INTERNAL POLITICAL FALLOUT FROM THE EMERGENCE OF AN IMMIGRANT MAJORITY: THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

RONALD LAWSON

QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY

REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS RESEARCH, 1999, VOLUME 41, PAGES 20-46

The U.S. has received an influx of "new immigrants," drawn from many parts of the developing world, since 1968. These have, in turn, altered the demographics of congregations and denominations. Of all the denominations operating in metropolitan New York, Seventh-day Adventism has been impacted most dramatically by the changes. Its face has been transformed as it has shifted from a church of primarily Caucasians and Afro-Americans, each dominating separate conferences, to one that is now 90% new immigrant. This paper explores the tensions that emerged, as a result of the changed racial/ethnic balance, in the competition to control leadership positions and resources, initially in local congregations and later in the conferences, and the dynamics as these tensions have played out. Finally, it considers why such conflict has been especially strong within Adventism.

The passage of the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act in 1965 fostered an influx of immigrants that was much more ethnically diverse, and less European, than previously: while three-quarters of the immigrants arriving in the U.S. between 1900 and 1968, when the law took effect, were from Europe, almost two-thirds of those arriving since then have come from the developing world (Christiano 1991:172). The influx of "new immigrants," as those from the developing world are often known, has impacted the demographics of both denominations and previously existing congregations, as well as fostering a multitude of new congregations. Almost every mainline denomination has been growing more diverse as it has absorbed immigrants: Presbyterians and Methodists are known for their Korean congregations, Catholics for Hispanic, Haitian, and Filipino congregations, Episcopalians for their West Indian congregations.

This paper focuses on the political impact of the influx of new immigrants within Seventh-day Adventism in metropolitan New York.[1] The face of Adventism there has changed dramatically over the past 30 years, as it has been transformed from a denomination of Caucasians and Afro-Americans to one that is now 90% immigrant, drawn from a multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups from different parts of the globe, but especially from the Caribbean.

Given the focus of this research, I became interested in comparing the extent of change within Adventism in this region with that of the mainline denominations. The estimates of

new immigrant members provided by the local headquarters of the Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, and American Baptist Churches ranged from 50% of Catholics to 15% of both Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Although these denominations have therefore been impacted considerably by the influx of new immigrants to metropolitan New York, their experience has been much less dramatic than that of the Adventist Church. It will be shown that its racial/ethnic transformation has, in turn, had marked internal political ramifications.

Although Adventism in metropolitan New York may be unusual in its high proportion of immigrants, its experience there illustrates a broader trend. Within the North American Division [NAD] of the Adventist Church, which includes both the U.S. and Canada, the membership in at least four other major metropolitan areas--Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, and Miami--also shows large majorities of new immigrants (interviews). Indeed, 75% of the new members added to the Adventist Church in the Division in recent years have been immigrants from countries in the Developing World.[2] According to the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, between 1980 and 1990 the number of Hispanic members in the NAD increased by 127.1%, Asians by 62.4%, those of African Descent (a category that does not distinguish between Afro-Americans, West Indians, and Haitians) by 71.1%, and Caucasians by only 4.9%.[3] The proportion of Caucasians in the NAD membership declined from 72.2% in 1980 to 60.2% in 1990. They were estimated as 52% in 1996, and are expected to become a minority – 47% – by 2000 (Sahlin 1997b; Vasquez n.d.:3).

This trend is not limited to the U.S. Within the NAD, it is even further advanced in Canada, where the Caribbean presence is now so great, especially in the cities of Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, that the constituency has elected a West Indian as president of the Adventist Church in Canada. A similar trend began even earlier in London and other urban centers in England, and is now so advanced there that the president of the British Union is also a West Indian. Of the 3,578 Adventists in metropolitan Paris, fewer than 400 are French Caucasians; more than 3,000 of them are from the Caribbean and French Guyana, others are from former French colonies in Africa and Asia (interviews). That is, the bulk of the immigrants in all three countries come from the Caribbean, just as they do in New York. The tensions accompanying the emergence of an immigrant majority among Adventists in metropolitan New York are very similar to the dynamics experienced in these other cities and countries (Lawson 1998b).

This paper first reviews earlier research bearing on the relationship between demographic changes resulting from an influx of immigrants and subsequent political tensions and conflicts within denominations and congregations, and then, after explaining the research methods employed in the study, sketches the contours of the recent demographic changes within Adventism in Metropolitan New York. The core of the paper explores the tensions that emerged from the competition to control leadership positions and resources as the racial/ethnic balance within Adventism altered, initially in local congregations and later in the conferences headquartered in metropolitan New York, and the dynamics as these tensions have played out. The concluding segment considers why such conflict has been especially strong within Adventism.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND SUBSEQUENT INTRA-CHURCH TENSIONS: A REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH.

The United States is a country of immigrants: American history tells of successive waves of ethnic groups, generation after generation, drawn primarily from Europe until the 1960s. For immigrants, their congregation often became "a Gemeinschaft in the midst of the alien "Gesellschaft" (Warner 1994:70), where the language of home was used and ethnic festivals celebrated. Both Neibuhr and Herberg saw the varied national backgrounds of immigrant groups as a major source of religious differentiation in the U.S. (Niebuhr 1954 [1929]:26-7; Herberg 1960 [1955]).

European Immigrants

The waves of immigrants created changes in the internal ethic balance within denominations. This often subsequently caused conflicts, which are similar to those discussed in this paper, as existing congregations coped with changes, immigrants created their own ethnic congregations, and denominational polities faced new demands and shifting balances of power. However, these changes affected Catholics and Protestants differently: the Catholic Church, being a universal church, had to contain the diversity, while Protestantism fragmented further as it catered to it.

Irish Catholic immigrants in the first-half of the nineteenth century "could find no place for themselves among the old-American Catholics and had to struggle hard before they got churches they could call their own. The Germans, coming somewhat later, resented the 'Irish-dominated' churches they found and would not rest till they had churches that spoke the language and followed the ways of the 'old home.'" Similarly, the later Catholic immigrants--Italians, Hungarians, French Canadians--"were often assigned to already established Catholic churches in their vicinity, usually Irish or German, that seemed utterly alien to them" (Herberg 1960 [1955]:11). "The result was a struggle, parish by parish, between the old Catholics and the new, a struggle that involved the nationality of the priest, the language to be used, the saints' days to be observed, and even the name of the church" (Handlin 1951:135).

The conflict was exacerbated as one ethnic group and then another held sway among the Catholic hierarchy in the U.S.; French bishops succeeded the English after the French Revolution, during which time the now predominantly Irish flock were restive because there were so few Irish priests; ultimately Irish bishops came to dominance, only to find that they were confronted by an intense ethnic nationalism among more recent immigrants (Herberg 1960 [1955]:139-140). The conflict came to a head in the 1890s, when Germans petitioned the Holy See, demanding the subdivision of the American Catholic Church into quasi-independent ethnic dioceses. Having routed this threat, the American hierarchy attempted in a number of ways to provide immigrants with a church where they could feel at home: "'national' parishes with priests from the same ethnic group were permitted, sometimes even encouraged; lay societies of all sorts were established along ethnic lines; the church availed itself of the immigrant's language in its religious and educational work" (Herberg 1960 [1955]:145).

Protestant immigrants had typically been identified in Europe with national churches

using their own languages. The various immigrant groups therefore typically created religious bodies in the U.S. that mirrored the European Protestant diversity: for example, German, Swedish, and Norwegian Lutherans created separate denominations. Further fragmentation occurred when some American denominations refused to allow foreign-language subdivisions: thus, Methodist intransigence spawned two separate German Methodist denominations, the United Brethren and the Evangelical Church (Herberg 1960 [1955]:14). When new generations of immigrants felt alienated when they found that compatriots who had preceded them had assimilated, adopting the English language and making other modifications which they regarded as heretical, there was more fragmentation. For example, conflicts between liberalized forerunners and conservative newcomers further atomized both the German Lutherans and Scots (Warner 1998:26-27; Niebuhr 1954 [1929]:214-5). However, once immigration declined, accommodation proceeded, as the subsequent union of Lutherans in the U.S. well illustrates.

The New Immigrants

Just as immigrants from Europe built much of what American Catholicism is today, so now "new immigrants" from predominantly Catholic nations in Latin America, the Caribbean, and along the Pacific rim, are pouring into the U.S., changing the demographic profile of American Catholicism once again. In the Diocese of Brooklyn, for example, Mass is celebrated in 24 languages each Sunday, and these languages represent more than 50 national differences--over 20 alone among the Spanish-speaking (Malagreca 1991). However, the trends among these immigrants differ in some significant ways from those found among the earlier Europeans.

Although Protestants, and especially the then new "upstart sects"--the Methodists and Baptists--had been very effective in their evangelization of the frontier, they had not been successful in meeting the challenge of European immigration to the cities during the latter half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries. Consequently, urban areas such as New York City often became Catholic bastions (Finke and Stark 1992; Herberg 1960 [1955]:115). However, after World War II, a generation after the slowing of European immigration, American Catholicism increasingly viewed itself as a "post-immigrant" Church, and discarded the tools which had earlier proved effective in anchoring immigrants in church life--parish schools and "national parishes" (Christiano 1991:181). New immigrants now typically find themselves in multiethnic parishes where they may eventually gain a mass in their own language, but because of the ethnic diversity they cannot regard the parish as theirs (Malagreca 1991).

These changes, together with a shortage of ethnic priests matching the new immigrants, seem to have made it easier for today's upstart sects--Pentecostals, Adventists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other evangelicals and fundamentalists--which are already often making strong inroads in the predominantly Catholic countries from which the immigrants come, to evangelize among the immigrants in the U.S . Catholic bishops are especially concerned about the exit of Hispanics (Greeley 1990:61-62; Christiano 1991:174). Shibley argues that conversion to an evangelical faith occurs "at times of personal crisis when people are struggling to piece their lives together without a supporting and affirming community" (1996:72). Immigrants especially face such an experience.

These same upstart sects are also being successful in proselytizing among immigrants from countries that are predominantly Mainline Protestant, such as the Caribbean islands, where the majority of the population is Anglican, and Korea, where the largest Christian denomination is Presbyterian. An Episcopalian priest who has researched in this area estimates that 1.5 million former Anglicans from the Caribbean have been lost to the Episcopal Church in New York (Brathwaite 1998).

The experience of Korean immigrants illustrates the tensions that continue to occur within denominational polities. While about 30% of the Korean population is Christian, two-thirds of whom are Presbyterians, almost 70% of immigrant Koreans in the U.S. identify themselves as Christians, although the proportion of these belonging to the various Presbyterian congregations here is lower than in Korea (Shin and Park 1988:235). About half of the Presbyterian congregations are not affiliated with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., but instead are affiliated with a separate Korean Presbyterian Church, which was founded in the U.S. when Korean immigrants realized that the PC U.S.A. was more liberal than the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Warner 1994:77). This denomination has personal, but not organizational, ties to the Presbyterian Church in South Korea. Although the other congregations did affiliate with the PC U.S.A., they felt alienated, as a minority using a different language and having their own issues, from their presbyteries, so that participation there was low. They have recently been successful in persuading several PC U.S.A. regional synods to allow the establishment of nongeographical, Korean language presbyteries within the PC U.S.A. There have been similar tensions within the United Methodist Church, where Koreans have demanded the right to form a separate Korean language conference that would overlap geographically with the existing conferences (Han 1998).

Studies of Congregations in Transition

Although this genre has typically focused on Caucasian to Afro-American transition, the dynamics are similar when the invading groups are new immigrants. These studies may be traced back to Douglas's study of 16 downtown and near downtown mainline Protestant congregations facing an influx of immigrants, racial transition, and/or neighborhood deterioration (1927), and to a number of studies during the 1960s of congregational dynamics in racially changing communities. Wilson and Davis, in their 1966 study of Methodist Episcopal congregations in racial transition noted that tension emerged at three different stages: when members of the new race first attended, when they first attempted to move their membership to the congregation, and when they began to assume leadership positions (1966).

Studies of congregations have seen resurgence recently. Wind and Lewis (1994) present detailed portraits of 12 congregations, including Burns' account of the transition of a Catholic parish in San Francisco from Irish to Hispanic (1994). Ammerman's study of 23 congregations in 9 communities undergoing change includes some experiencing an influx of immigrants (1997). She finds several possible trajectories among the experiences of the congregations studied. These include the gradual decline and probable ultimate death of a congregation as a result of the original constituency moving away; becoming what she dubs a "niche congregation," which establishes an identity that successfully draws a con-

stituency from a broader region; changing the culture and programs of the congregation in order to attract the constituencies that are moving into the community; and selling the church building in order to relocate to a different community (44-45).

In coining the term "niche congregation" and its application to a moribund congregation that survives by broadening its geographic base through appealing to a particular constituency, Ammerman has really focused on a special case of a more general phenomenon that has become prevalent as the population has become increasingly mobile and loyalty to a particular denomination or one's local parish has eroded. She recognizes this: "The implications of a mobile, cosmopolitan culture, where congregational choice is the norm, make such specialized religious sorting more and more likely" (130-1). Indeed, she adds that "The possibility for choice has been greatly enhanced with the growth of cities. In an urban region, one can choose, for instance, among the 'high church' Methodists and the 'pro-life' Methodists and the 'charismatic' Methodists and the Methodists with the woman preacher" (35). We could add various kinds of ethnic or ethnically mixed congregations to this list. Consequently, "Urban congregations probably always lie somewhere between the two poles of parish and niche" (36). However, congregations cannot easily change their programs in an attempt to appeal to changing constituents because of the "weight of habit and tradition" and the fear that an influx of new constituents would alter the political balance of power within the congregation (63).

Warner and Wittner have recently edited a book which contains accounts of immigrant congregations (1998). These are not so much congregations undergoing transition, but new congregations created to cater to new immigrants. In his introduction to the book, Warner points out that the new immigrants have diversified not only the ethnic backgrounds but also the religions in the U.S.; however, their religious communities have heretofore been largely ignored by scholars (1998:4,10).

One of the contributors to this book elaborates on the work of Pyong Gap Min, a Korean-born scholar, in listing the practical needs met by immigrant congregations: fellowship (because they have been uprooted, are marginal to the new society, and must adapt in order to reroot, immigrants have a heightened need for community), maintenance of their cultural traditions (they celebrate ethnic holidays there, share ethnic food, and attempt to pass on their language and culture to their children), social services (those in need receive financial help, counseling concerning handling the new bureaucracies, and tips and opportunities from being embedded in church networks), and the achievement of status (opportunities for appointment to leadership positions within a congregation can bring prestige, power, and recognition within the immigrant community, which can compensate for the downward mobility that often accompanies migration) (Chai 1998:298-99; Min 1992). The Adventist congregations described in this paper meet similar needs. It is much more difficult for mixed congregations to fulfill such needs, because of competition over whose needs will be met, whose cultural traditions will be preserved.

Second Generation Immigrants

A prime reason why immigrants establish congregations is to provide a means of passing on their ethnic heritage to their children. However, they often instead alienate the youth, who wish to assimilate as quickly as possible (Warner 1998:25). As Niebuhr (1954

[1929]:211) noted, the transition to English language within a congregation founded by immigrants typically presents a crisis. However, such a change is necessary for self-preservation, for the American-born or -bred second generation almost always speaks English as their first language and thinks and feels about things in American ways.

Since the first generation is anxious that their children remain true to the faith, it tends to make the religion more rigid. However, the second generation see their religion and home language as part and parcel of the immigrant baggage of "foreignness" they are so eager to abandon (Herberg 1960 [1955]:16, 18-19). Such sentiments undermine the commitment of the second generation to the immigrant church, especially while it clings to the language of their ancestors. For example, although church attendance by first generation Korean immigrants is very high, it is quite low among the second generation: in New York City these contrasting attendance figures are 75% for the first generation and 5% for the second generation (Chai 1998:300).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research reported here is part of a large study of Seventh-day Adventism, which has included well over 3,000 in-depth interviews with church administrators, teachers, hospital administrators and medical personnel, pastors, students, and leading laypersons in 55 countries in all twelve divisions of the world church. Since I am an Adventist who has lived in metropolitan New York for 28 years, I was well aware of both the demographic changes taking place and the internal political tensions flowing therefrom, and ultimately decided that these were so dramatic and relevant to my general research theme that they warranted focused study.

I approached the headquarters of the two overlapping Adventist conferences whose territory included metropolitan New York, the Greater New York Conference and the Northeastern Conference, in the Fall of 1996 seeking data on the racial/ethnic breakdown of their membership. This effort proved fruitless. However, both conferences provided me with lists of churches, the language used by each for worship, their official membership, and the names and phone numbers of their pastors.

I called the pastor of every English-speaking church to ask him to go through the membership roll, place every baptized member in a racial/ethnic category, and then give me the total for each, and to subtract those members who were missing from the official membership total. As I had expected, most pastors referred me to the Church Clerks, the women who keep the membership rolls for their congregations. These are usually long-term participants who know the membership well. Since the pastors had referred me to them, the clerks proved eager to help, and I achieved a 100% response rate.

I had carried out in-depth interviews with the leadership of both conferences and a broad sample of their pastors in 1985, and had remained acutely aware of the changes there in the years since that time both as an active Adventist (the changing racial/ethnic mix in congregations and the subsequent conflicts at conference constituency meetings and on conference executive committees were frequent topics of discussion among members) and through formal follow-up interviews. While waiting for the church clerks to tabulate the requested statistics, I carried out another wave of interviews with conference leaders, past and present leaders of the Hispanic Ministers' Association and the Black

Ministerial Association, and long-serving pastors representing all major racial/ethnic groups. Here I explored their experience with the racial changes over time and the dynamics of the ensuing tensions, conflicts, and power struggles. All those interviewed proved eager to discuss such pressing issues and to present their points of view.

I also ascertained from these interviews that the membership of the non-English-speaking congregations was homogeneous--those attending Spanish-speaking churches were Hispanic, those attending Francophone churches were Haitian,[4] those attending Korean churches were Korean. This meant that there was no need to phone the clerks of these churches to ask about the ethnic breakdown of their congregations--which was just as well, since many would not have spoken sufficient English.[5]

I asked the pastors of the non-English-speaking congregations to give me the number of missing members on their rolls, generalized these to the group, and subtracted the figures so obtained when I totaled the number in each category. Since the territories of both conferences extend beyond Metropolitan New York, I excluded the churches in those segments of the conferences from my study.

Since both conferences were due to hold constituency meetings during the summer of 1997, I followed the dynamics of these closely through follow-up interviews with key respondents representing the competing racial/ethnic groups. Finally, when I completed the first draft of the paper, I asked key representative participants to comment on it.

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

RACIAL/ETHNIC CHANGE AMONG ADVENTISTS IN METROPOLITAN NEW YORK[6]

Since this paper argues the thesis that extensive demographic change within Adventism in metropolitan New York has fostered internal political conflict, it is necessary first to sketch the contours of racial/ethnic change. The extent of the demographic transformation is seen most clearly when the membership figures for 1945 are used as a baseline, for in that year the Adventist Church in most of the U.S. was reorganized along racial lines.[7] Until the end of 1944 Adventism was organized geographically, so that the nation was subdivided into local conferences. Although Adventism had grown steadily among Afro-Americans to that point, none of their pastors had been promoted to administrative positions within the church bureaucracy, which was still totally Caucasian. By the time of World War II the demands of the Afro-American pastors for such opportunities had become so strident that church leaders chose in 1944 to defuse the discontent--not by opening positions in the existing structure to them, but by creating separate conferences for Afro-American churches which could then elect their own leaders. The new black, or "regional," conferences overlapped geographically with what now became white conferences. The membership statistics for the reorganized units provide excellent data concerning the racial distribution of the membership at that time.

Until the reorganization all Adventists in the New York metropolitan area fell under the Greater New York Conference [GNYC], which had 4,499 members at the end of 1944. However, when the new racially based structure was created at the beginning of 1945, the

TABLE 1
THE RACIAL/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MEMBERS WITHIN THE TWO CONFERENCES IN METROPOLITAN NEW YORK, 1996

RACE/ETHNICITY	GNYC	%	NEC	%	TOTAL	%
West Indians	3,816	28.1%	12,306	58.9%	16,122	46.8%
Hispanics	5,804	42.8	719	3.4	6,523	18.9
Haitians	1,538	11.3	4,346	20.8	5,884	17.1
Afro-Americans	122	0.9	2,639	12.6	2,761	8.0
Caucasians	933	6.9	14	0.1	947	2.7
Africans	391	2.9	277	1.3	668	1.9
Black Central Americans	0	0.0	572	2.7	572	1.7
Koreans	430	3.2	0	0.0	430	1.2
Brazilians	232	1.7	1	0.0	233	0.7
Filipinos	146	1.1	24	0.1	170	0.5
Southern Asians	73	0.5	9	0.0	82	0.2
Chinese	75	0.6	0	0.0	75	0.2
Other	12	0.1	1	0.0	13	0.0
TOTAL	13,572	100.0	20,908	100.0	34,480	100.0

Afro-American congregations were removed from GNYC and placed in the new Northeastern Conference [NEC], which then elected Afro-American leaders. The GNYC retained the Caucasian congregations. Since congregations were highly segregated along racial lines, the separation was complete. A total of 1,817 members were transferred from the GNYC to the new NEC.[8] Almost all of these would have been Afro-Americans, for few black immigrants had entered from anywhere else up to this time. The GNYC was left with 2,682 members. The vast majority of these were Caucasians--the first Hispanic congregation was just organizing. The "Negro" conference contained 40.4% of the Adventists in the region.

Adventism continued to grow in metropolitan New York during the following decades. The earlier pattern continued initially, with most of the members being Caucasians and Afro-Americans, although the latter gradually outstripped the former in number. However, once the wave of new immigrants from the developing world gathered strength after 1965, the membership profile became increasingly diverse.[9]

It was inevitable that Adventists would be present among the new immigrants, for Adventism had been growing rapidly in the developing world. Adventists had sent out their first foreign missionaries in the 1870s, and their number then burgeoned. They had established a presence on all continents and in most major countries by the turn of the century, and the foreign membership surpassed that of North America during the 1920s. The world membership reached one million in 1955, three million in 1978, six million in 1989, and nine million in 1996 (Yost 1995:28, updated). The developing world's proportion of the total membership increased from 55.5% in 1960 to 86.0% in 1995 (derived from General Conference 1961, 1996). Meanwhile, the proportion of the world membership residing in the NAD declined from 26.7% to 9.5% during the same period (derived from General Conference Annual Statistical Reports).

By June 1996, the official membership of the GNYC within metropolitan New York had increased to 15,164, and that of the NEC to 29,369. The combined membership stood at 44,533, almost ten times that of 51 years earlier. However, the membership of both con-

TABLE 2
The Flow of Immigrants to New York from Selected Countries/Regions, 1983-1993

West Indies, Guyana	174,111
Dominican Republic	165,124
China	91,566
South America	61,018
The former U.S.SR	46,175
Haiti	42,155
Southern Asia	40,745
Central America	22,932
Korea	21,877
Philippines	21,723
Eastern Europe	20,421
Western Europe	17,666

Source: Abstracted from U.S. Census Statistics

ferences, and especially that of the NEC, is exaggerated because missing members remain on the rolls.[10] After excluding missing members as described above in the segment on research methods, I arrived at an estimated real membership of 20,908 in the NEC and 13,572 in GNYC, for a total of 34,480. The right column in Table 1 shows how the total membership now subdivides racially and ethnically: the two categories used in 1945 have now been replaced by great diversity. (See Table 1).

In recent years, New York has attracted large numbers of immigrants from many countries and regions of the world (see Table 2). Adventism has not drawn from all immigrant groups in proportion to their numbers, but has done best among those groups where it is a presence in their home countries--where it has a large membership and is relatively well known. Three groups in particular stand out among the Adventist membership in metropolitan New York--English-speaking West Indians, Hispanics, and Haitians--who now together make up almost 83% of the total Adventist membership. While in recent years New York has received strong flows of immigrants from the areas from which these groups are drawn--Jamaica, Guyana, and other English-speaking islands of the Caribbean; the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico,[11] and parts of Central and South America; and Haiti--it has also drawn large numbers from other places, such as China, the former U.S.S.R., and Southern Asia, very few of whom are Adventists.

The large immigrant groups among the Adventist membership grew initially because the general flow of immigrants from those regions included a steady stream of Adventists. However, as time passed, these groups also expanded because of the evangelistic zeal of many of the newcomers--a zeal which was so successful that the conferences fostered it by transferring resources to immigrant evangelism. Indeed, data from a study of Hispanic Adventists in the U.S. indicate that 75% of first generation Adventists were baptized after arriving there (Hernandez 1995:35). Moreover, because most immigrants were young, their fertility was high, and consequently their congregations soon included many children and youth.

Meanwhile, the growth-rate among American Adventists--both Caucasian and Afro-American--had first slowed and then become negative. Interviewees estimated that the number of Caucasian members in the region had climbed to about 3,500 by 1970 (interviews)[12], but has since plunged to fewer than 1,000, barely one-third of their total in 1945

and only 2.7% of the total membership. These include three congregations of recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, speaking Romanian, Hungarian and Ukrainian. While the number of Afro-Americans in the NEC equaled the number of English-speaking West Indians as recently as the mid-1970s (interviews), today they are barely one-fifth of the latter and they comprise only 8.0% of the total Adventist membership in the region (see Table 1). Both groups have lost much of their zeal and effectiveness at evangelistic outreach. They have also failed to retain a large proportion of their youth, so that their constituencies have aged, resulting in low fertility. Moreover, they have experienced flight and out-migration as their members have reacted negatively to finding themselves in congregations where they are outnumbered by immigrants or have chosen to retire to the South. Indeed, all the formerly English-speaking "white" congregations are now very mixed racially, and only three of the 56 English-speaking congregations in the NEC, where Afro-Americans were previously dominant, now have Afro-American majorities--and all three are small, with memberships of less than 100.

The decline of the two groups that were dominant in 1945 and remained so as recently as 1970 has been so dramatic--both relatively and absolutely--that today almost 90% of the Adventist members in the region are immigrants or youthful members of immigrant families (see Table 1).[13]

THE IMPACT OF RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY ON THE ADVENTIST POLITY

Because Adventism originated in the U.S., began to spread to other countries only in the 1870s, and had only a small presence in Europe during the period of massive European immigration to the U.S., the American church gained relatively few members from abroad during that period. Within Europe Adventism grew fastest initially in Germany, and there were consequently two small German-speaking congregations in New York City, some of whose members were undoubtedly converted after migrating to the U.S. Internal political tensions in the wake of an influx of immigrants were experienced only with the coming of the new immigrants, because of their much larger numbers. Rather than fragmenting, as has been common among Protestants, Adventism has followed the Catholic model, containing its diversity and maintaining its organizational unity because of its centralized international structure and its vision of itself as God's "Remnant Church," bearing a special message of warning and preparation to earth's final generation.

Nevertheless, the dramatic demographic transformation of Adventism has resulted in competition and conflict within its polity in metropolitan New York. This has been intensified by the political structure of Adventism. Students of religion usually list three possible authority structures--congregational, presbyterian, and hierarchical--into which all the mainline Christian denominations fall (Ammerman 1997:51-52). The Adventist structure does not fit any of these, but is a mixed and complex type, which its leaders call "representative." It is multilayered and hierarchical, with democratic trappings befitting a group born in the U.S. The latter allow significant freedoms to congregations and invest delegates chosen by congregations with considerable power at the level of the local conference.

The congregations are situated at the base of the structure. These are grouped geo-

graphically into conferences--in the U.S., as was noted above, into one of two systems of geographically overlapping race-based conferences.[14] The 51 conferences in the U.S. are grouped into eight union conferences, or "unions," and all the unions throughout the world are, in turn, grouped into the 12 Divisions of the General Conference. The General Conference, which is located in suburban Washington, DC, occupies the position at the top of the hierarchical pyramid. Another indication of Adventism's American origins is that the head of each entity is called not a bishop or pope, but a president.

Many congregational issues are decided locally, by the "church board," which is made up of pastor, elders, and the heads of the various departments of the local church, by the "board of elders" if the church is large, or by a church business meeting open to all members in good standing. The congregation controls membership--it admits new members, disciplines those who have offended, and occasionally drops the names of those who have disappeared; it also elects its lay leaders, implements programs, and disburses those funds given as "local offerings." Since the congregational polity decides such issues as variations in the form of worship, what kinds of music are acceptable, what events will be celebrated and the nature of the celebrations, the focus of outreach programs, and the language in which worship is conducted, a change in which group controls that polity can make a great difference to who feels at home in the congregation.

However, the autonomy of the congregation is severely limited by powers vested in the conference. The bulk of the income--tithes and other offerings--is sent to the conference, which pays the pastors and has the ultimate voice in selecting who will pastor each congregation (including the ethnicity of the pastor) and when a pastor is moved. The conference also allocates funds for such items as evangelism and subsidies to church schools. The conference's ultimate weapon should there be conflict with a congregation is that it holds title to the church building once it has been built or purchased by the congregation. The extent to which the conference is sensitive to the needs of a congregation can therefore have a considerable impact on the happiness of its members.

Adventists call their system representative: the leadership of each structural layer is elected by delegates representing the components of the layer below. Thus, congregations choose delegates, whose number varies with the size of the congregations and who normally include their pastor, to conference constituency meetings. The main task of the latter is to elect the conference president, other officers and department heads, who are all usually clergy, and its executive committee, which constitutionally must include some laypersons. The delegates elect a nominating committee, a process that is often manipulated by the conference leaders and also, on occasion, by segments within the constituency. This committee, which is chaired by the union president, who often plays an activist role, recommends a single name for each position. While those nominated are usually then approved by a vote of the delegates, some may be rejected or, rather, have their names "sent back to the committee."

The conference executive committee in turn chooses delegates to the union constituency meeting. Because these normally include the conference officers and some other clergy, this body, and its nominating committee, includes a much higher proportion of church employees. The unions in turn choose delegates to the quinquennial session of the General Conference, which chooses leadership and department heads of the General Conference and its Divisions. At this level the vast majority of delegates are union and conference

officials and other church employees, who are typically wary about rocking the boat and unwilling to appear to be in opposition to church leaders, on whose favor they are dependent for their careers and promotions.

The Adventist structure is thus a mix of local autonomy in some issues, federalism at the conference level (because of the role of congregational delegates at its constituency meetings), and a hierarchical system. The latter's influence is felt at the conference through the role of the union president as chair of the nominating committee and via pressures from above on the conference leaders once they have been elected. Its influence on the congregation is felt as the conference chooses and pays the salary of its pastor, pressures him to implement its programs, and holds title to its real estate. The moral authority of the General Conference, which can inspire enthusiasm, fear, and obedience from both employees and members, is rooted in the status of the General Conference session and the leaders elected there as "the voice of God on earth."[15]

The Adventist political structure can heighten conflict at the conference level because of the openness of the struggle there between groups of delegates, the majority of whom are laity and therefore more difficult to control. Behind election battles lie competition for resources, such as which pastors (from which ethnic groups) will be added, how they will be distributed among congregations, how finances for evangelism will be disbursed (among competing ethnic groups), and the size of subsidies for schools and of loans for those congregations purchasing buildings. The conference president is often caught between the wishes of the constituency, which can refuse to re-elect him if he alienates sufficient segments within it, and pressures from the hierarchy, which can facilitate his future promotions.

The fact that the conference holds title to real estate limits the options of an Adventist congregation that faces demographic changes because of an influx of immigrants: its leaders usually cannot sell their church building and move to another location. Congregations usually welcome newcomers, for their presence reflects the success of the denomination in its world mission. If the immigrants speak the same language as the congregation, tensions are likely to increase as their numbers grow, and especially when they begin to assume leadership positions. Those speaking a foreign language are usually deemed to be much less threatening. Because the Adventist system is more flexible, such groups can begin to create separate structures for themselves more easily than their counterparts within Catholicism. They typically begin by creating a separate adult Sabbath School class for those of their language, and from there organize separate worship services and then their own congregation. Because Adventists worship on Saturday, it is relatively easy to rent a church belonging to a Sunday-keeping congregation while saving to purchase their own building.

The experiences of the two conferences in metropolitan New York with the demographic changes have varied from one another because their racial/ethnic profiles, and therefore the balance of the competing racial/ethnic groups, differ from one another (see Table 1).

The Northeastern Conference

This conference has had a clear, and rapidly increasing, West Indian majority for nearly two decades. During this time it has faced two foci of conflict in turn. When the West

Indians were first gaining a majority in English-speaking congregations, there was competition for leadership positions there, and bitterness when Afro-Americans were displaced. (Both Afro-Americans and immigrants value the status that holding church positions can bring because of the paucity of prestige positions available to them in other sectors of society.) One West Indian pastor who had presided over an especially difficult transition later analyzed it in a dissertation and then published a version of the dissertation as a book. He noted that the experience had been "alarmingly stressful" to Afro-Americans, who had lost control and leadership of their congregations and had subsequently been obliged to adapt to new ways of worship and church management. The result had been "divisiveness and suspicion,...strife and ill-will" (Ashmeade 1991:16-17). Since the West Indians had finally gained a majority within the congregation, they now had "almost total control," as the Afro-Americans had had before them (19). His appeal for the two groups to work together stirred up a storm within the conference, which included the publication of a "critical" review of the book by an Afro-American pastor, who angrily accused the West Indians of having organized to gain power and control, and of having neglected evangelism among Afro-Americans (Creech 1991:3-5). Such tensions and conflicts were most overt during the period in which the West Indians gained power within their congregations. They are much less obvious now because of the disparity in numbers: the transition has been completed in most congregations. Some congregations that continue to have a significant minority of Afro-American members are careful to continue to elect some of them to positions in order to foster ethnic harmony.

In spite of the rapid growth of its West Indian membership, and their gaining of majorities among the members in increasing numbers of congregations, the conference administration was very slow to employ West Indian pastors. This was reminiscent of an earlier situation in London, where the mismatches between a totally Caucasian pastoral force and congregations that had become mostly or completely West Indian had led to great bitterness, and ultimately to the concerted withholding of tithes from the conference. The tension there became so great that eventually the president of the General Conference, the leader of the world church, felt obliged to intervene personally. The resulting "Pearson Package," negotiated in 1977, provided funds from the General Conference to bring established West Indian pastors to serve in England (interviews).

The situation in New York was resolved differently, when competitive pressures were brought to bear. The disquiet over the paucity of West Indian pastors gave the "white" conference, the GNYC, its opportunity to expand into West Indian communities at a time when it felt its survival threatened by the decline of its Caucasian membership. Since Adventist West Indians were not used to organizational segregation and did not share the bitterness towards Caucasians that Afro-Americans often held, a minority of these immigrants had already joined GNYC congregations close to their homes. Realizing that further growth among this community was possible, the GNYC chose to hire pastors from among the ranks of West Indians who had migrated in the hope of finding positions in the U.S. It began tentatively, with a single such pastor, and then, as he proved successful in attracting Adventist West Indians and in evangelizing others, it added more until it currently has 22. Informants explained that the success of this strategy and the threat it presented to the NEC forced the latter to follow suit (interviews). However, West Indian pastors inevitably remained a small minority among the NEC pastors for a considerable time.

Their numbers were bolstered when some unemployed immigrant pastors proved themselves by engaging in self- sponsored evangelism and then offering the congregations they had raised up--along with themselves--to the conference.

Once the West Indians had achieved a majority among the NEC membership, they found it difficult to achieve the next step--the winning of political dominance there. A long-term Afro- American president was well entrenched: since he could count on a cadre of Afro-American pastors to manipulate who was elected to nominating committees and had no compunction about punishing anyone who opposed him, he could control constituency meetings. For example, when the Afro-American pastor of the conference's largest church, which is situated in Harlem, challenged him unsuccessfully for the presidency, he punished the challenger by moving him to an isolated church with fewer than 50 members in Niagara Falls, at the opposite end of the state. Given this situation, it was not surprising that the West Indians were reluctant to risk retaliation and stirring up further antagonism by trying to replace him. Consequently, they contented themselves with gradually gaining some of the lesser positions. By 1982 they held the positions of both secretary and treasurer of the conference. However, the situation continued to rankle with them because they felt neglected by the president, whose position in the conference was pre-eminent: interviewees pointed to the slowness to hire West Indian pastors as the most obvious evidence of this (interviews).

The political frustration of the West Indians peaked when this long-term president was succeeded in 1985 by another Afro-American, who organized well among the pastors and was supported by visiting Adventist Afro-American luminaries. The latter argued that the conference had been created in order to give Afro-Americans opportunities to occupy leadership positions, so that the position "rightly" belonged to one of them rather than a foreign usurper. The campaign also made good use of the West Indian fear of being viewed as "pushy." However, this president held office for only one term. He was defeated in 1988 after his insensitive remarks galvanized opposition, allowing him to be dubbed as anti-West Indian. West Indians on the Nominating Committee then declared that it was time to elect "one of our own," and succeeded in doing so (interviews).

Although several Afro-American interviewees reported that members of their community felt subsequently that they would never again see one of their own elected as president because of the changed ethnic balance in the conference (interviews), the West Indian president was challenged by an Afro-American department director when he ran for his fourth three-year term in 1997. As a result of accumulated bad blood, the challenger came within a single vote of victory in the crucial vote within the nominating committee; moreover, that committee then chose to prevent the president from punishing the challenger by blackballing his re-election to his previous post. However, the president demonstrated that he had learned well from the practices of his predecessors when, after the elections, he rewarded his key supporters by according them recognition or bringing them to pastorates in New York City and punished those who had supported his rival by relocating them to churches far from their homes and much, much smaller in size than what they had previously pastored (interviews).

This turbulence occurred in spite of elaborate endeavors by the president to keep the peace between Afro-Americans and West Indians throughout his period in office. He has taken pains to ensure that both West Indians and Afro-Americans are represented among

the conference officers and department heads, and has rotated the ethnicity of the pastors serving churches and "balanced" the ethnicity of new pastors hired.[16] This concern has considered not only the balance between West Indians and Afro-Americans, but also the distribution of pastors among the various West Indian islands.

However, this care to include is limited to the West Indians and Afro-Americans. Haitians, who are in fact now the second-largest group in the NEC--considerably larger now than Afro-Americans, at least in the metropolitan area--felt so isolated that a segment of them switched to the GNYC at a time when it was so desperate about its declining numbers that it was willing to welcome all comers. The Haitians within the NEC continue to feel left out because they have only one representative in the Conference office, the Haitian coordinator. Indeed, they have no more representation at the conference and fewer pastors than the Hispanic group, which has less than one-sixth their membership. Because of such poor opportunities for advancement, Haitians have recently, in a move reminiscent of those taken by Methodist and Presbyterian Koreans, pressed for the formation of their own conference.

The Greater New York Conference

This even more diverse conference has faced less overt conflict at the congregational level. In part this is because its non-English speaking segment is larger and such congregations are usually spawned as new groups, rather than competing for control of existing structures. When English-speaking West Indians first moved into some Caucasian congregations, they were usually welcomed because the latter were already in decline and, at least in some cases, having difficulty keeping up with mortgage payments. As the proportion of West Indians in these congregations increased, they took control fairly easily, since those Caucasians who resented the changes usually chose to exit individually rather than fight while others worked together fairly comfortably with the newcomers during what usually proved to be a period of transition. There was major conflict in only one congregation, the oldest in Brooklyn, which had originally been mostly Scandinavian in membership but had then, as neighborhoods changed over the years, become predominantly Italian. When an influx of West Indians resulted eventually in a transfer of leadership, a large segment of the Caucasian minority reacted negatively, breaking away and forming a new congregation, which has itself since become very diverse. Members of other formerly Caucasian but now multiethnic churches watch nervously when an influx of minorities from evangelism or immigration changes the balance of power yet again. Meanwhile, several new West Indian congregations were spawned when their mother churches in the Bronx became overcrowded. Since these had to find their own buildings, they avoided the discomfort that is often associated with changing racial/ethnic balances in existing congregations.

On the other hand, the extent of the GNYC's racial/ethnic diversity has created high tension in conference politics. Because the conference has no majority group, the Hispanics and West Indians, which have become the two largest segments, have increasingly vied with each other for power and influence as they have grown, while the declining Caucasians, who have always regarded the conference as theirs, have sought to hold onto power. The latter, now fourth in size (to the Haitians in third place), retained the presi-

dency until 1997 by playing the two largest groups against one another and with help from the NAD leaders, who saw retaining a Caucasian president as the best way to avoid civil war in the Conference and as essential if Adventism were to have any chance of again reaching out to white New Yorkers.

The Hispanic Ministers' Association, formed in the late 1970s, fought for an increasing measure of independence within the conference under the leadership of their elected "Spanish Coordinator," sometimes going further with demands for a separate conference. In an attempt to placate their demands, a Dominican was appointed secretary-treasurer of the conference in 1980. When the latter was called to a position higher in the hierarchy in 1988, a Puerto Rican was elected as secretary, which seemed to establish an understanding that that position now belonged to the Hispanics. A Caucasian was chosen as treasurer, which became a separate position.

Feeling overlooked, the West Indians organized to gain representation at the conference level. Their initial success, in 1985, moved a single departmental position into their column. They added a second such position in 1988, but remained locked out of the three leadership positions. The Black Ministerial Association, formed in 1990, mobilized the West Indian laity behind them and readied them for an attempt to cut the political pie more favorably at the constituency meeting scheduled for 1991.

The growth of the immigrant groups within the GNYC had escalated under the presidency, from 1980 through 1994, of a multilingual Caucasian who, as a former missionary, was strongly committed to evangelism. While immigrants were brought into positions in the conference under his leadership, he gave no indication that he saw either Hispanics or West Indians as future leaders of the conference. Indeed, when it became clear, as the 1991 constituency meeting approached, that the Hispanic secretary was planning to run for the presidency, he felt threatened, fearing that the challenger would garner solid Hispanic support.

Consequently, the constituency meeting in 1991 was tense and unruly. However, the focus of contention was not the presidency, for neither immigrant group felt ready to pursue that position, so that the secretary's challenge to the president failed. With incumbent Caucasians holding both the presidency and treasury and with this being the president's final term, competition between Hispanics and West Indians focused on the position of secretary. When the president, once he had been re-elected, used his influence to prevent his challenger from being returned to his position and successfully maneuvered on the nominating committee on behalf of a West Indian, he set the scene for open conflict. Hispanic delegates, feeling betrayed, refused to support the nominee, while the latter's recent arrival in the conference and the obvious politicking behind his nomination lost him support among some West Indians also. Consequently, the delegates voted to return his name to the nominating committee. The atmosphere became so tense that the chairperson frequently called delegates to prayer in attempts to calm their passions. Tempers flared, and friction between ethnic groups was at an all-time high. The session deadlocked, forcing two adjournments, first for 30 days and then for six months. However, when it became clear, after the long cooling-off period, that there was no other well-known bilingual, well educated Hispanic candidate available, another West Indian was elected to the post with broad support.[17] When the Caucasian treasurer moved to another position some months later, he was replaced by a Hispanic, giving Caucasians, West

Indians, and Hispanics one officer's position apiece.

In the months preceding the 1994 constituency meeting, when a new president was due to be elected, rumors circulated that West Indians were preparing to run for the post. Since no one could be elected without support from at least two of the ethnic communities, these rumors fostered the formation of a Hispanic-Caucasian coalition designed to prevent such an outcome, an effort that was abetted by the NAD. The Hispanic Ministers' Association decided that the ideal candidate would be another bilingual Caucasian who would be acceptable to them because he could speak Spanish and to Caucasians merely because he was white. Meeting with the Hispanic Vice-president of the NAD before the session, they settled on an outside, unknown Caucasian candidate who had been born in Peru of missionary parents and had later served in South America, and who happened to be the husband of the Vice-president's secretary. The Vice-president helped procure the desired outcome when he used his position as an opportunity to meet with the nominating committee. The re-election of the other officers meant that the same three ethnic groups retained one position each.

However, the new president quickly alienated both groups responsible for his election and created deep tensions between them. He earned the enmity of Hispanics by altering the formula for dividing funds for evangelism, which had previously favored them, by removing some the privileges the Spanish Coordinator had previously enjoyed because his constituency was the largest, and by supporting a Caucasian attempt to get rid of the ethnic coordinators, who were critiqued as hampering the working of the conference's departmental system, on the grounds that these positions were not provided for in its bylaws. After a bitter struggle within the conference executive committee, the latter attempt was defeated, and the ethnic coordinators were given departmental status as directors of ethnic ministry in the bylaws. The independence of the ethnic groups was also strengthened when changes in the bylaws abandoned the previous system, which had divided the conference into geographic districts each containing a variety of ethnic churches, and replaced it with race-based sub-conferences, which governed much of the distribution of funds and had the power to select new pastors. This system raised racial tensions because it threw the groups into direct competition with one another. The Caucasian pastors felt especially shortchanged by the new system because their multiethnic congregations lacked political clout owing to their low membership, even though their per capita tithes were larger.[18] Consequently, their congregations were forced to subsidize the salaries of the pastors of the poorer immigrant groups, while most of them were obliged to pastor two churches, which irked them greatly. They also resented being forced into a leftover, politically weak "multicultural" sub-conference--which, in addition to their own very mixed congregations, also included Chinese and Ghanaian congregations--because there were now no Caucasian congregations as such.

Despite the establishment of sub-conferences based on ethnic groups and their sense that they were now better represented among conference officers and staff, the Hispanic pastors remained discontented. They eventually persuaded the GNYC to approve a feasibility study of a plan to create a separate Hispanic conference. They held that this was needed for two reasons: their distinct language made the departments of an English-dominated conference of little use to them, and their background in the Inter-American and South American Divisions of the Adventist Church had given their work different foci,

which involved the membership much more heavily in church activities. They justified the proposal in terms of the missiological principle that self-governing churches are also self-propagating, arguing that a Hispanic conference would be able to focus better on the needs of the Spanish-speaking churches and foster growth among Hispanics more effectively,[19] and on the basis that the membership and tithe income of a Hispanic regional conference within the Atlantic Union would be greater than that of three of the existing conferences there.[20]

However, a major consideration for the Hispanics, as with the Haitians in the NEC, was to create additional administrative positions for their clergy. Some of the better-educated laity in their congregations had been achieving upward mobility, and the pastors did not want to be left behind. While the Adventist system allows for little variation in salary level, it has come to define a move from pastor of a congregation into conference administration as an increase in power and prestige. Consequently, the creation of a separate Hispanic conference would have the effect of making more room for upward mobility among their clergy. The Hispanic pastors felt disadvantaged because, unlike Afro-Americans, who had in recent years won promotion to higher positions in the church hierarchy as a result of gaining administrative experience in their own conferences, they had few opportunities to gain such experience and thereby demonstrate administrative ability.

Since all the pastors of the Hispanic churches had been born, trained, and had originally pastored in Latin countries, they also claimed that they felt uncomfortable within a structure where American mores fostered a great deal of independence among pastors rather than the strict control from administrators that they had been accustomed to in Latin America. However, it was this concern which made a minority of the pastors uncomfortable with the proposal, for they feared that the future presidents of a Hispanic conference could become dictators, like many Latin political leaders (interviews).

The views of the majority of Hispanic pastors were usually not shared by those who, although from a Hispanic (typically Puerto Rican) background, had been born or educated on the U.S. mainland. These now usually pastored formerly Caucasian English-speaking churches which were part of the "multicultural" group and were attracting increasing numbers of acculturated Hispanics who preferred to worship in English. A statement arguing against the position adopted by the Hispanic Ministers' Association, which was published by one of their peers who taught at the Adventist Seminary, reflected their integrationist views: "...the very growth of the Latino church raises serious questions about the benefits of raced-based institutions as a major force for church growth" (Hernandez 1995:50).

The higher administrative levels of the American church (union and division) are reflexively opposed to proposals for additional conferences because these would increase the number of administrative salaries required. Nevertheless, in 1996 the leaders of the Atlantic Union were persuaded, in spite of financial problems, to appoint Hispanic and Haitian Vice-presidents at the union level in an an attempt to undercut the demands for ethnic conferences. However, the Hispanic pastors saw this as an indication of their power and as proof that their plan would ultimately be realized.

As the president of the GNYC struggled to juggle his difficult relations with the various ethnic groups within his constituency, he adopted the practice of presenting different faces to different audiences: for example, while he appeared supportive of the moves

towards a separate Hispanic conference when with Hispanics, he argued against the proposal when with other groups. This practice led to turmoil and deep divisions at meetings of the conference executive committee, which contained members from all groups. Ultimately all groups became alienated from him, a situation that was reflected in a move for a vote of no confidence in him by the committee.

With the 1997 GNYC constituency meeting approaching, the president of the Hispanic Ministers' Association contacted his West Indian counterpart in an endeavor to create an alliance between the two largest ethnic groups in the conference. They agreed to coalesce in an attempt to depose the incumbent Caucasian president, to each nominate candidates from among their members for the position, and to give their joint support to whomever won. Having agreed to cooperate, the West Indian and Hispanic pastors met together for Communion, thereby symbolically sealing the deal.

When the nominating committee met, five candidates were nominated for the presidency--one Hispanic, two West Indians, and two Caucasians, including the incumbent. After early ballots had removed the other candidates, the final vote was between the Hispanic and a West Indian. The former, a bilingual Dominican who was director of the conference's youth department, won by two votes. When the nominee's name was brought to the floor, some delegates attempted to have it sent back to the committee, but this failed by a wide margin. Meanwhile, the Hispanics on the Nominating committee had joined with the West Indians to elect the runner up in the presidential vote as secretary, in place of the incumbent West Indian. When the Hispanic treasurer was re-elected, this left Caucasians out of the GNYC's leadership triumvirate for the first time.

The GNYC was the second conference in North America to elect a Hispanic president and the first to elect a foreign-born Hispanic.[21] Less than a month later the neighboring New Jersey conference also elected a Hispanic president, this time a Puerto Rican. New immigrants have thus gained the presidency in both of the conferences based in metropolitan New York as well as in the neighboring conference across the Hudson River. They are following the path already trodden by Adventists in England and Canada.

The political coup and sudden transfer of power in the GNYC inevitably heightened the tensions among the various ethnic groups, for some lost power in order for others to gain it. The new president therefore announced that his first priority would be to try to foster peace and harmony among the constituency, and especially the clergy. However, shortly after the election every Caucasian working in the conference office either left the conference or resigned from church employment. Three of the Caucasian pastors also accepted calls to other conferences, while others sought for follow suit. Although some of those exiting had personal reasons for their decisions that were independent of the transition in leadership, the total effect of the exodus was dramatic, especially when the conference had difficulty attracting replacement Caucasian pastors.[22]

Meanwhile, having had one of their number chosen as president of the GNYC, the Hispanic pastors now find themselves divided over whether they should push ahead with their plan to try to create a separate Hispanic conference, or instead consolidate their gains within the GNYC. Some argue that the conference will become Hispanic by default if they bide their time, for the growth of their segment is likely to spurt under Hispanic leadership. Moreover, they already hold two of the officer positions and a total of 11 of the 23 positions at the conference. A major figure in the thrust for a separate conference stated

that if they could gain the appointment of a full-time Spanish-speaking evangelist, so that the Spanish coordinator would then be free to concentrate on administering the Hispanic sub-conference, they might then be willing to abandon the goal of separation. Others, less patient or less confident that they will retain the presidency hereafter, are concerned about losing momentum. They support their case by arguing that if Hispanics gain a conference of their own, this would have the effect of making it easier for other minority groups to win their own conferences, and that self-government would result in more rapid growth for them also (interviews).

However, while continued growth may perhaps allow the larger immigrant groups to become self-governing, and therefore also self-propagating, who is to govern declining groups, such as Caucasians and Afro-Americans, and save them from oblivion?

Across the Conferences

It was noted above that the GNYC, when hard-pressed by the decline of its traditional Caucasian base, trespassed into NEC ethnic "territory" when it set out to evangelize West Indians and later accepted a breakaway Haitian congregation, which allowed it to evangelize yet another "black" constituency. The NEC, in retaliation, chose to open evangelism among Hispanics, who had traditionally "belonged" to the GNYC, while its Afro-American pastors suggested that the West Indians pastoring in the "white conference" were traitors. Today, the conferences continue to mistrust one another, being fully aware of the competition between them for members. For example, the NEC accuses the GNYC of planting new congregations close to its churches in the Bronx in an attempt to steal its sheep as part of a ploy to become dominant among the West Indians there. Discontented groups are also able to play one conference against the other. This has weakened discipline, since those being disciplined have the option of seeking acceptance by the competing conference.

However, Hispanics and especially Haitians are weakened by being divided between the conferences. Rump groups are powerless: Haitians in the GNYC lost pastors because of a budget crunch there in spite of their numerical growth. However, the new Hispanic and Haitian vice- presidents of the Atlantic Union have set out to strengthen the influence of the segments they represent, bringing their pastors from the various conferences together in an attempt to unify them and coordinate their activities.

In the early 1980s, the then president of the Atlantic Union, who was well aware of the declining Caucasian membership in the GNYC and that otherwise the two conferences were beginning to look more and more alike in their diversity, recommended that the GNYC be merged into the NEC. However, his recommendation was dropped when it created an uproar of protest within the GNYC. The membership of that conference has grown substantially since that time, almost doubling since 1983, but the whole of the net growth is comprised of new immigrants. The NAD took strong steps to prevent a West Indian from being elected president of the GNYC in 1994 partly because this would have meant that the two conferences, which were created to cater to the needs of different racial groups, would have then had presidents of the same ethnicity. When I, in my interviews with pastors during 1996, asked if there was reason to maintain the separate identities of the two conferences given their racial/ethnic similarities, I found considerable opposition

to their merger among Caucasian and West Indian GNYC pastors in particular. These argued that the differing cultures of the two conferences made it difficult and unwise to try to meld them: the culture of the "black" conferences supported a much more authoritarian leadership than was common among the "white" conferences, where leadership tended to be shared more among the officers and to be exercised more consensually. However, the recent election of a Hispanic as president of the GNYC has raised fears among some that it too will, over time, embrace a more authoritarian leadership culture.

CONCLUSION

Adventism in metropolitan New York has experienced greater internal turmoil than other denominations as a result of the influx of "new immigrants" since 1968. There are two reasons for this. First, the face of Adventism has been transformed to a greater extent than that of any other denomination: this is the one denomination whose membership now contains a substantial majority of new immigrants. Moreover, because of the extent of its transformation, this has also been more rapid than that of others. This dynamic inevitably heightened its level of internal tension, as almost every congregation and both conferences faced dramatic changes.

Secondly, Adventism's complex structure has exacerbated the turmoil. Because this is centralized and hierarchical, it has experienced more tensions than it would have if its structure had been congregational, for all racial/ethnic groups are thrown into the conference polity. Its pot is also very mixed because it has retained its unity: Pentecostals, taken collectively, are proving even more successful among immigrants than Adventists; however, they are already fragmented, and they continue to subdivide along racial/ethnic lines.[23] Moreover, its representative system makes Adventism's tensions more visible than they would be in an authoritarian system such as those of the Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons: its annual election of officers within congregations and its triennial conference constituency meetings provide forums where competition for power and resources become overt.

Which groups are more conflicted, and under what conditions? Small groups of new immigrants, such as the Filipinos and Southern Asians within multiethnic congregations and the Chinese within the GNYC and the Hispanics within the NEC, tend to accept the weakness of their situations. Groups that are declining in relative size, such as the Caucasians in both the GNYC and their congregations and the Afro-Americans in both the NEC and their congregations, fight and maneuver to avoid losing power. Rapidly growing groups which gain influence, such as the Hispanics in the GNYC and the West Indians in both conferences and their congregations, learn to exercise it--with increasing confidence. Foreign language groups, such as the Hispanics and Haitians, may, if they grow rapidly and begin to mobilize resources, embrace separatist ambitions, just as the Presbyterian and Methodist Koreans have done.

Because the Adventist membership was smaller than that of the mainline denominations, its congregations outside the "Adventist ghettos" that exist around Adventist colleges and hospitals were forced to gather their members from areas geographically much larger than the typical mainline parish: their members have typically been scattered throughout several neighborhoods or suburbs. Adventists therefore got used to commut-

ing to church well before mainline congregations noticed that rapid transportation was allowing a good preacher, a particular theological emphasis, the featuring of a particular kind of music, or a reputation for "high church" or "glory and praise" worship to draw members from beyond parish boundaries, or Nancy Ammerman coined the term "niche congregation." In recent years, as Adventists have become larger, with more congregations and greater diversity--for example, theologically, in level of education, and in musical taste-- members have taken the mobility they were used to a step further, and increasingly commute past congregations closer to home to the ones of their choice. For example, Ammerman reports that a survey of the members of Berean Church, a predominantly Afro-American Adventist congregation in West Adams, Los Angeles, found that more than 60% of the members drive over 10 miles to church--from across the metropolitan area (1997:94). Similarly, the membership of Ephesus Church in Harlem is over 2,000, but the vast majority of the members do not live there--indeed, the majority commute from the suburbs (interviews). The same phenomenon is also well advanced within the Adventist ghettos, where many Adventists take advantage of being able to choose among an array of congregations available to them (interviews). The emergence of ethnic churches, often worshiping in foreign languages, has added to this pattern, as immigrants prove willing to travel many miles to be "at home" among their own on the Sabbath.

After seeing my data showing the changing face of Adventism in Metropolitan New York, the leaders of the NAD expressed great concern about the failure of Adventism to reach Caucasians in major North American cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto, and announced that special funds would be made available for focused evangelism there. When I pointed out to the NAD president that Adventist representation among African-Americans in New York was almost as poor, he shrugged off my comment. An evangelistic campaign featuring a well-known Caucasian evangelist preaching in Manhattan and beamed via satellite to many sites within the metropolitan area has been planned for the Fall of 1999. However, I predict, based on the data surveyed above, that the West Indian Adventists will enthusiastically bring their friends and acquaintances to these meetings, far outnumbering Caucasians present, so that most of the baptisms will be of members of the former ethnic group.

The influx of new immigrants in recent years has reshaped the face of both the Adventist congregations and the Adventist polity in New York. The extent to which this impact will be lasting will depend on several factors: future migration patterns, the extent to which second-generation immigrants become rooted in Adventism, and the extent to which the latter retain their ethnic identity. It was noted above that the American-born-and-bred children of immigrants are typically more fluent in English than in the language spoken at home, and that in their urgency to accommodate to their new society many turn away from the churches of their parents. My research indicates that this pattern is being repeated among the children of new immigrant Adventists (Lawson 1999). Consequently, although the impact of the recent immigrants has made a dramatic change in Adventism in the New York region, it is too early to claim that this is a permanent reshaping of its face.

NOTES

* Address for correspondence, Ronald Lawson, Department of Urban Studies, Queens College CUNY, Flushing, NY 11367-1597, rlawson@cloud9.net The author wishes to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for two fellowships which provided time for data gathering, PSC-CUNY which helped with travel funds, and the Louisville Institute for a fellowship which provided time for data analysis.

1. Metropolitan New York is defined as New York City and Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester and Rockland counties, the four suburban counties located in New York State.
2. This datum was derived from data supplied the author by Monte Sahlin, director of the North American Office of Church Information and Research. However, this proportion was reduced somewhat in 1995 and 1996, when larger numbers of Caucasians were baptized as a result of Net95 and Net96, huge evangelistic campaigns transmitted throughout the Division by satellite. This method of evangelism emerged from the Anglo Evangelism Task Force at the NAD Think Tank on Evangelism. The programs received less publicity in minority churches, few of which chose to participate (they made up only 6% of the total participating), and these often used alternative equipment such as videos rather than purchasing the costly satellite equipment (Sahlin 1997a: 3,9,10,12,25).
3. Given the tendency in recent years to retain many of the missing members on the membership rolls, there is no doubt that the number of active Caucasian members is actually declining steadily.
4. Immigrants from Guadeloupe and Martinique are forced to attend English-speaking congregations because they do not understand the Haitian Patois.
5. Although those classified as West Indian were drawn from many islands and also Guyana, and those classified as Hispanic came from many countries from the Dominican Republic to Mexico to Argentina, I made no attempt to have the church clerks give me a detailed breakdown: those from English-speaking churches commented that while they knew who fell into the broad West Indian category, they would not have been able to subdivide it with certainty, and the language problems mentioned made it impossible for me to discover whether a breakdown would have been possible for the Spanish-speaking churches. However, I was able to get impressionistic data from my interviews with pastors.
6. The data presented in this segment are taken from Lawson (1998a).
7. Niebuhr noted that the vast majority of Afro-Americans belonged to "Negro" denominations, and that even among the so-called "integrated" denominations almost all Afro-Americans attended segregated congregations and most were separated also into special conferences or districts (1954 [1929]:239-240). Adventist Afro-Americans had long attended segregated congregations; at this point these were joined together to form separate conferences.
8. The NEC had a total of 2,228 members, for its territory extended to Boston and Buffalo; however, this paper limits itself to the New York metropolitan area.
9. Although the flow of "new immigrants" burgeoned after the passage of the Hart-

Cellar Immigration Act of 1965, some such immigrants entered before that milestone: the founding of the first Adventist Hispanic congregation in New York was in 1944, while the first Haitian congregation dates from 1956.

10. This is a much more common occurrence today than 50 years earlier, when administrators pressured pastors to "clean the rolls." There is still considerable such pressure within the Hispanic culture.
11. Since Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens they are not technically immigrants. However, when Adventists from there move to New York they usually join Spanish-speaking congregations. In recent years the influx from Puerto Rico has been much smaller than that from the Dominican Republic.
12. As explained above ("Research Methods"), it is not possible to provide a specific source when citing interviews because of the need to maintain confidentiality. When more than one interview is being drawn on the citation is plural.
13. Adventist children are usually baptized around the age of 10 or 12, and are only then counted as members. I instructed the church clerks to count the baptized youth in immigrant families as immigrants even if they had been born in the U.S.
14. Regional (black) conferences were never created in the two unions covering the states west of the Rocky Mountains.
15. Ellen White, the Adventist prophet, who died in 1915, gave this endorsement.
16. In 1996 the whole conference, which extends beyond metropolitan New York to additional concentrations in such cities as Boston, Buffalo, and Hartford, had 50 Afro-American, 30 West Indian, 19 Hispanic, and 13 Haitian pastors (interview).
17. Most of the Hispanic pastors lacked proficiency in English because they had been born and educated abroad and had, since immigrating, been working with Spanish-speaking congregations.
18. Tithe per capita in 1995 was $935 for the multiethnic congregations, $648 for the Hispanics, $596 for the West Indians, and $228 for the Haitians. However, with $1,422, the Koreans were in fact highest. These calculations are based on the official membership figures, which include missing members. The multiethnic congregations, including seven outside the metropolitan area, sent a total of $3.2 million to the conference, the Hispanics $3.8 million, the West Indians $2.8 million, and the five Korean congregations $0.6 million.
19. The fact that there had been rapid growth among Afro-American Adventists in the U.S. after the latter were formed into self-governing conferences in 1945 suggested that the principle was effective when applied within the Adventist context.
20. The Atlantic Union consists of New York, New England and Bermuda. It is subdivided into six conferences.
21. A Mexican-American served as president of the Texico conference, which comprises New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle, from 1991 until 1996.
22. It has long proved difficult to attract Caucasian pastors to New York, both because of an antagonism to city living in Adventist theology and because of New York's reputation, since it has proved to be "poor soil" for "soul-winning," of being a location in which it is difficult for a Caucasian pastor to make a reputation. The recent problems attracting such pastors have raised fears that the election of a Hispanic president may be strike three for New York in the minds of

many more Caucasian pastors.

23. The proportion of the collective membership of the Pentecostals that is made up of new immigrants is also smaller than that of Adventists because of the strong base that several of their groups, such as the Church of God in Christ and the Apostolic and Jesus Only churches, have among Afro-Americans.

REFERENCES

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. 1997. *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Ashmeade, Roy W. 1991. *African American-West Indian: Friend or Foe?* Jamaica, NY: Claremont.

Brathwaite, Percy. 1998. Address on "West Indian Immigrants and the Episcopal Church in New York," to an Urban Religious Movements class at Queens College, March.

Burns, Jeffrey M. 1994. "Que es esto? The Transformation of St. Peter's Parish, San Francisco, 1913-1990." In James P. Wind and James W. Lewis (eds.) *American Congregations Vol. 1, Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities*. Pp. 396-463. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chai, Karen J. 1998. "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church." In R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner *Gatherings in Diaspora*. Pp. 295-331. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Christiano, Kevin J. 1991. "The Church and the New Immigrants." In Helen Rose Ebaugh *Religion and the Social Order*, Vol. II: Vatican II and U. S. Catholicism. Pp. 169-186. Greenwich: Jai Press.

Creech, Charles E. 1991. "A Critical Review of the Book African American-West Indian: Friend or Foe?" *Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. 3(1):1-20.

Douglas, H. Paul. 1927. The Church in the Changing City. New York: Doran.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America*, 1776-1990. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. 1961. 98th Annual Statistical Report–1960. Takoma Park, D.C.: Office of Archives and Statistics.

1996. 133rd Annual Statistical Report--1995. Silver Spring, MD: Office of Archives and Statistics.

Greeley, Andrew M. 1990. *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics*. New York: Schribner.

Han, Jin H. 1998. E-mail letter to Ronald Lawson, answering questions raised following an address on "Korean Immigrants and the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in New York," to an Urban Religious Movements class at Queens College, March 28.

Handlin, Oscar. 1951. *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Herberg, Will. [1955] 1960. *Protestant--Catholic--Jew*. Garden City: Anchor.

Hernandez, Edwin I. 1995. "The Browning of American Adventism." *Spectrum*. 25(2)

(December):29-50.
Lawson, Ronald. 1998a. "From American Church to Immigrant Church: The Changing Face of Seventh-day Adventism in Metropolitan New York." *Sociology of Religion*. 59:4 (Winter).
1998b. "When Immigrants Take Over: The Changing Face of Seventh-day Adventism in England, France and Canada." A paper to be read at the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, November, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
1999. "When Immigrants Take Over: The Impact of Immigrant Growth on the Trajectory from Sect to Denomination in American Seventh-day Adventism." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38:1 (March).
Malagreca, Joseph. 1991. "The American Church: One Church, Many Cultures, Many Languages: A Pastoral Challenge." Paper presented at a Theological Symposium, Association of Diocesan Liaisons, September, New Orleans, LA.
Min, Pyong Gap. 1992. "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the U.S." *International Migration Review*. 26 (Winter):1370-1394.
Niebuhr, H. Richard. [1929] 1954. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. Hamden: Shoe String.
Sahlin, Monte. 1997a. Net 96: Follow-up Survey of Participating Churches. NAD Office of Information and Research, Report 17. Silver Spring: North American Division.
1997b. Information drawn from surveys of church members.
Shibley, Mark A. 1996. *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
Shin, Eui Hang, and Hyung Park. 1988. "An Analysis of Causes of Schisms in Ethnic Churches: The Case of Korean-American Churches." *Sociological Analysis*. 49, 3:234-248.
Vasquez, Manuel. n.d. "America's Changing Face and the Church's Changing Voice." North American Division. Unpublished paper.
Warner, R. Stephen. 1994. "The Place of the Congregations in the Contemporary American Religious Configuration." In James P. Wind and James W. Lewis *American Congregations*, Vol. 2. Pp. 54-99.
1998. "Immigration and Religious Communities in the United States." In R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner *Gatherings in Diaspora*. Pp. 3-34. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Warner, R. Stephen and Judith G. Wittner. 1998. *Gatherings in Diaspora*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Wilson, Robert L. and James H. Davis. 1966. *The Church in the Racially Changing Community*. New York: Abingdon.
Wind, James P. and James W. Lewis, eds. 1994. *American Congregations* Vol. 1, Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Yost, F. Donald. 1995. "Changes Ahead? The Numbers say 'Yes'!" *Dialogue*. 7(2):28-29.