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RELIGIOSITY AND PUBLIC ISSUES AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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This study explores the relationships between religiosity and attitudes toward public issues in a random national sample of 419 members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Church members favored liberal social-political causes as long as the church itself does not become involved. On the other hand, a sizable minority (44%) considered itself to be Republican, and few designated themselves political liberals. In 1984, Adventists voted disproportionately for Reagan, and this voting behavior was accompanied by self-identification with a conservative ideology. A variety of religiosity factors, such as orthodoxy, religious practice, openness to change, and extrinsicness were found to be related to such public issue factors as peace and justice, political involvement of individual Christians and corporate churches, law and order, and government intervention in social causes. However, not all findings supported the theoretical framework. Political consistency theory was employed to attempt to explain the diverse findings.

Social scientists have long been interested in discovering the forces that influence the positions individuals hold on public issues including political identification and voting patterns. No doubt, these forces are many and complex—family traditions, socio-economic class, education, and generation being some of the more obvious ones. Another contender is religion. To what extent does knowing how a person is religious allow us to predict where he or she might stand on the public issues of the day? The topic has generated much attention, as can be illustrated in two recent symposiums edited by Lovin (1986a) and Dunn (1989).

Historically, Protestants have been more likely to be Republicans, and Catholics and Jews to be Democrats. In fact, since 1952 the majority of Protestants have voted Republican in every presidential election except that of 1964 (Johnstone, 1988). As Johnstone reminded us, however, these differences cannot be traced totally and simply to religion since a relationship between religion and social class has been demonstrated to exist. Also, changing conditions may be eroding the relationship as citizens perceive it to be in their interest to switch traditional partisan allegiances.

Substantial research has been undertaken on the relationship between religion and politics among conservative Christian groups (Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983; Bromley and Shupe, 1984; Johnson and Tamney, 1985). While some have found the connection weak, a number of researchers have discerned significant effects of conservative religious beliefs on electoral choices, partisan affections, and issue

positions (Smidt, 1983, 1987; Brundy and Copeland, 1984; Jelen, 1984, 1986; Wilcox, 1987).

Research has also been performed within denominations. This concept recognizes the wide variation in the way religion is expressed that exists among members of any given religious community. To the extent that religiosity influences attitudes toward public issues, these attitudes should also vary within denominational groupings. Thus these relationships have been explored within the Roman Catholic church (Leege and Welch, 1986; Welch and Leege, 1988), the Lutheran church (Hart, 1987), the Mennonite church (Kauffman, 1989), and the Reformed Church in America (Nemeth and Luidens, 1989).

Little has been done, however, on the relationships within smaller conservative denominations. The purpose of the present study was to investigate religion and public issues among a national sample of Seventh-day Adventists. Two research objectives may be identified: (1) to describe American Adventists in terms of positions on public issues, political identification, and voting behavior, and (2) to relate these socio-political attitudes and behaviors to various measures of religion in an attempt to discover if *how* Adventists are religious determines their public posture. The basic assumption is that all Adventists do not have the same religion. Under the umbrella of the church, they vary as to what they believe, how they behave, how they experience their faith, and what motivates them religiously. Do these variations make a difference in their socio-political positions?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Upon what basis might we predict a relationship between religiosity and positions on public issues within the Seventh-day Adventist church? What relationships might we predict? Considerable social scientific research, with theoretical underpinning, has demonstrated that people who are "liberal" in politics tend to be more "liberal" in religion (Hadden, 1963; Johnson, 1966). In the Radical Right politics of the 1950s, the war against communism and other patriotic themes received vigorous support from Protestant fundamentalists like Billy James Hargis and Carl McIntire. In the 1980s, the New Religious Right strongly supported Reagan and the Republican platform including issues like the defeat of ERA, opposition to abortion, and support of prayer and Bible reading in the public schools. Of course, liberal churches have also backed political causes such as a nuclear freeze, protests against the Vietnam war, civil rights, and the Sanctuary movement (Johnstone, 1988).

A more recent example of this connection is found in a study of the Reformed Church in America. Luidens and Nemeth (1989) discovered that support for ecumenism was related to political liberalism while support for Biblical literalism was related to political conservatism.

However, other research has shown that the correlation is not quite that simple. A careful review of 266 empirical studies has revealed that the relationship is elusive with different dimensions of religion and conservatism being related in different ways (Wuthnow, 1973; Peterson and Takayama, 1984). For example, Rothenberg and Newport (1984) found that evangelicalism, as operationalized by a variety of measures, was related to attitudes on sociopolitical issues but not strongly related to foreign policy attitudes, partisanship, or Presidential voting behavior.

In a study relating the importance of religion to various family, political, and social attitudes that are possible consequences of religion, Hoge and Zulueta (1985) found only weak relationships except in limited areas—mostly the domains of family life, sexuality, and personal honesty. Religion had weak effects on patriotism, government involvement, and economic issues. The impact that religion did have was always in the conservative direction. Hart's (1987) study of the Lutheran Church in America also reported an inconsistent relationship between conservative religion and conservative politics.

In spite of the tenuous nature of this connection, the conservative-liberal continuum remains the most frequent way of classifying religions (Smith, 1990). By definition conservatives find it natural to cling to traditional ways of doing things. Such a mind set wants to hold on to what is tested and true, what has proved to be of value. Thus more conservative groups are more likely to support "legislation of morality" (Johnstone, 1988) such as Sunday laws, school prayer, and regulation of intoxicating beverages. From this point it is a small step to oppose communism whose aggressive atheism threatens traditional values and to favor a strong national defense to preserve American freedoms so that these values can continue. It is also easy to identify these traditional values with the capitalistic system under which they have flourished.

Hunter (1983) has held that the stance of conservative churches on public issues can be largely explained by its reaction to the secularizing effects of modernity. Faced with the modern world, churches and individuals have three options: withdrawal, resistance, and accommodation. The mixture of the three will be partly determined by theology.

Marsden (1980) has traced the "great reversal" by which mainline evangelicals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who were active in societal improvement, became individualist-minded fundamentalists as a reaction to liberalism creeping into the churches via evolution and biblical criticism. And Lovin (1986b) has suggested that the relationship between faith and public life depends upon the respective emphasis on the three basic claims of religion: to maintain order, to guarantee freedom, and to promote new forms of social justice.

Given this background, we might expect those Christians who hold the most orthodox beliefs—including biblical literalism—to be the most conservative in the political arena, basically favoring the status quo, for they have high respect for past traditions, especially those they believe resulted from divine guidance. Their use of Romans 13:1-6, for example, with its declaration that "the powers that be are ordained of God" and we should be subject to them "for conscience sake," may incline them to support the current political state regardless of how corrupt the government or how unjust its laws.

We might also expect that those members who have the greatest exposure to their faith through more frequent attendance, serving in congregational offices, taking part in witnessing activities, or studying church literature and those who manifest greater commitment by increased contributions or increased devotional activity will hold more conservative attitudes toward public issues. Having made a greater investment in their faith and having a more intelligent understanding of it, they have more to lose by changes in the status quo. These relationships may not hold for Christian ethnic minorities, however. For example, Wald (1989) has shown how predominantly Black churches combine theological affinities associated with evangelicalism with the progressive social role championed by mainline Protestantism.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Seventh-day Adventism arose in the mid-nineteenth century from the remnants of the Millerite movement. When Christ failed to appear in 1844, the larger movement fragmented. One group that reinterpreted the 1844 experience, held to the soon-coming, literal advent of Christ, and accepted the seventh-day Sabbath organized in the early 1860s as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In considering the historical relationship of Adventism to the United States government, church historian Jonathan Butler (1974) has identified three phases. In their Millerite beginnings and very early days Adventists espoused an *apolitical apocalyptic* in which they avoided any relation to government. From mid-century until the 1870s, they moved to a *political apocalyptic* in which they denounced the Republic as doomed, using the language of contemporary politics. By the 1880s and beyond, they adopted a *political prophetic* which “engaged them as prophets to sustain the Republic, at least for a time, rather than merely to forecast its ruin as apocalypticists” (p. 174).

After the disappointment of 1844, those Millerites who still believed that their experience of that year was a fulfillment of prophecy and who adopted the seventh-day Sabbath spent the next few years trying to agree on a core of doctrines and establish a sense of identity as a religious group. While Christ had not returned at the predicted time, they still expected His coming to be very soon and put all their efforts into attaining a state of readiness. They would not recognize government, even to the point of organizing as a legal entity, for they felt that any such bow to societal arrangements would constitute them as Babylon. They were “*apolitical apocalyptic* in that they spurned even minimal political participation as they awaited an imminent end” (p. 177).

The foundation for the shift to a *political apocalyptic* was laid even before the official organization of the church in the early 1860s. In 1851, just about the time that sabbatarian Adventists had defined their basic doctrines, established a sense of identity, and begun to institutionalize with the establishment of publications, John N. Andrews published what was to become a unique Adventist view of the American government.

While many Protestant interpreters had held that the first beast of Revelation 13 represented the papacy, Andrews went on to apply the second beast in the chapter—the one with two horns like a lamb but who spoke as a dragon—to the United States of America. Andrews pioneered in arguments which were to become standard for Adventist evangelists, using such features as the location of the power and the manner, place, and time of its appearance. He held the horns to be symbolic of its Republican civil power and its Protestant ecclesiastical power. To “speak like a dragon” would be to repudiate its principles and to enforce the worship of the first beast upon its citizens.

Thus the foundation was early laid to view the American Republic as the ultimate persecuting enemy. While Adventists would follow the New Testament counsel to be good citizens and obey government as long as its dictates did not conflict with their duty to God, they would view government suspiciously, realizing that at any time the dragon might cast off its lamblike disguise. For the next few decades, pronouncements about government tended to follow this *political apocalyptic*. This is most evident in the matter of slavery and the Civil War.

During this period church papers contained many articles opposing slavery and

advancing abolitionist sentiments. However, the condemnation of slavery was not so much an effort to abolish the institution as it was to illustrate the dragon-like characteristics of the United States. James White (1862), an early church president, applied the actions of the second beast of Revelation 13, which had a lamblike appearance but spoke like a dragon, to the nation's practice of holding four million human beings in "the most abject and cruel bondage and servitude." Adventists at this time did not believe society could be reformed and supposed that slavery would persist until the coming of Christ. Therefore, their rhetoric was not to bring about change but to alert people to the fulfilling prophecies of Revelation and thus to the nearness of the end.

By the 1880s, a gradual shift in the position of the church vis-a-vis government was taking place. In certain limited areas Adventists were beginning to engage in the political arena with the goal of influencing public policy. The two major areas of such activity were religious liberty and temperance. The struggle for religious liberty could be justified in that it would make possible the preaching of the pure Gospel and thus allow more people to hear the message and prepare for the coming of Christ. Prohibition was a moral cause because liquor so dulled the minds of its slaves that they could not comprehend God's last message.

Thus, the church moved gradually into the *political prophetic* phase where Adventists, as a prophetic people, were to use their voice to sustain the Republic as long as possible. Since then the reaction to public concerns has been mixed. Adventists largely sat out the Civil Rights Movement because to take sides might result in internal division and would make it more difficult to earn a hearing with some of the populace for their spiritual message. On the other hand, after consultation with the sixteen world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, president Neal C. Wilson issued a series of public statements expressing the church's position on peace, racism, home and family, and drugs. The documents urged "every nation to beat its 'swords into plowshares'" and proclaimed that the "Adventist hope must manifest and translate itself into deep concern for the well-being of every member of the human family." In a world of conflict Adventists "desire to be known as peacemakers and work for worldwide justice and peace under Christ as the head of a new humanity." The church "deplores all forms of racism, including the political policy of apartheid with its enforced segregation and legalized discrimination." While the church supported the stability of the home and family, it took no position on the Equal Rights Amendment (GC President, 1985).

In an attempt to provide an explanatory framework, Bull (1989) has recently argued that: "In the early republic, civil religion was constituted by the discourse of civil millennialism which, through the agency of revivalism, functioned as an orthodoxy with monopolistic ambitions. Using the eschatological language of civil millennialism, Millerism formulated a heretical discourse that was developed in Adventism into a heretical sub-culture by the inversion of orthodox rhetoric and the emulation of orthodox practice" (p. 185). Thus, in this interpretation, Adventism constructed a thorough-going alternate to civil religion. With their Saturday Sabbath versus the national Sunday Sabbath and their imminent premillennial Second Advent versus a temporal millennium of peace, "the Adventist movement and the American nation were perceived as two rival groups competing to realize their respective millennia" (p. 183).

This historical perspective would lead us to predict that Adventists most commit-

ted to the traditions of the church are likely to resist any government intrusion into religion while at the same time adopting many elements of the American system in their beliefs and practices. More specifically, those Adventists who believe strongly in the historic interpretation of the second beast of Revelation 13 as representing the United States would be more likely to take such a stance than those who were more tentative about this prophecy. Thus, individual Adventists might reflect any one of the three phases or variations of them. And those who are most conservative in their religious beliefs might well operate with the mentality of the earlier phases.

We expected, then, that those scoring highest on the Adventist orthodoxy scale would be likely either to withdraw from political concerns completely or to favor separation-of-church-and-state issues and preservation of the status quo in government, since any change (such as an amendment to the Constitution) could bring about the long-awaited persecution.

The more orthodox Adventists are also likely to view sinister forces as having infiltrated liberal Christianity through the influence of evolutionary teachings, Biblical criticism, and denial of the obligation to obey the ten commandments. Since liberal churches have long been identified with the social gospel, including political action for civil rights and social justice causes, orthodox Adventists should be more likely to reject such action as tainted and tending to undermine the genuine Gospel. While the denomination has officially opposed racism, conservative members may be likely to feel that becoming involved in political solutions to racial problems is a dilution of the Gospel. Like conservatives of other faiths they may believe that the proper way to change systems is to change individual human hearts. Again, Adventist ethnic minorities may react differently and be more generally supportive of social action.

Since religious belief and religious practice are related, especially among conservatives, those Adventists who attend church more regularly, who participate more fully in church functions, who are more committed to the church as an institution, and who engage more often in devotional practices recommended by the church will be likely to exhibit the same behaviors described above as those with strong orthodox beliefs.

On the other hand, those who are less orthodox are likely to possess a mind set more willing to experiment with political and economic changes as possible solutions to societal problems, will tend to be more optimistic about the prospects of making structural improvements in society, and thus will be more likely to employ social and political action and to work for social justice than will their more orthodox fellow believers.

Adventists whose religious orientation tends to be open to new insights and tentative as to traditional beliefs rather than fixed and dogmatic—whether the content of their beliefs is conservative or liberal—will be more likely to favor liberal political positions. They will be especially likely to minimize the religious function of *order* and oppose legislation of morality for they realize that their positions—however important to them personally—may be viewed differently by other sincere and reasonable people. Thus, they are likely to emphasize the religious function of championing freedom. They tend to have a “I disagree with what you say, but I will fight for your right to say it” mentality.

Finally, according to Greeley (1984), how one conceives of God helps to determine one’s attitudes toward public issues, especially those dealing with social problems. Adventists, like others in the general public, whose images of God are

the “softer” ones of mother, spouse, lover, and friend might be expected to be more supportive of a liberal social agenda and of “peace politics” than those who are more likely to image God with the sterner attributes of father, master, judge, and king.

METHODOLOGY

The research instrument was developed by choosing or constructing items to measure various dimensions of religiosity that a thorough review of the literature suggested might be relevant. To measure *belief* or *orthodoxy*, we constructed five statements about doctrines that have been historically important to the Adventist church but which have become more or less controversial in recent years. They were (1) creation in six literal days, (2) pre-Advent judgment in 1844, (3) the second coming of Jesus in our generation, (4) Adventism as God’s true church, and (5) the inspiration of Ellen White. The complete wording of all items is shown in the appendix.

The *experiential* dimension was measured by three items adapted from those in the literature with slight changes to fit the Adventist situation. They dealt with feeling the presence of God, assurance of sins forgiven, and being born again.

Four items were employed to measure *ritualistic* or church-related behaviors (frequency of attendance, holding congregational office, witnessing activities, extent of financial contributions) and another four to tap *devotional* or personal and family behaviors (prayer, Bible study, read religious literature, family worship). A single item on the importance of religious faith measured *salience*. All of these were taken from the literature with slight modifications to fit Adventist norms.

Based on Yinger’s (1969) concept that how a person is religious is a more fundamental measure than how religious he or she is, Benson and Williams (1982) asked their respondents to name the most basic human problem, the principal pathway to overcoming that problem, and the most important outcome of that “salvation.” They then connected these three components to determine if the respondent was agentic (individualistic) or communal in world view. Leege and Welch (1986) refined this measure in their study. We used a forced-choice form of the Leege and Welch model as a three-item *Foundational World View* measure, scored as one item and slightly modified to fit Adventist theology.

We also included three intact scales. For the *Intrinsic-Extrinsic* orientation we chose a brief single scale developed by Hoge (1972) that used those 10 items that yielded the highest validity, reliability, item-to-item correlations, and item-to-scale correlations. The *Religious Maturity* scale builds on the work of Allport (1950) in distinguishing between the mature and immature religious sentiments. It consisted of 11 items (Dudley and Cruise, 1990).

Greeley (1981) proposed that the imagery one associates with God would serve as a strong predictor of social outlooks and political values. This led to his “grace factor” (Greeley, 1984). We included his four-item *Grace* scale which asks respondents to place their images of God on seven-point continua between polar extremes (mother-father, master-spouse, judge-lover, friend-king).

The dependent variables consisted of 18 statements on public issues with responses on a five-point scale from strongly oppose to strongly favor. A list of more than twice this length was originally prepared and, because of space limitations,

was reduced to the present size by attempting to select a battery of items that would be representative (rather than exhaustive) of the most-debated public concerns of the day. In addition, respondents were asked their political party *preference*, their *political orientation* (conservative, moderate, liberal), and their *voting behavior* based on how they voted in the 1984 presidential election (data collected in the summer of 1988). Standard demographic questions were also included.

The sample was created by drawing 800 households by a random sequential method (every *n*th name after a random starting point) from the mailing list of the North American Division edition of the *Adventist Review*, the general church paper of Seventh-day Adventists. While this journal is published weekly and sold by yearly subscription, church administration subsidizes the sending of the first issue of every month on a complimentary basis to every Adventist household in the United States as far as the list is complete. Since maintaining a current list is a major undertaking, this process is likely to under represent those members who have recently changed addresses, especially inactive members who do not bother to report the changes. Some 300,000 names are on the monthly list.

Since several members may comprise a household, the instructions accompanying the questionnaire contained a further sample selection procedure. Recipients were told that the survey must be completed by a baptized member of the Adventist church who was at least 18 years old. In case more than one member of the household met these criteria, the one whose birthday came first in the calendar year was to complete the questionnaire.

Copies of the questionnaire, letters of appeal and instruction, and a stamped envelope addressed to the researchers were mailed to the 800 households. Two additional mailings followed several weeks apart. Each included another questionnaire and another stamped envelope. It was found that 52 of the letters were undeliverable due to incorrect addresses, thus reducing the sample to 748. Of these, 419 completed usable instruments, resulting in a response rate of 56%. The following analyses are based on these 419 subjects. The results are likely to be biased toward core members who, presumably, would be more willing to return the questionnaires than would marginal members.

FINDINGS

Where did Adventists as a group stand on the 18 public issues? If “somewhat favor” and “strongly favor” are combined, the support for each item can be discerned. Nine of the statements were worded as typically “liberal” statements; the other nine as typically “conservative.” Table 1 shows both sets of statements arranged in the order of support suggested above.

On seven of the first nine issues the majority favored the statement—an indication of inclination toward liberalism on the politico-social front. Note that American Adventists were most likely to favor the liberal stance on socio-economic and peace issues and most likely to forsake it on direct involvement in politics. In contrast to the “liberal issues” the majority of Adventists favored only three out of the nine “conservative” issues. The support was much less here, although it is plain that the subjects did not necessarily oppose the other issues. The “uncertain” response was high on several of them, especially the last five (over 30% each). The two most highly favored issues dealt with law and order—perhaps reflecting the heavy law

TABLE 1
 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS FAVORING PUBLIC ISSUES (N=419)

Item	Oppose	Uncertain	Favor
<u>Favoring "liberal" positions</u>			
Eliminate racial restrictions	7%	11%	82%
Peaceful relations with Russia	6%	14%	80%
Insurance for nursing homes	7%	18%	75%
US-Soviet freeze on nuclear weapons	10%	18%	72%
Registration of all firearms	21%	16%	63%
Equality for women (ERA)	22%	17%	61%
Government aid to minorities	24%	24%	52%
Christians involved in politics	35%	24%	41%
Churches involved in political action	70%	16%	14%
<u>Favoring "conservative" positions</u>			
Tougher laws on crime	8%	11%	81%
Capital punishment	18%	20%	62%
Capitalism in harmony with Bible	11%	36%	53%
Prayer amendment	47%	15%	38%
SDI (Star Wars)	35%	31%	34%
Military aid to "Contras"	44%	33%	23%
Conservative US Supreme Court	35%	43%	22%
Increased spending for national defense	49%	30%	21%
Withdrawal from United Nations	55%	31%	14%

orientation prominent among Adventists. The finding may also indicate the increasing alignment of Adventism with the American social system. The third-favored position dealt with approval of capitalism. This may again reflect the work ethic that grows out of a strong sense of righteous behavior.

What about political affiliation? While the majority of Adventists did not consider themselves Republicans, those who did constituted the largest grouping (44%) of any political identification. Democrats were considerably behind at 24%, 20% indicated that they had no interest in politics, and 12% listed themselves as independents.

In the 1984 presidential election (the most recent before data collection), 46% of the respondents voted for Reagan, 15% voted for Mondale, and the remaining 39% did not vote at all. Finally, in describing their political orientation, about a fourth (24%) claimed no political opinions. Most of the rest divided fairly equally between conservatives (34%) and moderates (37%). Only 5% admitted to being political liberals.

A principal components analysis of the 18 public issues items with varimax rotation resulted in five factors with eigenvalues over 1.00 and accounting for 50.3% of the variance. Factor 1—consisting of items on nuclear freeze, relations with Russia, withdrawal from UN (negative), aid to minorities, elimination of racial restrictions, and ERA—was named "Peace and Justice." Factor 2—loading

defense spending, aid to “Contras,” SDI, and conservative justices—was labeled “Defense.” Factor 3—composed of items on Christians and churches becoming involved in political action and churches sticking to preaching the gospel (negative)—was called “Political Involvement.” Factor 4—comprising crime control, capital punishment, and capitalism—was named “Law and Order.” Factor 5 was somewhat of a mixed category—prayer amendment, nursing home insurance, and registration of firearms—that we labeled “Government Intervention.”

The religiosity variables were also submitted to a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Seven factors with eigenvalues in excess of 1.00 emerged, but Factor 7 proved to be not interpretable so only six factors were employed with a cumulative variance of 48%. Factor 1 contained the three items on the experiential dimension plus the seven intrinsic items from Hoge’s scale. It has been labeled “Relationship with God.” Factor 2 combines the ritualistic and the devotional items and has been named “Religious Practice.” Factor 3 combines the five ideological items with two items from the Religious Maturity Scale which were intended to indicate immaturity. We called it “Orthodoxy.” Factor 4 draws on items from the Religious Maturity Scale which were intended to measure Allport’s sense of tentativeness, humility, and heuristic qualities. It has been labeled “Openness to Change.” Factor 5 employed the three extrinsic items from Hoge’s scale as well as the measure of worldview and has been named “Extrinsic.” Finally, Factor 6 loaded three of the four items from Greeley’s scale and has been named “Grace.”

A series of stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed in which the religiosity factors were regressed on each of the five public issues factors. Also included among the predictors were demographic variables consisting of education, gender, years as an Adventist member, whether or not parents were Adventists, age, income, ethnic background, and marital status. The last two were coded as dummy variables with “white or minority” and “married or not married” classifications.

For Factor 1, Peace and Justice, only Openness to Change was significant, and the relationship was weak ($R = .11, p < .05$). Those less dogmatic in their faith were somewhat more likely to favor positions supporting international peace and social justice for minorities and women. None of the demographic variables was significant.

Openness to Change was also the only religiosity factor significant in a regression on Factor 2, Defense ($R = .15, p < .01$). Surprisingly, those who were more tentative about their religion tended to favor defense items. Again, the background variables were not significant.

Religiosity proved to be a better predictor of Factor 3, Political Involvement. A regression of all the religiosity factors and demographic variables on Political Involvement yielded a multiple R of .47, highly significant at .001. The results are shown in Table 2.

Those who are closest to traditional belief and who practice their religion most faithfully are most likely to oppose corporate churches and individual Christians becoming involved in political action. Those who are less dogmatic and more open to change tend to favor such action. Also, those with more education and females tend to favor political involvement on the part of Christians and churches.

A regression of all religiosity factors and demographic variables on public factor 4, Law and Order, displayed in Table 3, produced a multiple R of .28 ($p < .001$), but most of the variance is explained by two demographic variables. Whites are

TABLE 2
REGRESSION OF RELIGIOSITY FACTORS AND DEMOGRAPHIC
VARIABLES ON POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT (N 389)

Step	Factor	Multiple R	R Squared	Beta
1	Orthodoxy	.36	.13	-.33
2	Religious Practice	.40	.16	-.16
3	Education	.42	.18	.18
4	Gender	.45	.20	.16
5	Openness to Change	.47	.22	.15

more favorable than minorities toward the Law and Order issues, and those who have been in the church longer (perhaps a proxy for age) are more likely to favor them than are newer converts. Openness to Change had a significant though weak relationship. That the more flexible and less dogmatic should tend toward stricter law enforcement and favor capitalism is somewhat puzzling since it seems to go opposite to the theory.

The regression on Factor 5, Government Intervention, yielded a multiple R of .43 ($p < .001$) with Extrinsic and Religious Practice having significant betas, as shown in Table 4. Government intervention tends to be favored by those higher on the Extrinsic factor and opposed by those more diligent in the practice of their religion. Since this factor contains two clearly liberal items (firearms registration and nursing home insurance) and a conservative item likely to be opposed by conservative Adventists (prayer amendment) because of Adventism's position on church and state, a high score on this factor would seem to indicate liberal politics. Adventists, then, who are extrinsic in their religion may lean toward liberal issues while those who adhere most faithfully to ritual and devotional practices are likely to favor conservative politics.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION OF RELIGIOSITY FACTORS AND DEMOGRAPHIC
VARIABLES ON LAW AND ORDER (N=389)

Step	Factor	Multiple R	R Squared	Beta
1	Ethnic Background	.21	.04	.20
2	Years as Adventist	.25	.06	.14
3	Openness to Change	.28	.08	.12

TABLE 4
REGRESSION OF RELIGIOSITY FACTORS AND DEMOGRAPHIC
VARIABLES ON GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION (N=389)

Step	Factor	Multiple R	R Squared	Beta
1	Extrinsic	.25	.06	.21
2	Family Income	.32	.10	-.12
3	Years as Adventist	.36	.13	-.14
4	Ethnic Background	.39	.15	-.16
5	Gender	.41	.16	.11
6	Religious Practice	.42	.18	-.11
7	Education	.43	.19	-.11

Five demographic items also have significant betas. Minorities and women are more likely to favor such intervention than whites or males. Those with less education, less income, and fewer years as Adventists are also more likely to be favorable.

DISCUSSION

The hypotheses of this study have been only partially supported. In general, American Adventists who are more orthodox in their beliefs are more likely to oppose political involvement of both individual Christians and corporate churches and come close to significance in supporting law-and-order issues. Those who are more frequent in the practice of their faith are also likely to oppose political involvement as well as government intervention in liberal causes or in areas that might breach the separation of church and state. And those who are more open in their religious convictions are more likely to favor positions supporting peace and social justice and political involvement of Christians and churches.

On the other hand, those more open and less dogmatic are more likely to favor stricter law enforcement and the capitalistic system and to have voted for Reagan in 1984. Also, those higher on extrinsic items tend to favor government intervention in liberal causes. And while the relationships were not canceled out by demographic variables, nevertheless, most of them were quite weak. Why the lack of strong and consistent relationships?

Some understanding may be had from a brief look at *cognitive consistency theory*. The basic idea is that "an attitude provides some consistency for response tendencies that otherwise would be incongruous or inconsistent" (Morgan, 1977:381). People may maintain consistency by averaging together a number of conflicting attitudes toward something to arrive at a single less complex attitude, or they may revise attitudes to bring them into line with commitments they have

already chosen. The important thing is that no matter how confused and inconsistent a person's attitudes and behaviors may seem to us, the individual has found a way to make them harmonize in his/her mind.

Kiecolt and Nelsen (1988) hold that "consistency among issue beliefs presupposes a level of sophistication in political thinking that often is not attained" (p. 50). That is, an individual may be attracted to a particular issue but not be aware of where it fits on a conservative-liberal continuum or, for that matter, not see it in terms of ideology at all.

To test this concept, Kiecolt and Nelsen employed the two dimensions of *level of conceptualization* and *political belief system consistency*. The first refers to the degree of abstraction in political thinking. "At the top level are 'ideologues,' individuals who base their candidate and party preferences on a liberal-conservative 'yardstock' [*sic*] that serves to structure their opinions on issues. The second level contains individuals who base their political decision-making on 'group benefits,' that is, whether their group is likely to be helped or hurt" (p. 50). Next come *nature of the times* citizens who respond to isolated issues or short-term concerns. At the bottom is the *no issue content* level where preferences are apolitical or without apparent rhyme or reason.

Political belief consistency refers to the degree to which individuals consistently take conservative or liberal positions on issues. One would expect that consistency would decrease with descending levels of conceptualization. The hypothesis was tested with data drawn from the American National Election Studies of 1972, 1980, and 1984.

True to expectations, the researchers found that consistency is greatest among the ideologues and decreases with lower levels of conceptualization. They also discovered proportionately more ideologues among liberal than among conservative Protestants and, in addition, somewhat less belief system consistency among conservatives than among liberals at all levels of conceptualization. Thus, in general, conservatives were "less likely to link issues to the left/right political ideology in which political conflicts are framed" suggesting "a somewhat lower level of psychological involvement of the conservative Protestant mass public in the political arena" (pp. 57-58). The conservative mind set seems to run more toward concrete issues than toward integrated ideology.

It may be that American Adventists have not constructed for themselves a clear and consistent policy of public life but have reacted to the happenings around them as bits and pieces without fitting them into some overall framework. On the other hand, they may have formulated a consistency based on what they perceive to be the interests of the church facing a world scenario called for by their interpretation of prophecy. Even though world church leaders have issued statements on political issues, it is questionable as to the extent these statements have been employed to raise the consciousness of individual congregations and members. Many Adventists may remain basically inward-looking and fail to regard political issues as important unless they impact the church directly.

With this in mind, we note that Adventists who are most committed to the traditional teachings of the church are likely to be found taking one of two possible stances. Either they hold conservative political positions, or they withdraw from politics completely. The findings for orthodoxy are stronger than for any other measure of religion, and the above conclusion was supported across the board except, as noted, for ethnic minorities.

On the other hand, those not as firmly committed to orthodox teachings—presumably those with more exposure to functional rationalization and cultural pluralism—are more open to the possibility of change. While they do not necessarily deny the Adventist eschatological scenario and the presence of conspiracies, they question them. They see the church and its members as having a present contribution to make to the solution of societal problems and believe that they best advance Christ's kingdom in this world by ministering to human needs. Their text may well be: "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13).

The above reasoning would suggest a direct correspondence between the conservation-liberal religious spread and the conservative-liberal political continuum. But complicating factors intrude. First of all, Adventist eschatology portrays the United States republic as a persecuting power that will repudiate civil and religious liberty and enforce the "mark of the beast." Thus, orthodox Adventists find themselves in the dilemma of wanting to preserve the present governmental system and its values (as good conservatives) but of being suspicious of government trying to impose its control over the church.

Thus, orthodox Adventists are likely to oppose any public issues which may seem to break down the wall between church and state. They tend to oppose prayer and Bible reading in public schools (although they believe strongly in both where not mandated), to oppose morality legislation (though they might personally agree with the values), to oppose conservative Supreme Court justices (since liberal ones—like William J. Brennan—have been the champions of individual liberties), and to keep churches out of the political arena. In much of this they line up with political liberals. Thus, their view of eschatology influences the more orthodox to be conservative in politics generally, but liberal when religious liberty issues are at stake.

Where this factor is especially strong, the highly orthodox may take the second course noted above. Instead of supporting conservative courses and candidates, they may withdraw from the public arena altogether and proclaim: "This world is not my home; I'm just a-passin' through." Thus, a fifth of our sample claimed that they had no interest in politics, nearly a third did not identify with either political party, about a fourth stated that they had no political orientation, and two-fifths did not vote in the most recent presidential election. These "withdrawers" were most likely to be the strongly orthodox.

A second complicating factor to the conservative-liberal construct is the fact that Adventism has historically been a sort of "peace" church. From the days of the American Civil War onward, the church has recommended that its members participate in the military only in noncombatant service. This is based, of course, in the Ten Commandment law of "Thou shalt not kill." But, as we have seen, it also grows out of the Adventist view of prophecy with its suspicion of the lamblike beast. Thus, more orthodox Adventists are likely to join once again with the liberals in favoring peace actions and opposing military offensives.

A third complicating factor, as noted above, is ethnicity. Ethnic minorities, especially Blacks and Hispanics, tend to be conservative theologically and, therefore, quite orthodox. But they tend to be more liberal politically, especially in issues involving social justice. This is easy to understand in view of the history of material and social deprivations suffered by minorities in America. Though conservative in religious beliefs, these Adventists tend to stress freedom and justice over order.

To summarize, more orthodox Adventists are more likely to be conservative politically except when factors of religious liberty, pacifism, and ethnic experience lead them to believe that liberal political positions are more in harmony with their faith or personal interests. Indeed, a recurring theme in this entire study is that the Adventist involvement in the political arena is selective and that such selectivity is based on what seems to be the church's best interests. Individual members or subgroups within the church also make their decisions based on the same operating principles. Thus, a basis for consistency is established.

In the light of these findings, perhaps the church needs to study more carefully whether or not the kinds of issues investigated are related to the life of faith and, therefore, call for providing guidance to its people as they seek to live their religion within their social and political communities.

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APPENDIX

Public Issues Scale

Below are some current issues in American society. Please circle the number that shows how you feel about each one as follows: 1 = strongly oppose, 2 = somewhat oppose, 3 = uncertain, 4 = somewhat favor, 5 = strongly favor.

1. United States-Soviet "freeze" on the development of nuclear weapons
2. Establishment of normal, peaceful relations with Russia
3. Increased government aid to improve the social and economic position of Blacks and other minorities
4. Elimination of all racial restrictions in housing, education, and employment
5. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution which guarantees equality to women
6. Christians as individuals becoming involved in political action (run for office, work for a candidate, etc.)
7. Churches as corporate entities becoming involved in political action (e.g., issuing position statements)
8. A constitutional amendment to permit prayer and/or Bible reading in public schools
9. Increased spending for national defense
10. Military aid to the Nicaraguan "Contras"
11. Government-sponsored insurance for elderly in nursing homes
12. Construction of Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) to ward off possible nuclear attack
13. Appointment of conservative, strict-constructionist justices (such as Rehnquist, Scalia, and Bork) to the US Supreme Court
14. Control of crime by tougher laws and "stiffer" sentences
15. Withdrawal of the United States from the United Nations
16. Registration of all firearms
17. Regarding capitalism or free enterprise as that form of government most in harmony with Biblical Christianity
18. Capital punishment (the death penalty) for certain classes of dangerous criminals

Orthodoxy Scale (strongly disagree = 1 through strongly agree = 5)

1. God created the world in six literal days, approximately 6000 years ago.
2. The investigative judgment began in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844.
3. Jesus Christ will come the second time in our generation.
4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true church.
5. Ellen White was inspired by God, and her writings are an authoritative guide for Adventists today.

Experiential Scale

1. I frequently feel very close to God in prayer, during public worship, or at important moments in my daily life.
2. I often experience the joy and peace which comes from knowing my sins have been forgiven.
3. I am certain that I have had a conversion or born-again experience.

Hoge's Intrinsic Scale

1. My faith involves all of my life.
2. One should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.
3. In my life I experience the presence of the Divine.
4. My faith sometimes restricts my actions.
5. Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.
6. I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life.
7. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.
8. It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life. (R)
9. Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs. (R)
10. Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in life. (R)

Religious Maturity Scale

1. My religious beliefs provide me with satisfying answers at this stage of my development, but I am prepared to alter them as new information becomes available.
2. I am happy with my present religion but wish to be open to new insights and ways of understanding the meaning of life.
3. As best as I can determine, my religion is true, but I recognize that I could be mistaken on some points.
4. Important questions about the meaning of life do not have simple or easy answers; therefore faith is a developmental process.
5. I could not commit myself to a religion unless I was certain that it is completely true. (R)
6. I have struggled in trying to understand the problems of evil, suffering, and death that mark this world.
7. Churches should concentrate on proclaiming the gospel and not become involved in trying to change society through social or political action. (R)
8. While we can never be quite sure that what we believe is absolutely true, it is worth acting on the probability that it may be.
9. I have found many religious questions to be difficult and complex so I am hesitant to be dogmatic or final in my assertions.
10. In my religion my relationships with other people are as fundamental as my relationship with God.
11. My religious beliefs are pretty much the same today as they were five years ago. (R)

Church Involvement Scale

1. If not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, I attend church:
 1. rarely or never

2. once every month or two
 3. two or three times a month
 4. at least once a week
2. Do you hold an office or other service position in your local congregation?
 1. no
 2. yes
 3. How active have you been this last year in outreach or witnessing activities?
 1. rarely or never
 2. at least six times a year
 3. at least once a month
 4. at least once a week
 4. Last year, approximately what percent of your gross income was contributed to the church or other religious causes?
 1. Less than 5%
 2. 5% to 9%
 3. 10% to 14%
 4. 15% to 19%
 5. 20% or more

Devotional Practices Scale

How often do you participate in these practices? (Seldom or never = 1 through daily = 4)

1. Pray privately
2. Study the Bible
3. Read religious literature
4. Participate in family worship

Salience

All in all, how important would you say your religious faith is to you?

1. fairly unimportant
2. not too important
3. fairly important
4. quite important
5. extremely important

Foundational World View

1. Religion always identifies a basic human problem, something that is wrong with humans and their world.

Indicate the single most basic problem.

1. something lacking in my individual life
 2. separation of humans from God; sinfulness
 3. lack of human community or closeness between people
 4. other _____
2. Religion always describes a path to salvation, a way that basic human problems can be overcome. Which of the following comes closest to that path?
 1. doing good works to earn God's favor
 2. trusting in God's free gift of forgiveness
 3. working hard to make society better and more just
 4. other _____
 3. Finally, religion talks about the outcomes of salvation. What is the most important outcome?
 1. life on earth is changed; feel fulfillment, meaning
 2. live forever with God after the resurrection
 3. world changed so people live in peace and harmony
 4. other _____