of Adventist university students, and in the Association of Adventist Forums and its chapters. In addition, the hypothesis was further tested and elaborated in 20 in-depth interviews with pastors, scholars, and counselors who had lived recently in urban, rural and Adventist ghetto locations in all quarters of the U.S.A.

## *The Distinct Way of Life of Seventh-day Adventists*

The Seventh-day Adventist church, which currently has 3.9 million members worldwide, 600,000 of whom are in the United States, traces its roots back to the Millerite Movement of the 1840s. William Miller, a Baptist lay-preacher, taught throughout upstate New York and New England that the world would end with the second coming of Christ on October 22, 1844. The failure of his prophecy, which is known within Adventist circles as "the Great Disappointment," brought jeers from without and disillusionment to many within the circle of his followers [Festinger et al., 1956, 12-23]. Some, however, encouraged by the visions of Ellen (Harmon) White (1827-1915), a - young woman who was soon to attain the status of a prophet, reinterpreted Miller's prophecy and went on to found Seventh-day Adventism [Nichol, 1944].

The initial separation of Adventists was social rather than geographical. It began with the ridicule heaped upon them following the Great Disappointment. It grew as they developed a theology that set them apart as God's "Remnant," charged with delivering a special message that judgment was already in progress, Christ's return was imminent (though its precise timing was unknown), and that in order to be ready for that event, Christians must observe the Saturday Sabbath. This last requirement effectively set Adventists apart in a society where Sunday was not only the Sabbath but also the only non-working day. For example, in 1859 a member in Wisconsin wrote to the church paper:

> It is extremely hard here for poor folks--the hardest I have known. And it comes harder on poor Sabbath-keepers (and we are all poor in this place), than on others because those who are able to hire choose not to hire those who will not work on the Sabbath; and some have even thought to starve them to it. But, thank God, I believe there are some who would rather starve than sin [quoted by Graybill, 1979: 35].

It is not surprising, then, that most of the converts to Adventism were drawn from the ranks of the self-employed, such as farmers, and that other converts had to move quickly to gain control of their working lives. Graybill traced 100 subscribers to the church paper in the 1860 census, 74 of whom lived in Michigan, which was by that time the bastion of Seventh-day Adventism, and found that 78 heads of household were farmers, five were professionals, three merchants, and eight skilled craftsmen. Only five were laborers. In contrast, only 38 percent of the Michigan population were farmers, while 31 percent were laborers [Graybill, 1979: 33-35].

Ellen White stressed that Adventists were called to a special piety that was in keeping with their mission: they were to be a "peculiar people," observing the highest standards and keeping themselves separate from "the world." Thus, most "worldly

entertainment"--the theater, dancing, gambling, card-playing, and even reading of fiction--was forbidden. Adventists were also distinguished by their vegetarian diet and their abstinence from coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco. Adventist women were set apart by their "modest, healthful, and unostentatious" dress and absence of jewelry and (later)makeup. This separation from "the world" created by these shared beliefs and -practices was endorsed by Ellen White, who explicitly warned against intermarriage or forming close friendships or partnerships with non-Adventists.

There is little wonder, then, when Adventist beliefs such as millenarianism and the seventh-day Sabbath, the persecution and ridicule they received, and their social and rural isolation are considered, that their hymns and personal religious testimonies expressed a keen sense of separation from the larger society [Graybill: 1974]. Nor is it surprising, given these factors and the amount of time Adventists regularly committed to church activities, that their religious ritual and ideology expressed a thriving sense of community, of peoplehood, internal to their group.[2]

## *"Adventist Ghettos" and the Perpetuation of Adventist Distinctiveness*

As time passed, Adventism's distinct way of life was reinforced by the emergence of geographically segregated Adventist communities surrounding institutions sponsored by the church. The earliest institutions were concentrated in the town of Battle Creek, Michigan, and included a press, an elementary school (which eventually extended through all grades), a college, a "school of hygiene" with such programs as nursing education, a "health reform institute" specializing in water cures which expanded in 1878 into a sanitarium which earned a national reputation, and a medical school, the -American Medical Missionary College (1895). However, after the sanitarium and -publishing house were destroyed by fire in 1902, is was decided, at the urging of anti-

[2] Many of the Adventist practices, such as those concerning alcohol, smoking, gambling, and worldly entertainment, were similar to those held by mainstream protestant denominations in America in the second-half of the nineteenth century (Blake, 1974; Butler, 1974; Green, 1974; Smith, 1974). This was also true of Sabbath observance, which was modeled on the practice among many Sunday keepers of the period rather than Jewish observance: indeed, one of the reasons why Adventists portrayed Sunday as the "false Sabbath" was that at that time Sunday observance in many protestant churches was very similar to Adventist Sabbath observance practices (Lawson, 1971). Members of such churches also frequently committed large amounts of time to church activities. Similarly, Ellen White drew heavily on the ideas of nineteenth century health reformers and dress reformers in formulating Adventist views on diet, tea and coffee, and standards for dress (Numbers, 1976). Even the observance of the Saturday Sabbath was not held alone, but was shared with the Seventh-day Baptists, who had been observing it for three centuries and from whom Adventists borrowed it, and the Church of God (Seventh Day), which separated from Seventh-day Adventism in 1860 (Tarling, 1981: 10, 24). Only their special brand of millenarianism, incorporating a view that a pre-second advent judgment was already in progress, and the belief that they constituted God's "Remnant People," charged with announcing their special message to Christendom and beyond, were truly unique to Adventists, and these set them apart more in attitude than practice. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that taken together Adventist practices represented a distinct way of life that to a large extent separated them out from the rest of American society. Moreover, it was an entrenched way of life because each facet had the endorsement of the Adventist prophet (Lawson, 1971).

urban Ellen White,[3] that a decentralized system of Adventist institutions should be built in rural settings outside cities. (Battle Creek, though only a town, was considered too "urban," and the concentration of so many of the institutions of the expanding church at a single location was seen as a mistake.) The program was put into effect rapidly. Over the next 30 years some of the "academies" (boarding high schools) in the various regions of the U.S. were upgraded to junior college and then college level, until eventually there were 10 colleges and a medical school, all in fairly isolated locations. The colleges were all, in turn, fed by a system of local schools and academies. Meanwhile, a system of sanitariums was also being built in small towns or beyond the outskirts of cities--since they were not yet concerned with the provision of acute care they did not need to be in the midst of substantial communities. In many instances several institutions--colleges, schools, sanitariums, publishing houses, vegetarian food factories, as well as local, regional, and national headquarters of the church--came to occupy adjacent sites.

These institutions were founded to help fulfill the special mission of the church: for example, Ellen White declared that the health work was "an entering wedge, making a way for other truths to reach the heart" (Numbers,1976: 184), and G. I. Butler, the President of the General Conference when the first college was opened in 1874, explained that "It is not for the purpose of making a show, or for reputation, that we desire [education for our people]; but we desire that we may be useful. As we have a great work to do, as a people, we want to be in the best manner qualified to do it" (1874:44). However, the institutions also helped provide employment without Sabbath problems to a growing membership, while the schools and colleges allowed the youth of the church to gain the skills needed to serve the church without running the risks of exposure to hostile ideologies (Brown, 1979: 7, 8).

Since these institutions were located in rural settings, they often became essentially Adventist communities, attracting additional Adventists who wished to live near their own people as merchants, tradesmen and retirees, and so avoid "mixed contacts" (Goffman, 1963: 17), while also making use of the institutions there, especially the schools. For example, when, in 1893, the Texan Conference bought 800 acres of land near the hamlet of Keene on which to establish a school (later Southwestern Adventist College), and announced that it would sell plots to members wishing to settle near the school, this "led to a mass exodus of Adventists to Keene" so that "the new school was almost engulfed in an Adventist community even before it could be built" (Schwarz, 1979: 327). Such communities emerged as the major concentrations of Adventists: today almost every large (1000 members or more) white Adventist church in the United States is situated in an Adventist ghetto,[4] and 17% of the members in the U.S. belong to

[3] "My warning is: keep out of the cities" (Quoted by Numbers, 1976: 186).

[4] All Adventist churches in the U.S. are linked to a "conference." There are two geographically overlapping systems of such units, "local" conferences and "regional" conferences. The latter have black officers, and their churches have memberships that are close to solidly black. The officers of the former are usually white, and most of their churches are close to solidly white, although they also include Hispanic and some

a ghetto church.[5] These ghettos reflected the Adventist way of life to such an extent that they were often without butchers and liquor stores, their stores remained closed on Friday night and Saturday, and the main focus of their newspapers was church news; in the town of Loma Linda, CA, which grew up around Loma Linda University, the Adventist medical school, the USPS long delivered mail on Sunday, but not Saturday.

The geographic isolation of those Adventist ghettos that originally were built in rural areas near cities was undermined by post-World War II suburbanization, so that they found themselves embraced by encroaching metropolitan areas. Union College was encompassed within Lincoln, Nebraska. Both Loma Linda University and Hospital and La Sierra College, in the San Bernardino Valley, and Glendale Hospital, the regional headquarters of the church and the offices of the west coast radio/television ministry, in suburban Los Angeles, found themselves caught in the sprawl of Greater Los Angeles. Most dramatic of all such changes was that which impinged on the church institutions in Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.--the Adventist World Headquarters, regional headquarters, Columbia Union College, the Review and Herald Publishing Association, and Washington Adventist Hospital--which eventually found themselves serviced by the subway system of the nation's capital. The engulfing of these ghettos created disquiet among many Adventists, with the result that decisions were made to move the more easily mobile institutions in attempts to re-establish geographically separated communities. The institutions that have been moved or plan to move include the World Headquarters, both publishing houses, the Washington and Los Angeles regional headquarters, and media headquarters. Hospitals and colleges, however, have proved more difficult to move--both have greater investment in plant, and hospitals, which have evolved into acute care facilities, now need to be based in large communities. Even so, demands to move such institutions have been pressed: for example, a debate

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of the West Indian congregations. Black and Hispanic Adventists in the U.S., unlike white Adventists, have not clustered around Adventist institutions except for blacks around the single black college in Alabama; however, they have many large churches in urban areas. We suspect that their reasons for not migrating to Adventist ghettos include discriminatory employment policies by the institutions and a sense that the Adventists living in the church ghettos are not "their people"--a sense that is probably fostered by separate churches and educational systems within the church. This situation deserves further research, which we are planning to do.

[5] Membership statistics which isolate members according to whether or not they live in an Adventist ghetto are not kept. The best measure is therefore church membership. We relied upon local informants to list for us the churches which were perceived as being within the sphere of influence of an institutional ghetto. This statistic probably underestimates the membership of ghetto churches because many of the students attending academies and colleges away from home leave their memberships in their local churches. Another indication of the concentration of Adventists in their ghettos may be gained from the sample selected by two social scientists at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan in their 1974 study of white Adventist families. Their sampling plan was to choose congregations randomly within each region of the nation, and then to distribute questionnaires to all members attending a "family enrichment seminar." However, when the rural churches chosen proved often to have only 10 to 20 families, they felt obliged to alter the sample, weighting it in favor of churches in rural areas. Nevertheless, 14 of the 46 churches sampled were situated in the shadow of an Adventist college, hospital or publishing house. Because the membership of institutional churches is so much larger than average, 54.6 percent of the respondents were from such churches (Crider and Kistler, 1979:3-10).

concerning the location of Columbia Union College raged for most of the 1970s before it was decided not to move it from Takoma Park. Although the Adventist population surrounding such engulfed ghettos is still great, it has been both diluted by the influx of non-members and become more scattered, as Adventist families have moved further out, seeking the ideal of rural quiet.

Others among the older ghettos remain relatively isolated, especially those surrounding other colleges and most of the boarding academies (together with the administrative units that share such sites). The ghetto surrounding Pacific Union College, in northern California, for example, continues to be known locally as "Holy Hill"; and in Berrien Springs, Michigan, home of Andrews University, the Adventist Seminary and regional church headquarters, Adventists who generally interact with local non-Adventists only to do business, are known among the latter, because of their vegetarian diet, as - "peanuts". Even where land barriers are shrinking, as between the city of Walla Walla in Washington state and the Adventist ghetto surrounding Walla Walla College on its outskirts, a respondent could still argue that "we are still distinct--just let anyone try to get a vote for a liquor license in our community and they'll discover how different we are from the city!"

In summary, during the later decades of the nineteenth century Seventh-day Adventists developed a distinct way of life that was endorsed by their prophet, Ellen White. From the end of the century on, this way of life was reinforced by the emergence of geographically separate communities around Adventist institutions. A key reason for the founding of these institutions was the desire to maintain Adventist distinctiveness: high priority was accorded to the provision of an "Adventist" education, and these institutions consciously chose isolated sites where the social and ideological environment could be controlled most easily. Where these ghettos have been engulfed by suburbanization, efforts have been made, where possible, to relocate the institutions so that they will once again be separate. However, the Adventist communities surrounding most of the hospitals and four of the colleges have lost their geographic isolation.

Figure I shows a four-fold table depicting the two dimensions of separation/integration, geographic and cultural, implicit in the above discussion. Adventists were located in cell 2 during the early years of their history, for though culturally separated from society they were dispersed among the population, or integrated, geographically. Following the founding of Adventist institutions, significant numbers of Adventists began to cluster - geographically in isolated areas, and these thus moved into cell 1. That is, these isolated communities, rather than urban areas, became Adventist "cities," or "little Jerusalems" as they were sometimes called colloquially, acting as "central places" which attracted Adventist immigrants within their cultural regions (Fischer, 1975: 1324).

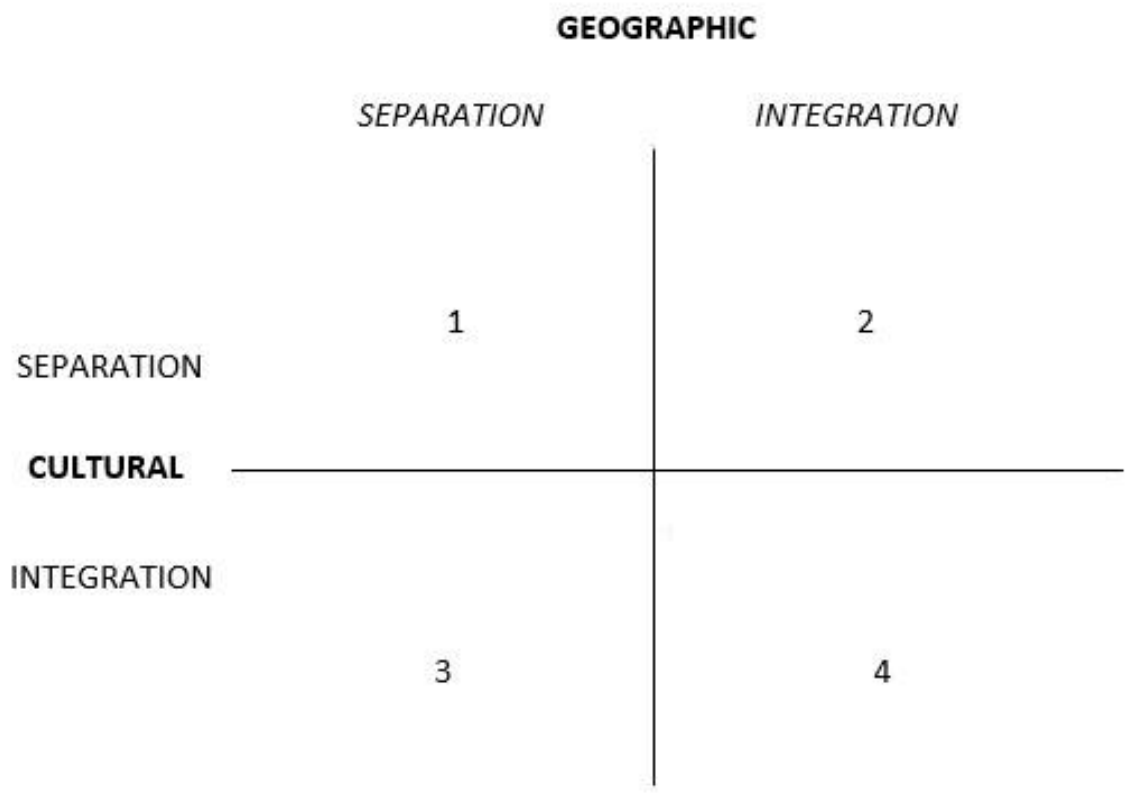


**FIGURE I: Dimensions of Separation/Integration**

## *Erosion of the Distinct Way of Life from within the Adventist Ghetto*

Paradoxically, Adventist ghettos became, with the passage of time, the cutting edge of change, the very places where the distinctiveness of the Adventist way of life was eroded. That is, the ghettos began to move from cell 1 to cell 3 of Figure I, as they became less separated culturally. The Adventist church, in general, was becoming more culturally integrated as it moved from "sect" towards "church"; what was unexpected

was that it was the ghettos, which had been created to preserve its distinctiveness, that led the way.

This shift involved three types of change: first, greater open-mindedness, involving awareness of society at large, readiness to examine new ideas, and theological questioning; second, an embracing of worldly achievement values, with a concern for upward mobility and social status, and a concomitant materialism; and third, a liberalization of standards in dress (fashion, makeup and jewelry), diet (notably the drinking of coffee, but also of wine, and a decrease in vegetarianism), entertainment (especially the use of television and attendance at theaters and movies) and reading matter, and Sabbath observance (some happily fellowship together over restaurant meals after Sabbath morning worship, in sharp contrast to the early strictness that led people to walk miles to church rather than take advantage of Sabbath-breaking work by non-Adventist public transportation employees).Although the pace of change differed from one ghetto to another, respondents emphatically agreed that churches serving the major ghettos have advanced further along the above dimensions than either urban or rural churches. This is not to argue that all members of ghetto churches have become culturally integrated: indeed, large numbers of such members continue to live a fairly traditional Adventist way of life. Nor do we contend that such changes have proceeded without producing tensions--although the existence, in ghetto areas, of choice among congregations with differing demographic and "personality" profiles has helped to both mute tensions and encourage diversity. Nevertheless, the number of ghetto residents who have shifted away from the old, strict interpretation of Adventist belief and practice is sufficiently high, and the level of toleration of such changes among the - remainder of ghetto Adventists has become sufficiently great, that the cultural tone of such Adventist communities is noticeably different from that found among gatherings of non-ghetto Adventists.[6]

Why did the ghettos become the cutting edge of change? First, because of the greater educational achievement and upward mobility of Adventists living in those areas (c.f. Niebuhr, 1954: 19-21). At the heart of each ghetto stood one or more institution--colleges, hospitals, publishing houses, media centers. This meant that the ghettos contained educated Adventists who were therefore more exposed to secular ideas--something that was especially true of those, such as theologians and other academics, with graduate degrees from major universities (Carden and Lawson, 1983). Moreover, the educational and employment opportunities available at the church institutions enhanced chances for upward mobility. The work ethic prevailed in spite of the millenarian doctrine: indeed, "seldom while expecting a kingdom of God from heaven, has a group worked so diligently for one on earth" (Gaustad, 1962:115); "Adventist millenarianism was [not] pessimistic, passive, or fatalistic, but perfectly consistent with a striving for human betterment in both spiritual and economic matters" (Graybill, 1979:

[6] Non-ghetto Adventists, having little or no choice among congregations, are often obliged to stress a high degree of conformity or risk conflict.

36). Members often found greater career opportunities within the Adventist communities than they would have had outside them--as doctors, nurses, administrators, teachers, professors, technicians, etc. To cite but one example: between 1914 and 1982 Loma Linda University's medical school graduated a total of 5,723 physicians. In keeping with the earlier practice of seeking to control their own work - experience, "Adventists remained fiercely individualistic in their personal economic affairs. The wealthy Adventists today are primarily physicians" (Graybill, 1979: 38). Since educated Adventists are almost always products of the Adventist education system, and therefore second and third generation Adventists, they tend to have a different set of questions from first generation converts, who typically are less educated and are found largely outside of the ghettos.

In addition, the institutions themselves helped to make the ghettos more in tune with the larger society by dropping the practices which had so clearly distinguished them from non-Adventist institutions. For example, during the decade before she died, Ellen White repeatedly urged that Adventist physicians discard "poisonous drugs" in favor of natural remedies; follow "the Lord's plan" of having men treat men and women treat women; and refrain from exacting large fees for medical services.[7] These were three of the reforms that Adventist medicine had come to represent. But "[t]imes were rapidly changing, ...and it was not long before scarcely a trace of [them] could be found among Seventh-day Adventist physicians, many of whom continued to revere the prophetess" (Numbers, 1976:199-200). A similar process governed the evolution of Adventist education. According to Ellen White's blueprint,

> Intellectual efforts should receive less emphasis, ...and biblical studies should create a religious atmosphere where the mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of pupils should develop. Students... must spend some time each day in physical labor, not only to preserve their health, but also to discourage the suggestions of "Satan" for "sport and mischief in idle moments."

While active with their bodies, pupils could learn "practical," marketable skills in agricultural and industrial areas (Johnsen, 1976: 35).

Like other injunctions, these also were forgotten. In this case the changes came as Adventists sought outside accreditation for their educational institutions. Around World War I they sought accreditation for their medical school, and from 1931 on for their colleges--a process which required that they bring their curricula into conformity with state standards and send their faculty members to secular universities to gain doctorates. These decisions ignored the explicit instruction of the prophet:

[7] The Christian physician has "no more right to minister to others requiring a large remuneration than has the minister of the gospel a right to set his labors at a high money value" (Ellen White, quoted in Numbers, 1976: 199).

> No one who is seeking an education for the work and service of God, will be made more complete in Jesus Christ by receiving the finishing touch at [a secular university]. ...Many have been unfitted to do missionary work by attending such schools (White, 1894: 374).

The reasoning behind these decisions was pragmatic: the medical school had to be accredited for its graduates to be licensed, and the colleges had to follow suit if their students were to be admitted to medical or nursing programs or licensed as teachers--all vital qualifications for Adventist institutions (White, 1983). The assimilation of Adventist educational institutions was perhaps best symbolized by the renaming of the church colleges. When founded, their names frequently referred to their religious mission. Gradually they were given names better befitting the educational mainstream: The College of Medical Evangelists became Loma Linda University in 1945, Emmanuel Missionary College was transformed into Andrews University in 1957, Washington Missionary College was renamed Columbia Union College in1961, and Southern Missionary College emerged as Southern College in 1982.

Education and social mobility among their residents were not the only reasons why the ghettos became the cutting edge of change. A second key reason was linked to the decline of the sense that society at large was antipathetic to Adventists--a realization that grew most strongly in the ghettos.

The thrust towards accreditation of the colleges occurred about the same time as the five-day, 40-hour week became general practice in the United States. This removed a serious economic difficulty for Sabbath-keepers. It also made them less isolated from society, although Sabbath observance continued to prevent them from participating in many of the social activities that flourished on Saturdays. While this change in practice affected ghetto Adventists less directly than others, it created a climate where the broader society seemed less hostile. Thereafter, the frequency of sermons and articles predicting that Adventists would become the objects of broad persecution declined.

Because Adventists in urban and rural areas were scattered and formed a small minority, they felt peculiar and defensive. This was especially true if they followed the church's direction and sought to proselytize among non-Adventists. However, in the ghetto all this changed--Adventists came to feel secure as part of a majority, and could thus relax. There was psychological space to experiment, to question their beliefs and to change their practices, to stretch the boundaries--and experimenters were likely to find supportive networks made up of others trying similar things, whether they were theologians questioning the authority of the Adventist prophet, physicians enjoying wine with meals, or teenagers with a yen to disco. That is, the greater density of church members clustered in the ghettos allowed them freedom to deviate because "value consensus [there was] less likely to exist...than in smaller communities" (Fischer, 1975: 1337). Inspiration to experiment might be provided by the mix of beliefs and standards that were found among the diverse Adventists drawn to the ghetto. It could be fed by

the flow of speakers who raise awareness of issues, or by the rumor mill, for all ghettos are well connected by networks. Others, especially the secondary school and college students, feeling the church is too much with them, would stretch the boundaries rebelliously, from a need to establish their individuality. Experimentation by the latter was greatly facilitated by the wide availability of the automobile, which opened easy access to prohibited off-ghetto amusement opportunities.

The ghettos have not always provided such psychological space. When, from the late 1920s on, the need for accreditation forced Adventist colleges to seek graduate education for faculty members, church leaders were very nervous concerning the "evil influences" they would encounter in secular universities, and laid down that "only persons of outstanding Christian experience and who have been successful in Christian work should be chosen--persons whose faith in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy [Ellen White] is well grounded," mature persons with "years of Christian service" (Branson, 1935). Moreover, these carefully selected people would be further protected by the fact that most of them would pursue their studies part-time, being released for occasional semesters or summer sessions. However, because of the opportunities offered as a result of the press towards accreditation, "scores of...young people" went "from the graduating classes of our colleges into the [secular] universities believing that it would facilitate their going into our work or finding employment in an educational institution". "Many of these" "lost their hold upon God", and were lost to the church (Branson, 1935). That is, when those who had gone without formal church sponsorship to graduate school encountered the questions that inevitably emerged from such an education, they found that the boundaries of Adventism were inflexible; many felt forced to cross them and leave the church. Others compartmentalized their questionings, keeping them to themselves while they taught in the Adventist colleges [interview data].

After World War II the proportion of persons with graduate education staying with the church increased and the sense of psychological space afforded by the ghettos expanded. At first the increase was slow; but it accelerated from the 1960s on, when rapid expansion of the colleges led the church authorities to sponsor large numbers of young graduates in leading graduate schools (Carden and Lawson, 1983). Like the older church-supported students of the 1930s and 1940s, these younger students were firmly committed to Adventism; but unlike the earlier generations, their youth, their experience of the more recent, more liberal Adventist ghettos, their exposure to the greater influence of full-time graduate education, the fact that the church could not now be so selective when sending such large numbers to graduate school, and the camaraderie that they enjoyed with one another, led them to be more flexible in their approach to Adventism. This flexibility was expressed most dramatically in the openness of the Forum organizations and of the journal *Spectrum* that Adventist graduate students formed in the late 1960s. When these scholars went on to the ghettos as college faculty and health professionals they added rapidly to the graduate school networks they had already established, and created psychological space through -

informal open discussion, by creating Forum chapters in the ghettos, and by using *Spectrum* to share and build on one anothers' thought and research. Interaction between scholars and physicians became especially significant around Loma Linda University Medical School in Southern California because physicians were more likely to have ties to external networks and their wealth made them both important to and yet relatively independent of church officials. The innovations in thought and practice have been given ideological support by the research of scholars, who have revealed the extent to which Ellen White's statements about the Adventist way of life, which had been seen as ordained by God, were, in fact, a product of her time (Numbers, 1976; Butler, 1979).In spite of the fact that, as God's "Remnant", Adventists hold "the Truth", so that official acceptance of change is slow and acknowledgment of it is rare, much behavior which once provoked raised eyebrows or official censure is today taken for granted. The boundaries are becoming increasingly flexible: the result has been a growing diversity in thought and practice. Thus, although Adventists still cluster around their institutions, the distance between the Adventist ghettos and the society at large is narrowing.

The innovations that have been taking place in the Adventist ghettos are, in turn, slowly having an impact on other sections of the American church. Parents, for example, have to come to terms with the rebellion of their children, especially when changes prove long-lasting. The number of Adventist professionals in the cities and suburbs is also increasing, and their variety has been expanding to include academics in non-Adventist colleges, clinical psychologists, social workers, lawyers, programmers, and corporate officers, in addition to the traditional physicians and dentists. Many of these hold graduate degrees from major non-Adventist universities. In the past, educated urban Adventists have had few intellectual colleagues and have frequently found that if they voice questions they raise suspicions among their fellow members. Consequently, they have tended either to behave as traditional Adventists or to leave the church altogether. Although this situation persists in most places, a growing number of sophisticated urban Adventists, integrated culturally as well as geographically in the broader society (cell 4 of Figure I), have been appearing in recent years and adding their input to the redefinition and diversification of Adventism. Most notable among these have been a congregation in Seattle and participants in several urban Forum chapters, especially the chapter in New York City, which acts as a congregation. However, the influence of the urban innovators has been much more limited than those in the ghettos because their network ties are much weaker.[8]

It is evident, then, that the Adventist ghettos became the locus of the cutting edge of change. Whereas independently minded urban Adventists tended to drop out, ghetto dwellers were encouraged to stay by the intricate, closely woven ties that enveloped

[8] Some conservative groups also continue to occupy cell 1 of Figure I. Most prominent among these are various independent "self-supporting" groups (which have informal, but not formal, connections with the church hierarchy). Four of these, for example, run unaccredited colleges

them, and especially by the proximity of groups of like-minded people. Network ties, in turn, amplified the influence of such persons.

## *Theoretical Implications*

Literature on the historical development of religious *sects* into *churches* or *denominations* has been largely descriptive, stressing the processes of bureaucratization, institutionalization of charisma, modification of distinctive beliefs, and compromise with the world. We have analyzed one of the many factors that contribute to this process. This factor, geographic segregation, has eventually had the effect of eroding the distinct way of life of Seventh-day Adventists, rather than of continuing to reinforce it as sociological theorizing concerning ghettos would have led us to expect. The Adventist data are excellent for making this case because of the possibility of comparing the experiences of those who ghettoized and those who did not. This seemingly paradoxical result raises two questions.

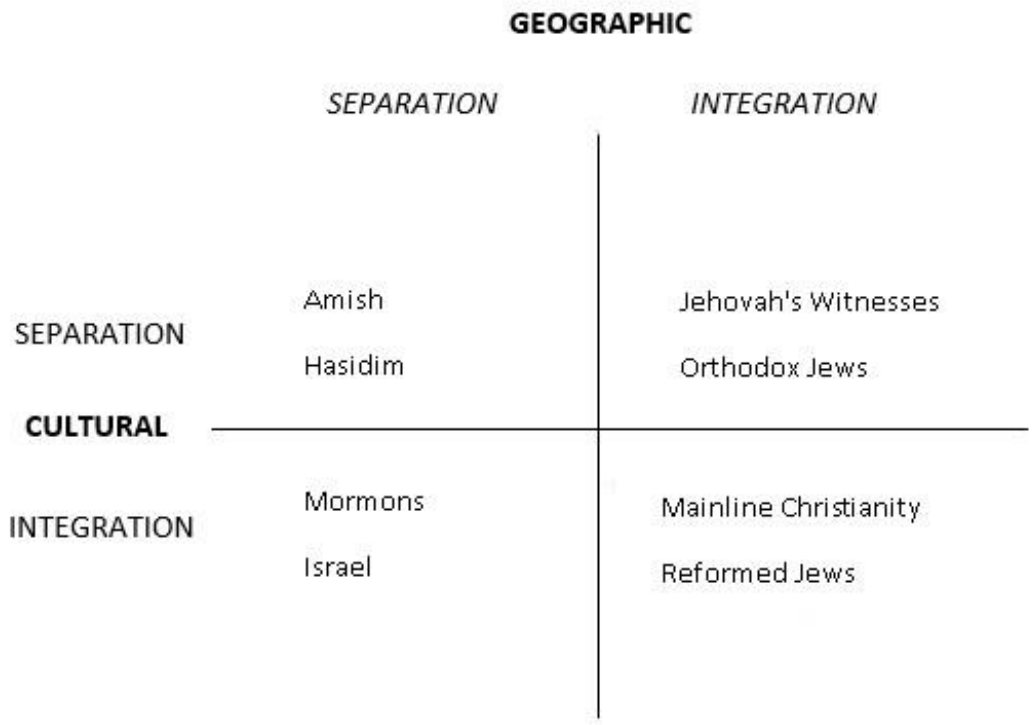


**FIGURE II: Examples of the Cultural and Geographic Dimensions of Separation/Integration**

First, are the Seventh-day Adventists an isolated case? For almost all of the segregated religious groups that we have examined--the Eastern European Jews, Amish, Bruderhof,

Hutterites, and Hasidic Jews of Williamsburg--geographic separation has worked to protect cultural distinctiveness rather than to erode it. However, Seventh-day Adventists do not stand alone in their experience, for the case of the Mormons is similar to theirs. (See Figure II)

The geographic separation of the Mormons from the mainstream of society was more complete than that of the Adventists, for it was spurred by three Mormon wars and in consequence this separation, "The Gathering," became fundamental to Mormon doctrine. "Within this developing separation, Mormonism elaborated its own ideas and values, its own theological innovations, and its own socioeconomic and familial ethic" (O'Dea, 1964: 113). However, in 1890, the president of the Mormon church took a major step in accommodating to American society: three aspects of Mormonism that had been judged by the federal government as "un-American"--polygamy, the belief in the political Kingdom of God (which foresaw Mormon priests taking over the governments of the U.S. and the world), and economic communitarianism--were abandoned as prerequisites for the entry of Utah to the U.S. These were replaced by monogamy, conventional politics, and capitalism (Hansen, 1981: 113-146). The Mormons thus brought their community culturally into the broader society: the church deliberately adopted a "conspicuously assimilist" policy (Mauss,1984). During the decades following World War I many Mormons built upon the strong emphasis on education that had been part of Mormonism from its beginning, and achieved middle class status in business, education and government. O'Dea concluded that, although "Mormonism retains much of its peculiarity", the result of these shifts is that the Mormon community is "no longer a separate entity", but has become rather "very much a part, both geographically and sentimentally, of the larger secular society of the United States" (1964:222). Thus Mormons, like Seventh-day Adventists, found that their experience in the geographic ghetto of the "Mormon heartland" of Utah and the contiguous states actually encouraged greater integration in the larger American society.

The second question is: under what circumstances is geographic segregation of a sub-culture likely to have the effect of eroding or challenging, rather than protecting, its distinct way of life? The case studies we have examined suggest that erosion is not at all likely while segregation is enforced via external compulsion or severe discrimination, as was the case with the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe. Similarly, it could not occur among the Mormons while they were subject to severe social disapproval as "un-American" and "immoral", nor was it likely among Adventists while they were ridiculed for expecting Christ to return in 1844 and they refused to work on Saturday when the six-day work week was the norm. These extremely negative external factors eventually shifted for both Adventists and Mormons. However, the experience of the other ghettoizing religious groups examined suggests that the removal of negative external factors is not in itself sufficient explanation for the erosion of distinctiveness within segregated communities.

Our analysis suggests that four factors contributed to the more rapid erosion of the distinctive way of life in the Adventist ghettos than among isolated Adventists. Two of these factors are contextual, setting parameters within which the changes in the ghettos can take place:

1. A belief system that, while relatively dogmatic, allows for change in both belief and practice.
2. Prior erosion of those traits which were most significant in setting the group apart from the rest of society.

The other two factors are peculiar to the ghettos, and become engines of change there:

3. The incorporation of major societal values in the belief system.
4. A situation where likely change agents do not leave the church but remain loyal and active, so that a sufficient density of networks among these educated, sophisticated experimenters is created.

Under these conditions, the distinctiveness of the old way of life is likely to be eroded, with the ghettos leading the way, as the examples of both Adventists and Mormons illustrate. First, both the Adventists and the Mormons had a belief system that was in many ways dogmatic, but that could in practice, and under pressure, be changed. Adventists had Ellen White's expectation of continued "new light" and her constant assertion that the Bible was the ultimate authority for both her and her church; the Mormons permitted change through revelation or directive by the president of the -church. Second, neither group retained the extreme peculiarities which originally set it off from the larger society. For the Adventists, the Great Disappointment receded into history and the Saturday Sabbath also diminished as a visible peculiarity once the five-day working week became the norm; the Mormons, for their part, abandoned their un-American political goals and economic and moral practices. Third, both denominations, within their ghettos, came to incorporate major American values in their belief systems. Adventists originally linked evangelism and individual self-development, especially through education in their ghetto institutions. Eventually this education created a professionalism with concomitant changes in values and lifestyle. The Mormons replaced communitarianism with economic individualism (Hanson, 1981: 129). Fourth, in recent decades, especially since the 1960s, change agents--primarily biblical scholars and theologians for Adventists, and historians and social scientists for Mormons--have remained within both churches in much larger numbers than previously, and have formed organizations (the Association of Adventist Forums and local Forum chapters for Adventists, and the Mormon History Association and the Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life for Mormons) and published journals (*Spectrum* and *Adventist Today* and, earlier, *Adventist Currents* among Adventists, and *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* and *Sunstone* among Mormons (Mauss, A.: personal communication).

In contrast, groups like the Amish, Hutterites and Williamsburg Hasidim do not have a theology that allows for change. Religion is a matter of rote learning of belief with great emphasis on rules and ritual. They explicitly reject the values of the larger American society, including achievement, materialism, and individualism. Moreover, they cling to the traits that set them apart from the rest of society. And the absence of numerous change agents has meant that boundaries have remained inflexible, with insufficient - psychological space to allow experimentation within the group. Consequently, like the Adventists before World War II, only an occasional person raises serious questions, and that person then leaves (Hostetler, 1968; Hostetler and Huntington, 1967; Poll, 1969).[9]

## *Conclusion*

Seventh-day Adventists developed a distinct way of life and then reinforced it by forming segregated communities, or "Adventist ghettos," around institutions such as colleges, hospitals, and publishing houses established by the church. However, as the external environment became less hostile, and Adventist institutions became themselves less distinctive while at the same time they provided opportunities for upward mobility, a paradox emerged: the ghettos became the cutting edge of change, where the distinctly Adventist way of life was most questioned and eroded.

An examination of data concerning other segregated subcultures suggests that while parallels are relatively few, Adventists do not stand alone in this experience. Fundamental to the occurrence of this pattern are a belief system that allows for change in both belief and practice and that comes to incorporate major societal values, the erosion of those traits which were most significant in setting the group apart from the rest of society, and a situation where likely change agents remain loyal to the group in large numbers.

[9] All these groups are what one might call immigrant religions. On the other hand, both Adventism and Mormonism are American innovations, and as such they have appealed to non-immigrants. It is these people to whom the American success values have the greatest appeal, even if they are also stressing the imminence of the end of the world.

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