Immigrant Influx: The Impact of Large Numbers of Immigrants from the Developing World on Seventh-day Adventism in England, France, and The Netherlands

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The center of Christianity moved slowly but surely during the twentieth century from the Developed World to the Developing World, so that the majority of Christians today are nonwhite (Jenkins, 2002). However, this "Southernized Christianity" has not confined its impact to the Global South: the patterns of international migration have shifted in recent decades, bringing increasing numbers of Christian immigrants from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America to parts of the Developed World. The influx has inevitably impacted congregations and denominations in the receiving countries (Koning 2007; Lawson 1998, 2000).

This paper examines the changing face of Seventh-day Adventism in England, France, and the Netherlands. Immigrants from the Caribbean were the first to migrate in large numbers and to become numerically dominant in urban areas. This pattern parallels that found by the author in New York and other urban centers in the U.S. and Canada (Lawson, 1998, 1999, 2000). The paper examines the extent and dynamics of change, and sets out to answer three questions: why have the number of immigrant Adventists increased so dramatically?, to what extent have the sources of the immigrants to each country changed over time?, and what has been the impact of the influx of immigrants on the Adventist churches in these countries? The analysis utilizes and develops "strictness" theory as presented originally by Kelley (1972) and clarified by Iannacone (1994).

Background

Seventh-day Adventists trace their roots to the Millerite Movement during the early 1840s, which attracted upwards of 50,000 followers in the American Northeast. When the prediction of Baptist lay-preacher, William Miller, that Christ would return on October 22, 1844 proved false, his movement shattered. One fragment, guided by a young visionary, Ellen White, reinterpreted the prophecy: the pre-advent judgment had begun in heaven on that day. However, Christ's return remained imminent, and it became the Adventists' God-given task to warn the world to prepare for that event. They took this responsibility seriously, and are now active in 215 countries. The Adventist Church passed the milestone of 20 million baptized members in 2016, and has been doubling its world membership about every 10-12 years in recent decades.

TABLE 1 - SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MEMBERSHIP, DEVELOPED vs DEVELOPING WORLDS: 1960, 1995, 2016

	1960	%	1995	%	Increase	2016	% Increase
Developed World[a]	553,592	44.5%	1,234,037	14.0%	122.9%	1,567,689	7.8 27.0
Developing World[b]	691,533	55.5%	7,578,518	86.0%	995.9%	18,441,810	92.2 143.3
World Totals	1,245,125		8,812,555		607.8%	20,009,499	127.1

[a]North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand.
[b]The rest of the world.

Sources: General Conference 1961, 1996, 2017

Adventism's recent growth has been primarily, and increasingly, in the Developing World, where the bulk of its membership is now clustered. Table 1 compares the growth rates in the Developed and Developing Worlds from 1960-2016. The membership growth in the Developing World between 1960 and 1995 was 996%, compared with 123% in the Developed World: during this time the proportion of the world membership located in the Developing World increased from 55.5% to 86.0%. Between 1995 and 2016 membership growth in the Developing World was 143.3% as compared with 27.0% in the Developed World. At the end of 2016 92.2% of world membership was located in the Developing World. Most of the growth in recent decades has occurred in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Asia. Growth in Europe, North America, and Australia and New Zealand has lagged.

In earlier published papers I examined the impact of "new immigrants" on the face of Adventism in Metropolitan New York between 1968, when new immigration laws took effect, and 1996. In 1968, Adventists there were almost entirely Caucasian (59.6%) and African-American (40%). However, by 1996 only 2.7% were Caucasians and 8.0% African-Americans: almost 90% were “new immigrants”. The three largest groups, making up 83.8% of the membership, were West Indians and Guyanese (46.8%), Hispanics, where the largest group was Dominican (18.9%), and Haitians (17.1%) (Lawson 1998).

This paper focuses on England, where the impact of an influx of Adventists from the Caribbean was first experienced, France, and the Netherlands.

Research Methods

The research reported here is part of a large study of Seventh-day Adventism, which has included over 4,000 in-depth interviews with Adventist administrators, teachers, hospital personnel, pastors, students, and leading laypersons in 60 countries in all 13 divisions of the world church. This paper draws on interviews with church officials and members of both the immigrant and indigenous groups in all three countries in 1989, 1997, 2014 and 2018; I also paid special attention to these issues in The Netherlands in 2001, when I was invited to speak to gatherings of the laity, pastors, and the administration on how best to address the tensions that emerge as the number of immigrant members move towards majority status. I have also drawn on official church statistics and reports in all three countries, and on other studies where available.

Because I was traveling in order to interview church personnel, I had to use statistics provided by Church leaders, supplemented when available by official Church studies (such as that in England reported by Anthony in 1980), rather than gather them painstakingly from every congregation as I had in New York, where I lived for several decades. The European data concerning the racial and ethnic composition of the membership are therefore are not as precise as those collected in New York. I learned that because church leaders were concerned about the racial/ethnic distribution of their members, and talked about this among themselves, they were usually able to answer questions about the current membership distribution at the time I interviewed them. However, because the Adventist statistical reporting system did not require them to gather or report such statistics, their knowledge of changes in such distributions over time was usually vague. The fact that I had asked about such distributions several times over the years therefore proved to be valuable. Although I was usually given estimates rather than official statistics, the evidence of dramatic changes in the composition of the membership, and of the impact of these on both congregations and church judicatories, was nevertheless compelling.

Theory

In 1972, Kelley asked why conservative religious groups in the USA had retained an active, committed membership rather than losing both fervor and members as the mainline liberal churches had (1972). He attributed this to the cost of membership in such groups. Here his definition of "conservative group" was in fact akin to what those sociologists who use church-sect theory define as sectarian: proclaiming an exclusive truth, with a closed, comprehensive, and eternal doctrine; insisting on adherence to a distinctive lifestyle; condemning dissenters and repudiating the "world"; and often embracing eccentric behaviors that isolate them and attract ridicule and persecution – in short, they exist in high tension with society (Kelley 1986:78-84).

In 1994, Iannaccone pointed out that in the 20 years since Kelley had published his thesis some of the so-called small sects in the USA had surpassed some of the mainline churches in size. He set out to clarify the mechanisms at work. He argued that the social costs of such distinctiveness screen out free riders, helping to retain the group's intensity since they discourage those who are not really serious from joining or encourage any present to exit. Consequently, the overall levels of commitment and participation, as

measured in attendance, giving, and internal ties, increased. Outside participation by members was reduced either because it was prohibited, penalized, or was inhibited as a result of expected stigmatizing behavior. Isolating the group from society in turn increased the value of its internal solidary benefits such as internal status, collective assistance, job or dating opportunities, joint fellowship, etc.

Although both Kelley and Iannaccone focused on maintaining fervor and commitment, their theory is also useful in understanding differing levels of growth between constituencies: that is, in understanding who is attracted and who is not. Sectarian groups are likely to attract people with few secular opportunities, those with the least to lose – such as immigrants. On the other hand, people with broad secular opportunities are likely to chafe at the social costs and refuse to join or, if they are already members, push to moderate group rules or choose to exit. That is, religious groups need to vary their strictness and distinctiveness according to their targeted audience. Internal tensions are likely to appear when a religious group endeavors to recruit or to retain diverse constituencies.

Britain

The Extent of Change, 1952-1997: Adventist growth in Britain had been high early in the twentieth century, averaging 8% per annum during the 1910-1920 decade, but it had then declined each decade to 1% per annum during 1940-1950 (Theobald 1979:317). The president of the British Union in 1950 declared that its “almost static membership" was the Union's "most perplexing problem" (Porter 1974:36).

TABLE 2 - THE CHANGING FACE OF ADVENTISM IN THE BRITISH UNION, 1950-1997

	Membership	Caucasians	West Indians	Others
BRITISH UNION				
1950	6,666	c100.0%	c0.0%	c0.0%
1980	14,569	44.4%	51.9%	3.7%
1997	18,846	c16.0%	c80.0%	c4.0%
LONDON				
1950	1,059	c100.0%	c0.0%	c0.0%
1980	4,088	8.9%	84.8%	6.1%
1997	c8,000	c3.7%	c92.0%	c4.4%

Sources: Anthony, 1980; interviews.

The influx of immigrants from the British colonies in the West Indies to England, and into the urban Adventist congregations, began in 1952, lifting the Adventist growth-rate to 4% per annum during the two decades 1950-1970. West Indians formed a majority among Adventist members in London by the mid-1960s, in the South England Conference by 1968, and the North England Conference by 1975. Black accessions surpassed white accessions in the British Union 2:1 in 1968, rising to 5:1 by 1975, where they have remained since. The gap in attendance was also dramatic, with black attendance outnumbering white 2:1 in 1975 and a 4:1 disparity among young unbaptized children (Porter 1974:43; Anthony 1980). By 1997 about 80% of the members of the British Union were of West Indian stock; the membership in Greater London was 92% West Indian, with only 300 of the 8,000 members there being indigenous English.

The formation of a Ghanaian congregation, with a membership of 80, in London in 1992 was a sign of changes to come: by late in the decade its expanding membership had reached 350 (Ackah 2000).

The demographics of the Adventist Church at that time contrasted dramatically with those of the general population, for in London less than 2% of the population was West Indian. The Adventist membership in the other major English cities, such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, was also heavily West Indian. Adventism was seen popularly as a "Black Church," a reputation it has maintained since that time.

Meanwhile, the white indigenous membership in the Union has declined sharply from a peak of 8,000 to little more than 3,000. This segment is aging, and scattered largely among small provincial congregations. (See Table 2)

Diversity Increases, 1997-2018: Legislation in the 1970s largely staunched the flow of West Indian immigrants. Those known a West Indians thereafter increasingly became British-born from the second, and then also the third, generation. However, the flow of immigrants continued, becoming increasingly diverse. In the new century the largest influx came from several countries in Africa—especially Zimbabweans fleeing the excesses of the Mugabe regime, and many others from other former British colonies there—Ghanaians, Zambians, Nigerians, Kenyans, Ugandans, Malawians—who were motivated to flee weak economies, even though many of them were educated professionals who often pursued their careers in small cities and towns in Britain. By 2014 most church leaders saw the number of Adventist Africans in Britain as almost equal with those of West Indian stock; by 2018 the two groups were at least equal, but probably with Africans exceeding the number with roots in the West Indies. There were a total of 20 Ghanaian churches by that time, and several other African groups had multiple churches; the Zimbabweans, probably the largest African group, responded to their hatred of their experience with Apartheid by joining integrated congregations.

By the end of 2017 the membership of the British Union had reached 37,212—more than double that in 1996. Of the 30,000 whose race was known, 71.4% were black. The fact that 70% of these had been born abroad was evidence of the rapid influx of Africans over the previous 15 years. The membership of the Adventist church in Britain was mostly black—a dramatic change since 1952.

By 2018 there were only about 1,000 white British remaining in the Union—secularism and post-modernism had caused the loss of most of the younger generations, so most of those remaining were elderly. Those who attended churches were in mixed congregations. Even the Scottish, Welsh, and Irish Missions—which had never been large enough to become conferences but had become the most British portions of the union, have now lost that status—they are now only 50% white. Meanwhile, however, a flow of white immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe (Romanians, Bulgarians, former Yugoslavians, Moldovans, Ukrainians, Poles) but also from South Africa, has been strengthening the white category somewhat. By 2017 the number of white members of the British Union who were born abroad exceeded the UK-born; the largest congregation in Ireland was Romanian, and the presidents of the Irish and Welsh Missions were both Romanians.

The British Union was also experiencing significant Hispanic growth, second only to the African growth—there are now several Portuguese-speaking congregations drawn from Brazil and two Spanish-speaking where the members are mostly Colombians. The most rapidly expanding Asian group is Filipino, although there are several longer-established Indian/Pakistani congregations, especially in the North England Conference.

The ethnic African congregations have been especially successful in recruiting back-slidden members whose origins were in their culture. Their biggest disappointment is the failure of their ambitions to convert the indigenous British.

It has become extremely difficult to recruit either British or West Indian pastors—most of those hired are African and Eastern European graduates of Newbold College. However, the diversity of the British Adventists, and the need for pastors who speak different languages, has forced the hiring of a goodly number of pastors whose training was not at Newbold College.

The Dynamics of Change: The Adventist Church, like the Roman Catholic Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses, is a global church with an "international outlook." Its congregations eagerly welcome visiting missionaries and international visitors and students, who are all appreciated as signs that their world church is fulfilling its mission. Members feel close ties to one another wherever they are because of their shared beliefs. Adventists therefore expected to encounter no major problems in building a multiracial church. However, this did not prove to be the case.

Extensive ethnic change seems almost always to cause tensions and conflict, especially when the changes are rapid. The tensions occur initially in the existing congregations which immigrants join, especially if they eventually become a majority of the members. (Where immigrants form new congregations, such as is common when the group speaks a foreign language, this step is omitted.) The second focus of conflict is likely to be within the judicatories of the church, especially, in the case of Adventists, in the local conferences. Here the Adventist Church is especially prone to conflict because of its structure. It is neither congregational, where there is little at stake in the judicatory, nor highly authoritarian, where members have little room to maneuver, but has democratic forms, with delegates from congregations meeting in conference constituency meetings where the officers and executive committees are chosen. These in turn

control the choice and payment of pastors, decisions about opening or closing schools, and the disbursement of funds for evangelism, schools, etc. This structure therefore maximizes the opportunities for groups to compete with one another and the incentives for conflict between entrenched and challenging groups.

The influx of immigrants occurred first in England, and it was there that the conflict was most severe, especially in London. Adventism had done well in the West Indies, where it had burgeoned over time. In Jamaica, for example, there were four times as many Adventists as in Britain by 1964, and a population ratio of 1:40 compared to 1:5,000 in Britain (Gerloff, 1992:290). It was inevitable, then, that Adventists would be among the influx of immigrants from there to England after 1952.

The West Indian immigrants were welcomed when they first attended the inner-city Adventist congregations in England: two studies in the 1960s showed that Adventists provided them with a much warmer welcome than they received from society at large, as they were given opportunities to serve by, for example, performing musically (Calley 1965:127; Patterson 1965; Theobald 1979:320-321). A survey in the early 1960s showed that while 69% of the immigrants had attended the churches of six mainline denominations in the West Indies, only 4% attended them in England (Hill 1963:22). However, the Adventists, along with Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, grew rapidly, not only holding most of their own members but also attracting many others (Rex and Moore 1967:184; Hill 1971:121-123; Theobald 1979: 317-320).

Meanwhile, the indigenous Adventist response passed through phases of welcome, puzzlement, and flight over time (Porter 1974:42). Unlike earlier visitors, whose stay had been temporary, the West Indians remained and their numbers expanded rapidly. Moreover, they soon made their mark because they were uninhibited in a conservative society: they tended to be noisier and more emotional in worship, more legalistic in their mores and judgmental of those who differed from them, more fundamentalist in their beliefs and more ready to participate in door-to-door outreach activities than the English; they were tardy, wore bright clothing, and their weddings seemed often to follow the birth of a child. Because many of them were eager and committed, as time passed they were given opportunities to teach adult Sabbath School classes, where they presented their different views. As they grew rapidly in number, tensions were exacerbated as the indigenous members felt overwhelmed by the clashing cultures and as immigrants were voted into positions of power within congregations and then introduced changes in the style of worship.

The West Indians, for their part, often felt that they were not accepted as they had expected, as brothers and sisters. The President of the South England Conference during the late-1960s told of being called to many church meetings to deal with congregational tensions, and of finding that neither congregational vote nor administrative fiat could command love.

As the number of immigrants in a congregation expanded, the size of the indigenous English group there tended to contract. Two studies in the late-60s reported a lot of white resentment and flight (Rex and Moore 1967; Handysides 1969; Gerloff 1992:277). Many of the indigenous members fled, sometimes

emigrating en masse to Australia, and often moving out to other congregations where, for the time being, they could be with their own, or becoming irregular in their attendance and then ultimately ceasing to attend Adventist services altogether. When the indigenous members became an aging cohort, many died and were not replaced: non-Adventist whites would not attend evangelistic meetings where most of those present were immigrant Adventists and the contacts they had invited, nor did they feel comfortable when invited to the predominantly black churches.

As the number of immigrants in London congregations increased during the 1960s, their white elders formed an organization to provide mutual support. They held regular meetings, whose stated purpose was to retain the leadership of their congregations in order to keep them receptive, at least to some degree, to the conversion of their fellow-countrymen.

For example, in 1989 one English couple told of the transition of one of the London churches, where he had been senior elder for 28 years. When they joined the congregation in 1951 it had 70 members, all indigenous English. Since their congregation was baptizing about 20 converts per year at that time, the indigenous membership grew to a peak of 150. However, only five more indigenous members were baptized between 1966, by which time the congregation was about evenly divided between the two racial groups, and 1989. The first three West Indians, who had arrived in 1953, had been welcomed warmly. However, as immigrant numbers grew rapidly, they gained the power to change the style and atmosphere of worship, and were then resented. Their presence also provoked hostility in the neighborhood of the church, to which they commuted, attracting graffiti saying "Blacks go home!" – an occurrence which embarrassed the indigenous members. A watershed occurred when a West Indian was appointed as pastor about 1980. What was described as a militant West Indian group was then placed in office: they were much more legalistic in their observance of traditional Adventist mores and they refused to do anything to observe Easter and Christmas, since they had been taught by missionaries in the West Indies that these were not biblical celebrations. The elder resigned his position shortly after the pastor's appointment, and in 1985 he and his wife moved to a more diverse congregation; they also began to travel a considerable distance once per month to meet with “the Amersham Group’, an all-white group of Adventists that rented their meeting space from a Quaker congregation, and attended an Anglican Church on Sundays. The membership of their former congregation had grown to about 350, only 3 of whom were indigenous English.

The parallel stories of the change process as West Indians perceived it told, for example, of reaching 85% of the membership in congregations in the 1960s but still being unrepresented among the elders. However, when their consciousness was raised, often by young members who were university graduates or students who gained courage to voice objections, moving from the floor of the church to have reports from nominating committees referred back, they then slowly achieved representation.

Meanwhile, tension between the immigrants and the conferences had also been mounting. The first major incident concerned the New Gallery Evangelistic Center in the West End district of London, which Adventists had bought in 1953 in an attempt to reach out to the higher social classes. However, church leaders saw this goal threatened when Adventist West Indians flocked there with friends they hoped

thereby to evangelize, fearing that the Center would become identified with immigrants: the sight of a large crowd of West Indians and their children socializing on the street after meetings was at odds with the image that the Center was trying to project. Consequently, in 1959, in spite of the fact that a predominantly West Indian congregation was using the space for worship on Sabbaths, the president of the South England Conference distributed a letter asking West Indians not to attend the evangelistic meetings there, for it had been "established at tremendous cost for evangelizing London's white millions, and particularly the upper social classes" (South England Conference Committee 1959). The Conference then moved the congregation from the Center to another location. These events, plus refusals to rent the Center to Adventist West Indian groups even though it was rented to non-Adventists, deeply offended the immigrants – an offense that was never forgotten.

The tension with the conferences was focused in the late 1960s by some West Indian university graduates and students, most of whom had been born in the West Indies but at least partially educated in England. They were emboldened by their awareness of the American Civil Rights movement, then at its height. The young activists raised the following issues among their peers:

1. Since the South England Conference had only 2 English-trained West Indian pastors, most congregations with West Indian majorities had white pastors. When they demanded that the Conference import West Indian pastors, they were told this was impossible because of the additional cost of benefit and furlough packages for those with the status of missionaries and the Conference's obligation to hire the graduates of Newbold College in England. However, the latter had a reputation of refusing to admit many West Indians. Moreover, even if a cohort of West Indians were now admitted, the activists felt this would take too long to solve the problem.

2. The Adventist schools were far from West Indian areas, yet West Indian students were facing enormous problems in the public schools both educationally and, from the point of view of their parents, in the socialization they were receiving there, which was loosening the ties of the youth to the church and fostering intergenerational conflict. The West Indian constituency therefore demanded an Adventist school in the Inner London area. However, once again it faced administrative reluctance because of cost.

3. Since West Indian youth were exiting the church in increasing numbers, the constituency voiced demands for a youth center and youth programs in London to try to stem the hemorrhage.

4. The West Indians, who were used to a heavy focus on evangelism, felt that this was being neglected in London because of the Conference administration's concern for racial conflict and its fear of adding to it through expanding the proportion of West Indian members. Even the campaigns in the New Gallery Evangelistic Center eventually ceased for a period as the focus of Adventist evangelism was shifted to more remote areas where whites predominated.

5. These difficulties brought home to the immigrants the disadvantages of not being represented among the church leadership and on the committees. These disadvantages were underlined when

> London-wide meetings attended mostly by West Indians had no black faces on the platform. However, when they demanded political inclusion they realized that this was impossible to win while most of their pastors were indigenous, for pastors were automatically included among the delegates from their congregations. The church leadership, which had earlier seen the West Indians as temporary visitors who therefore did not need representation at the Conference, now argued that the latter were not capable of handling such administrative posts as treasurer or even secretary.

The 1970s were marked by escalating racial tensions, both in society, where Enoch Powell's denunciations of the flow of immigrants ultimately resulted in street violence, and in the Adventist Church. In 1973 the youthful West Indian leaders formed an organization, the London Laymen's Forum (LLF), to pursue their goals. This held meetings in churches on Sabbath afternoons, educating the members concerning the issues and raising their consciousness. The Greater Birmingham Laymen's Association joined the protest in 1974. They published a magazine, *Comment,* analyzing what was at stake, and issued a manifesto. They spread this far and wide, reaching as far as the General Conference, the church headquarters in the U.S. They demanded frequent meetings with leaders of the Conference, practicing role-playing in order to press their case most effectively – and were then threatened with church discipline. The president of the British Union dubbed them "self-styled leaders" who had not been appointed by any pastor or even by the blacks themselves (Gerloff 1992:302).

In an attempt to respond to the rising pressure and discontent, the president of the British Union traveled to the General Conference in 1974 seeking funds to subsidize the recruitment of pastors from the West Indies. However, he found that rather than gaining the support he sought, he was instead lectured on race relations by Robert Pearson, the President of the General Conference, who had been subjected to the West Indian point of view by prominent West Indian Adventists in the U.S.

The LLF made its discontent public at the constituency meeting of the South England Conference (SEC) in May 1975, demanding greater inclusion in administration because black needs for matching pastors and a school were being overlooked. Under their influence, the Plans Committee drafted a resolution recommending proportional black representation among pastors, in conference departments, and within the administration and executive committee, and that black pastors be trained or recruited from abroad to serve the predominantly black churches. When there was insufficient time for this resolution to be debated by the full meeting, it was passed on to the Executive Committee, which in turn appointed a subcommittee to address it. The latter rejected the resolution on the grounds that representation should not reflect the makeup of the membership but rather, because of the church's responsibility to evangelize the whole country, the racial distribution of the whole population.

The LLF then increased pressure on church leaders by issuing publicity to the press. In June 1976 the respected *Observer* published an article headlined "Black Adventists Demand a Greater Share of Power." This reported that for the first time a British church faced a situation where the majority of its members were black. Nevertheless, the administrators and pastors of the church in Britain remained predominantly

white. "One obvious problem for the Adventist leaders is that they do not want to acquire the public image of being a West Indian organization" (Cross 1976).

Seeking a possible solution, the British Union initiated a debate about creating a separate West Indian conference overlapping with the territories of the South and North England Conferences, modeled on the racially separate "regional conferences" in the US. Although this had not been their demand, the LLF embraced it as apparently the only route to greater representation. However, the Union was never comfortable with its proposal. Suddenly, in what was seen as a ploy to cut off discussion, the president of the Union, referring to "contention and power-seeking," announced a referendum among all members, an unprecedented means of deciding the issue, in October 1976, allowing them only one week to return their ballots. His own letter in the *Advent Messenger* was clearly against the proposal, and no counterweight was provided. The proposal was soundly defeated: only 15.5% of the votes, which came from 42% of the members, supported it: it clearly lost within both racial groups (Gerloff 1992:310-314).

The LLF cried foul, sending an open letter of protest to the Union about the bias in the referendum process and rejecting its result. Its struggle had not been broken.

As an observer member of the British Council of Churches, the representatives of the British Union had frequently been exposed to debates critical of racism in church and society. As the Christian body with proportionately the highest active West Indian membership in Britain, they had tried hard to project an image as a peaceful multiracial church—with some justification, for Adventism had led the way in allowing West Indian participation in congregational leadership. However, its representatives now had reason to fear that fallout from the struggle would harm the image of the Church among other denominations in Britain. When the *Advent Messenger* announced in a January 1977 editorial that "we were happy to report" to a meeting of the Community and Race Relations Unit of the BCC "that of all the British churches, the SDA has been marvelously blessed in nurturing and maintaining a sense of cohesion and brotherhood that transcends race and colour [sic]," they were clearly fudging the data (January 7). However, when a black layman complained, the editor affirmed his statement, discounting the "tiny though extremely militant minority" (January 19).

The LLF kept up the pressure on the leadership, calling an assembly of all West Indian Adventists in London in 1977, with Dr. Walter Douglas, a well-known West Indian professor at the Adventist Seminary in Michigan, as speaker. An attempt by the Conference to cut attendance there by announcing that communion would be held on that day in the churches failed, and the meeting had a full house. The LLF also sent a stream of information to the General Conference leadership through educated West Indian Adventists in the U.S. In return, it was kept informed of relevant changes in attitudes and decisions there, and was therefore prepared in advance.

Meanwhile, the LLF resurrected the proposal for a regional conference. Its campaign gathered momentum when, following its urgings, three of the West Indian congregations in London withheld their tithes, banking them instead of passing them to the Conference, pending the settlement of the racial issues. Other members sent their tithes to the West Indies, which in turn caused conflict between two Divisions

of the world church when the English demanded that conferences in the West Indies hand over the diverted funds. The conflict over tithes led the LLF to appeal to the General Conference, an action which eventually gave the latter reason to intervene.

Since a constituency meeting of the SEC was scheduled for 1978, the LLF opened negotiations with a white candidate who was planning to challenge the president, and then endorsed him.

General Conference President Robert Pearson intervened directly in 1978, taking the British leadership by surprise; the president of the British Union had been under the impression that the purpose of Pearson's visit was to answer his earlier request for funds to import West Indian pastors. However, Pearson in fact imposed a broad solution, for West Indians in the General Conference such as its Secretary, Ralph Thompson, had applied strong pressure. The imposed solution, known colloquially as the Pearson Package, rejected the regional conference route. It had two main facets:

1. Each structural level (the Union and both English conferences) would in future have at least one West Indian officer and one department director, and West Indian representation on all committees; the secretarial staff would also reflect the balance of the constituency. That is, Pearson insisted on proportional representation.

2. A group of experienced pastors from the West Indies with leadership experience would be brought in, subsidized directly by the General Conference, as had been requested. These would provide the quality personnel needed to occupy the black positions in the leadership (Foster 1978:1-2).

The English responded to the pressure from above to accept the Package with considerable bitterness, the more so because they were allowed so little time to digest it. The South England Conference's constituency meeting, which followed only two weeks later, was an angry one, as the Package was forced through and its president was forced out, being replaced by the white pastor endorsed by the LLF. Two of the items of the Pearson Package were implemented immediately – an increase of Black committee members at all structural levels and on institutional boards, and the recruiting of seven "top-drawer pastors with leadership potential" from the West Indies (Gerloff 1992:330).

By mid-1978 both conferences had installed a black secretary and department director. Another black was elected Secretary of the British Union in 1981. That same year, Dr Sylburn Reid, the secretary of the SEC, was elevated to its presidency after a difficult, conflicted session in which the report of the nominating committee was referred back to it and the session had to be extended to another day. The SEC had West Indian presidents continuously from 1981 until 2016; in 1996 the position of Secretary also passed to a West Indian. By 1984, the proportion of black ordained and licensed pastors had increased to 37 of 138 (up from six of 132 in 1976), and the majority of pastors in London were black.

Although the proportion of immigrant members in the North England Conference was in fact somewhat higher than in the South England Conference, the former's President remained white to "keep the

balance," with a black Secretary, until 1995. However, a black President was then chosen as "the best man available." A West Indian was elected President of the British Union in 1991. He defeated the incumbent white with a nominating committee that was evenly divided racially, and was confirmed narrowly in an unusual secret ballot by all constituency delegates. The executive committees of all three judicatories had black majorities before 1997.

The West Indian immigrants in Britain had thus taken several decades after they became the majority group and had gained control of the key decision-making positions in their churches before pressing for leadership positions in the conferences and then the British Union. Similarly, African immigrants lived for over a decade under West Indian decision makers before the first African, Dr. Osei, a Ghanaian, was chosen as President of the South England Conference in 2016.

Reid, the first West Indian President of the SEC, started the John Loughborough School in Central London, named for an Adventist pioneer missionary. It initially attracted a lot of favorable attention from the media. However, shortage of funds led it in 1998-99 to apply for funding from both Central and Local Government sources, which opened it to greater scrutiny and less autonomy. The decision led ultimately to a clash of ideals between the Adventist holistic approach and the government's focus on attainment. In 2013 the Haringey London Borough Council decided to close the school because of inadequate pupil attainment and falling pupil numbers (Pears 2012; Wikipedia 2013). Reid also launched "big-tent" evangelism, based on the model used in the West Indies, which led to a boom in conversions of West Indians during the 1980s even though the influx of immigrants had by then been stopped by legislation. He also returned English Adventism to camp meetings, which were well attended by the West Indian membership but not by the indigenous members.

All groups of first-generation immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Latin America, or Eastern Europe, have differed strongly from most indigenous white English concerning behavioral norms and beliefs: it seemed that their influx would have the effect of reversing the trajectory of the Adventist Church in Britain, which had moved a considerable distance from sect towards denomination along the sect-denomination continuum, back towards the sectarian pole. For example, the attitudes of immigrants towards women pastors has made it difficult to find churches willing to accept women theology graduates as their pastors. However, the second, and now third, generations of Adventist West Indians in England have become socialized to British culture. They fought against the legalism and mores of their parents and, like their white counterparts, became much less involved in church outreach programs; to the extent that the British-born from immigrant stock remain active Adventists, they are likely to support the trajectory travelled by the indigenous white English Adventists. However, many of them have moved, like the younger generations of British, to the periphery of the Adventist Church.

The greatest sorrow of the indigenous English has been their inability to reach out successfully to their own countrymen. When it was pointed out that this pattern was congruent with the sharp decline in religious commitment among the English population and that Adventism was not gaining converts even in the areas where there are no immigrants, they replied that the number of indigenous English had earlier been growing slowly but steadily in the cities, but that this is now impossible, for the non-Adventist English

avoid evangelistic meetings where the majority in attendance is black. However, given the growing secularization of English society, it seems certain that the Adventist growth-rate would have declined even without an influx of immigrants, as it has in the other countries of Northern Europe. That is, in the words of the director of Church Growth in the South England Conference, "Without immigrants the Adventist church in England would be reduced significantly; now that immigrants have come in, (our) churches have been given life again" (Rowe, 2007, citing Aris Vontzalidis).

The Adventist Church in England has become a black Church. The indigenous pastors do not expect to see one of their own as a president again. Indeed, the flow of indigenous theology graduates is drying up as the white membership ages, making growth among the indigenous English even less likely.

France

Adventism grew slowly among the indigenous French. By the late 1960s there were only about 1,000 members in Metropolitan Paris. However, from that time onwards there was a swelling of the membership there, almost all as a result of the immigration of Adventists and evangelism among their fellows. Most of the immigrants came from the French Antilles—the French-speaking islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, whose populations are French citizens who can come and go to France as they wish —with some also from French Guiana. In 1997 over 3,000 of the 3,578 Parisian members came from that region or that stock. There were also about 200 from the former French colonies in Africa (the Malagasy from Madagascar) and Cambodia, and another small group from the former Yugoslavia.

As their frustration escalated, many of the indigenous French ceased attending church altogether. In the mid-1970s one pastor visited each missing indigenous member, and then gathered many of them to form a separate white congregation, Southeast Paris, that was committed to remaining a white bastion. However, when these whites requested letters transferring their memberships from the other churches, the Antilleans were offended, accusing them of racism, even when the rationale given was that such a congregation was necessary in order to evangelize the indigenous French population. In 1997 this was the one remaining congregation in Metropolitan Paris that was predominantly white. It had been maintained as such because the indigenous French members, in their determination not to allow a repeat of the earlier process, had adhered to an unwritten rule that they would not accept new immigrant members that would raise their proportion of the membership above ten percent of the total. But this church could not survive as designed without retaining its children, and this became impossible given the secularization of their generation. Some other indigenous members continued to be scattered among the predominantly black congregations, but several of these complained to me that they did not feel at home there. Consequently, the number of indigenous French among the Adventists in Metropolitan France continued to plummet, falling to perhaps 200 by 1997 (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 - ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE ADVENTIST MEMBERSHIP IN METROPOLITAN PARIS, 1997

Membership	Caucasians	Antillians	Others
3,578	c.200	c.3,000	c.400

Sources: Franco-Belgian Union

There was also a growing immigrant presence in the centers in the North France Conference outside of Paris. Consequently, the Caribbean immigrants also formed a clear majority of the membership in that Conference, which stood at 5,484 in 1997. While there was still an indigenous majority in the South France Conference, the immigrant minority there was also swelling.

During the next two decades the flow of immigrants to Paris and the other centers in the North France Conference became increasingly diverse, to the point where in 2018 there are 15 non-French language groups, some with several congregations. The largest of these groups are Romanians, with 800 members in five congregations. Ghanaians have two churches, one each in Paris and Strassbourg, and Brazilians also have two. Other ethnic groups with a congregation apiece include Filipinos, Russians, Serbo-Croats, Malagasy, Tamil Indians, Hispanics, and a mixed group of Africans worshiping in English. The other 30 churches are French-speaking, with almost all, except for two Haitian and two mixed congregations with a substantial white minority, being Antillian. The membership of the conference, which had stood at 3,904 in 1970 and 5415 in 1996, had then expanded much more rapidly, reaching 10,349 in early 2018 (see Table 4).

Meanwhile, however, the number of white indigenous French, especially in Paris, had continued to fall. They had lost almost every member of the generation now aged 30-50, and almost all of their youth, leaving an aging cohort involved in two mixed congregations situated in Neuilly and Damarylis in the outskirts of Paris. The paucity of children in this group of Adventists, and the difficulty of attracting other whites given the immigrant majority in the church, the challenge of post-modernism, and the secularity prevalent among the white French, suggest a bleak future for them.

In the last five years Europe has received an almost unprecedented flow of refugees from Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Northern Africa, and France has a goodly share of these, who are gathered mostly near the English Channel, frustrated in their hope of settling in Britain. Since most of the refugees are Muslims, they include almost no Adventists. Some Adventist churches, together with ADRA have become active supplying food and clothing to the refugees, and a few of those helped have attended church services: two of them were baptized in 2017.

TABLE 4 - ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE ADVENTIST MEMBERSHIP IN NORTH FRANCE CONFERENCE, 2018

Date	Membership	Fr. Antillians %	Fr. Caucasians %	Eastern Europeans %	Others %
2018	10,446	50%	20%	25%	5%
2014	9,290	45%	30%	20%	5%
1997	5,484	40%	40%	17%	5%
1989	5,262	30%	50%	10%	10%
1970	2,539	20%	70%	2%	8%

Sources: Franco-Belgian Union

The conference has hired a new group of diverse pastors, in order to match the needs and languages of the new immigrants. Some were Eastern European and African graduates of Collonges, the French college, but many had been trained in the colleges serving the regions from which other immigrants were drawn.

Seeing the changing racial balance, administrators had divided France into two conferences, North and South, in 1969, in order to maintain a white bastion in the South. However, the black portion of the population of the cities there had also begun to increase. Nevertheless, in 2018 the membership South France Conference, with far fewer immigrants than in the North, remained below 5,000, and thus clearly less than half of that of the North Conference.

Dynamics: While the first Antillean Adventists were welcomed to their congregations in Paris by the indigenous French, tensions emerged as their numbers increased, initially in the few churches in the City of Paris and then also in those on the periphery of the city. Although the immigrants were legally French citizens, and thought of themselves as French, the whites saw them as culturally very distinct. While French Adventists tend to focus on "justification by faith" and to be far less concerned with behavioral rules and to see obedience to them as peripheral to salvation, the Antilleans had been evangelized by legalistic American missionaries and therefore lived their religion differently. They were also used to more lively worship. Many of the indigenous leaders, becoming frustrated as tensions waxed, resigned their positions, preparing the way for the immigrants to assume leadership of their congregations and therefore to change the style of worship. Exiting whites then created new congregations on the periphery, increasing the total number in metropolitan Paris from six to 15, only to find that immigrants followed them there.

The first, and most dramatic, conflict occurred in the large South Paris church in the late 1960s. Facing an unexpected influx of immigrants, the white members feared being overwhelmed and losing what they had. Once the immigrants formed a clear majority, they organized and demanded an Antillean pastor. When the Conference responded by importing a pastor from Martinique, his arrival split the congregation. Consequently, other Antillean pastors were added slowly—the total in 1989 was only 5. . Moreover, most of those hired to serve the Antillians after the first one were chosen from among those who had pursued their education at Collonges, rather than those who had attended the Adventist college in Haiti or the two English-speaking colleges in the West Indies.

As the black proportion among the membership increased, evangelism among white Parisians became even more difficult. When all Adventists were urged to invite their friends to evangelistic meetings, the blacks proved more committed to outreach and found their friends more eager to attend. When the few white visitors attending found themselves part of an audience that was largely black, they usually did not to return a second time. Moreover, because most of the blacks were younger than the whites, their rate of natural increase has been much greater than that of the indigenous French, even though they estimate that they lose about 40% of their youth.

The shortage of Antillean pastors was so severe that a number of churches with black majorities had to accept white pastors. This situation made it difficult for the black pastors to seek higher positions, so that the black presence in the churches was not reflected in the conference leadership and staff. In 1989, by which time there was a clear immigrant majority in the North France Conference, there was only one Antillean departmental leader: nominating committees at constituency meetings, which were still dominated by white pastors, had begun to show concern that the immigrants receive token representation at the Conference. However, there were still no Antillean laypersons on the Conference committee. Black pastors told me then that it was time for a change, and that they expected to see that occur at the constituency meeting later that year. One result of their new determination was considerable tension at the next three constituency meetings: an Antillean was elected as President for two terms at raucous sessions in 1989 and 1993; the tension was maintained in 1997, when, following the retirement of the Antillean president, a white was again elected to the post.

Given the ethnic diversity of the delegates, each constituency meeting of the North France Conference becomes “a battlefield”, with each group endeavoring to take power. A second Antilllian was elected as president in 2001. The 2013 meeting was especially divided, resulting in the firing of the president, from Mauritius, for breaking the laws governing how churches deal with their finances. In spite of their numerical dominance at all levels of the administrative structure of the Adventist church, immigrants did not gain leadership positions in the Franco-Belgian Union until 2008, when a Antillian was elected its president. However, his term embarrassed his community. As a result of these scandals, the three constituency meetings that followed surprised when each elected a foreigner as president: a Romanian in North France, an Italian in the South conference, and a Portuguese at the Union.

The immigrants, especially the Romanians and Antillians, are theologically and behaviorally conservative, unlike the white French. This has given an additional dimension to tensions between the groups. The initial

tensions between Romanians and white French concerned the Sabbath behavior of their children; this was followed by disputes over "last-generation theology", which holds that Adventists must be living sinless lives before Christ can return. This highlighted the differing views of grace held by the two groups. The most frought issue to be debated at the North France Conference's constituency meeting in 2017 concerned articles written by a theology professor at Collonges in which he had favored accepting the marriage of gay and lesbian couples: these had greatly upset the immigrants, who argued that the conference should cease giving financial support to the college. However, the protest was quelled when Dr Jean-Jack Chafograck, an Antillian with a Th.D. who was elected president of the conference at that session, spoke out in favor of homosexuals being married so long as the relationship was exclusive. To generalize, immigrants have made the North France Conference both theologically and socially conservative, while in contrast the South France Conference is more liberal. However, Chafograck's bold statement in 2017 aligned the North Conference with the position on same-sex marriage adopted earlier by the South Conference.

In the whole of France, about 70% of the Adventist members are immigrants; in the North France Conference this figure jumps to about 80%; and in Metropolitan Paris it is over 90%. There is a brooding sense of desperation among the indigenous French concerning the future of Adventism in France among their own kind, especially in the North.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a small country and the Adventist membership there had matched the country: it was only 2,788 in 1960. Some Indonesians had migrated there when their country gained independence in the late 1940s, and these included Adventists; more arrived in the 1950s. Now third-generation Dutch, they were described to me as polite and well integrated into the Dutch church. Surinam gained its independence in 1975, but a strong tie persists between the two countries. Many Surinamese came to France for education in the 1970s and remained, even more came after a coup in 1980, until the flow stopped when restrictions were imposed because the Surinamers were not French citizens. A lay leader reported early tension because their beliefs and norms were more conservative than the Dutch were used to, but my Dutch interviewees always described them positively. The Antillians from the Caribbean islands of Curicau and Aruba had Dutch citizenship, and therefore the right to live in the Netherlands if they chose. Students came in the 1960s-70s, and others moved to the Netherlands after a refinery closed in 1969. Large numbers followed them in the 1980s and 1990s, fleeing a weak economy. In spite of their status as citizens, they arrived, unlike the Surinamers, without a felicity with the Dutch language. Although the Dutch had no former colonies in Africa, Ghanaians began to migrate there in the 1990s.

The Dutch Adventists became strongly aware of tensions emerging with the Antillians: while they emphasized salvation by faith alone, they found the Antillians legalistic and with strong views concerning some Adventist doctrines, but indifferent ethics: it was not uncommon for an Antillian to hold strongly to a complex doctrine such as the 2,300 days, but be uncertain who had fathered her children; they offended the Dutch by frequent requests for rebaptism, apparently regarding multiple baptisms as rendering them better Christians. The Dutch were also offended by their belief that Dutch Adventists needed to be

reconverted, in part because they did not strongly embrace evangelistic outreach. Because they grew much faster than any other group, both because of a large influx and having larger families, the Dutch church leaders regarded the Antillians with increasing concern. It was the policy of the Dutch Union to encourage immigrants to join Dutch churches in order to foster their assimilation, and the Antillians did this; however, they were uncomfortable there both because of the Dutch language and a neglect of standards they had been taught were important—they were shocked to find that the coffee was provided at churches and that Dutch women regularly ornamented themselves with jewelry. They were also extremely critical of an ordained woman pastor. They put special emphasis on such Adventist beliefs as eschatology, and an expectation that laws would be enacted making Sunday a sacred day and that those who did not observe them would then be persecuted. They regarded the Dutch as liberal, and were seen by them in return as inflexible. They requested that Antillian pastors be hired for their congregations, but the Dutch union regarded that as opening the way to repeat the trajectory that had resulted in the West Indian immigrants gaining control of most of the Adventist churches in England and then also of the church structure there. There were bitter feelings and white exits when Antillian majorities in large churches in the coastal cities gained control of the church boards and elder positions, and then changed the style of worship. However, in most churches the Dutch continued to control the church board, and did not allow the immigrant minority any power.

In 1995 15 Ghanaian Adventists who had been discontented in a multi-cultural church in Amsterdam gained permission to found a Twi-speaking congregation. By 1999 it had 75 members, and 150 by the beginning of 2001, when the attendance was actually close to 250. Ghanaians have a network when abroad like no other Adventist ethnic group: Matthew Bediako, a Ghanaian who was then Secretary of the General Conference, became mentor of the Amsterdam congregation, for he was President of the Association of Ghanaian Churches Abroad. The strength of this association was demonstrated when the President of the Adventist Ghanaian Union agreed to be the preacher in an evangelistic crusade in Amsterdam in 2000. Such crusades were extremely successful is reconnecting Ghanaians who had backslidden since arriving in the Netherlands because of their discomfort in Dutch-speaking churches or their failure to find employment that did not require them to work on the Sabbath (Koning 2007). The Ghanaians demonstrated the advantages of fostering single-ethnic group congregations to the Union leaders: by becoming cultural centers they could much more readily evangelize members of their ethnic group, reconnect with members who had fallen away, and at the same time they removed the risk that they could become the majority in a formerly indigenous Dutch church, and so take control of it and mold it to suit their culture. The union eventually learned from the Ghanaian example, and stopped insisting that immigrants join existing congregations. Instead, it gave immigrants room to create their own ethnic churches.

By the end of 2000 four new congregations serving a particular ethnic group had been created. However, immigrant members and persons with an immigrant background had grown to the point of being 45% of the Adventist membership in the Netherlands, and the Union leaders were uneasily aware that it would not be long before there was an immigrant majority (see Table 5). The latter were still reluctant to hire ethnic pastors. The first such, a Surinamer hired in 1985, was such a success that in 1993 he was elected as youth director at the Union, thus becoming the first immigrant at church headquarters. However, it

was not until 2000 that a second ethnic pastor, a Guyanese who had lived in Surinam, was hired as an intern after raising a new congregation as a volunteer. Meanwhile, a lay Surinamer served on the Union board from 1987-2000. These bellwethers made it clear that, given the percentage of immigrants within the Dutch church, they were very inadequately represented both in the pastorate and in decision-making positions. The union leaders realized the reality of this situation, but they felt they also had to protect Dutch interests and not allow the Dutch Church to follow the trajectory of the British Union by becoming a black church. The fact that the key advocates of what they regarded an unacceptably conservative theological interpretations and living according to strict rules were often former Antillian pastors who had come to the Netherlands as immigrants made them extra-cautious.

TABLE 5 - ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE ADVENTIST MEMBERSHIP IN THE NETHERLANDS UNION, 2000-2018

Year	Membership	Dutch Caucasians	Antillians, Surinamians	Others	All Immigrants
2018	6,002	35%	45%	20%	
2014	5,736	45%			55%
2000	4,327	55%			45%
1980	3,944				
1960	2,788				

Sources: Netherlands Union; Adventist Statistics

Realizing that they had to understand what options were available in their situation and to lay plans accordingly, the union leaders chose to hold a seminar to inform and raise the consciousness of the Dutch Adventist Church. Since I had recently published three articles on the impact of an influx of immigrants on the Adventist church in Metropolitan New York, they invited me to be the speaker. I spoke and dialogued with lay representatives, pastors, and the Union administrators and department heads in turn, and interviewed some from each group individually. As requested, I set out to educate them all and to discuss the alternative routes available. It was for them to make choices and steer accordingly afterwards.

In the subsequent years the flow of immigrants slowed because of the enactment of stricter laws, but it also became more diverse, as it had in Britain and France also: the ethnic groups represented among newcomers became predominantly Africans, Eastern Europeans, and Latins. Although the flow had slowed, the growth in immigrant numbers far exceeded the growth among the Dutch, partly because of the size of immigrant families. Early in 2018 in a union membership that had risen to 6,002, it was

estimated that 35% were indigenous white Dutch, 45% were drawn from the Antilles and Surinam, and the remaining 20% were "other" (see Table 5). The immigrants were no longer concentrated mostly in the large coastal cities, but were spread across the Netherlands and its Adventist churches. Recent Antillian immigrants are students desiring to further their education, and thus differ from their predecessors: they feel Dutch, prefer white churches, and integrate more readily. The union leaders now see secularization, rather than immigrants, as the main reason for the decline of the white membership—the Adventist experience is similar to that of the Dutch mainline denominations, who have declined without any immigrant influx. Indeed, immigrants were important in bolstering the Adventist membership in the Netherlands: forty years ago the Adventist membership in both Sweden and the Netherlands stood at about 4,000, but now the Dutch have 6,000 but the Swedes, who had no immigrant influx, have only 2,000.

One reason why the growth is slowing is that the children of the immigrants are becoming like the children of the Dutch—they are secularizing and losing interest in the church. This process is especially marked in the Surinamian constituency.

Some of the new immigrant groups have requested pastors who match them ethnically, and some such have been hired. The union leaders are concerned about the Eastern Europeans, who they regard as often rigid Adventists who promote their version of orthodoxy.

Representation in the church administration has broadened significantly in recent years. When I visited the Netherlands in 2014 I discovered that the elected treasurer had been forced by problems in his books to resign, and that he had been replaced by an Antillian businessman, who had changed his career in order to help his church. At the constituency meeting in 2016 a Surinamian pastor was chosen as secretary. The immigrants, who had long felt alienated from power in the Dutch Union, are now content: they do not want to push the Dutch out, for they recognize that would likely result in the loss of many indigenous members, but they do want a voice and a share of the power.

There are still deep ethnicity-related fissures over social issues within the Dutch church. At the 2012 business session a large majority of the delegates voted in favor of the ordination of women pastors, and the union soon after ordained the most eligible woman. However, after women's ordination was voted down by the 2015 General Conference Session, mostly because of the votes of delegates from the Developing World, immigrant members felt uncomfortable that the Dutch Union continued to oppose a policy endorsed by the General Conference. This was an important reason behind the voted changes of leadership in the Union in 2016. Another issue that gained attention at the 2016 session concerned LGBTQ couples: the former Secretary had written an article in the church periodical urging that Adventists listen to them and try to understand them. This was referred to and questioned. There was a strong wish expressed that the periodical be more in tune with the global church, that it had been too progressive. This concern did not come from immigrants alone. Nevertheless, the cultural and religious differences within the constituency are real: the Dutch are traditionally very liberal and not oriented to the World Church; immigrants, in contrast, are conservative and strongly oriented towards being in step with the World Church. Dutch pastors are not so concerned with doctrinal matters, but often care deeply

concerning social justice issues. On the other hand, as the immigrants have integrated more into Dutch society, they have become less conservative. For example, after the 2012 Session, the Union called 5 churches seeking to place a woman pastor; four largely white churches in the north refused to take her, but an Antillian congregation, which had earlier been very conservative, accepted her.

In 2002 the Dutch Union decided that it would hire only immigrant pastors who had lived as youth in the Netherlands and been trained in Europe in order to prevent conflicting theologies; it later added a requirement that if potential pastors did not conform with that history, that they at least complete an MA at Newbold College in England. By 2014 only two of the six active immigrant pastors complied with the first stipulation, but the others had completed MAs. One who did not was dismissed. By 2018 there were 8 immigrants among 22 active pastors: 3 Ghanaian, 2 Surinamian, 1 Guyanese, 2 Antillians. There are still several immigrant congregations with Dutch pastors: they are not complaining about cultural issues, though they would like more emotional than academic preaching.

The Dutch Adventist Church, unlike its counterpart in North France, still has active youth members, but fewer than earlier. The losses are no longer mainly among the white youth, but also among immigrant youth, as both groups are influenced by secularism and post-modernism. The youth leaders recognize that it is possible that they could eventually find themselves in the same situation as the French. In some respects the attempts to retain the youth divide along ethnic lines. Since it has become almost the norm among all European youth for couples to live together in advance of marriage, the indigenous Dutch pastors have long been willing to recognize such couples as if they were married already, and to encourage them to hold offices in their church; the youth department has also long allowed such couples, and indeed gay and lesbian couples also, to live in rooms reserved for married couples when they attend youth camps rather than reject their coupled status and so risk alienating them totally from the church. On the other hand, such policies offend many immigrant pastors, who would rather risk alienating them—even though they accept members who, while not “living together” parent children.

An Underlying Pattern

In each of these case studies there was an influx of immigrants, initially mostly from the Caribbean, into an area of Europe where Adventism had been growing slowly. While the first immigrants were welcomed by the indigenous white Adventists, tensions emerged as the flow of immigrants increased and they became active in the churches and successful in evangelism among their peers. This caused some whites to pull back, irritated by the "loud" behavior and legalistic theology of the newcomers. As the latter attained majority status within congregations, there were battles for control there, resulting ultimately in immigrant ascendancy and changes in the style of worship. This greatly increased the flight of whites, some of whom moved to other congregations or founded new ones, only to discover that the pattern was sooner or later repeated there.

Meanwhile, the presence of large numbers of immigrant members and their friends in evangelistic meetings made it very difficult to evangelize whites, and similarly a strong black presence in congregations made it difficult to embed any new white converts there. So conversions of whites declined even further

just as many of the white members were becoming discouraged and inactive. That is, the number of white Adventists fell sharply over time against the backdrop of a rapidly growing immigrant membership.

The changing numerical balance within each of the conferences and unions led in turn to tensions there. The initial issue was always the demand from immigrants in churches where they had come to form a majority for pastors who matched them ethnically and culturally – that is, that the conference import them and install them in their churches. When the immigrants realized that the conferences were reluctant to do this, usually using the excuse that they were obliged to hire the graduates of their local colleges to cover their fear that such actions would inevitably change the balance of power within the conference, they became frustrated and, flexing their numbers, began to demand representation at the conference. They realized that this would not only make the conferences more responsive to their demands, but also give their groups respected leadership posts. The entrenched white leadership usually responded by offering token positions to immigrants. However, rapid growth and then careful organization ultimately allowed the latter to seize the highest positions in the conferences. Once they were entrenched at that level, the immigrants sought representation and the leadership of their respective unions – that is, at the national level or, in the case of France, in the body overseeing the three conferences in France and Belgium. This has been achieved in the British Union but not yet completely in either the Franco-Belgian or the Dutch Union.[1]

In all these cases, the Adventist Church grew much larger during the period of immigrant influx from both the arrival of immigrants who were already Adventists and the successful evangelization of their peers. However, with immigrant majorities and leadership, and a small and declining white membership, Adventism came to be seen, accurately, as primarily an immigrant church in both England and North France; the Dutch have not (yet) reached that situation. Given the fact that its profiles there had become strikingly different from those of the host societies, this had the effect of further marginalizing the Church.

Meanwhile, restrictions on immigration and the passage of time are steadily changing the composition of Adventism once again, bringing second- and third-generation immigrants, socialized to their new cultures, to predominance. The Adventist Church has found that it is now having increased difficulty retaining its youth and evangelizing the new generations of immigrants. The problem of retaining youth is exacerbated by the generation gap between them and their first-generation parents, who have largely retained their immigrant cultures. Moreover, the new generations of non-Adventist immigrants are much less responsive to Adventism because they have developed their own networks, and are not urgently in need of church-based opportunities to celebrate their cultures since they have become more assimilated to the broader society and have developed avenues for advancement there.

Why has Adventism been transformed so dramatically in each of these cases? Why has its white membership declined so sharply and its immigrant membership grown so rapidly? The analysis

[1] Because it is small both numerically and geographically, the Dutch Union is a “union of churches” without constituent conferences.

demonstrates the utility of the Kelley/Iannaccone "strictness" theory in accounting for these trends. It also suggests the relevance of perspectives rooted in other research.

Accounting for the Decline of Indigenous White Members

The decline of white members in all cases occurred in contexts where religious participation among whites in general, notably in the established, mainline denominations, had been falling because of secularization. These trends also impacted Adventism in ways that are congruent with strictness theory, affecting both the enthusiasm of its members and its ability to evangelize others. As the white Adventists had experienced upward mobility, thus gaining greater opportunities within the secular society, they had become less eager to witness personally to their faith, so that the Adventist Church had come to rely more on public evangelistic campaigns for outreach. At the same time non-Adventists were proving less receptive to evangelistic endeavors. They found Adventism unattractive because of the social costs of its strictness, isolation, and its low esteem, which were linked in part to an often troubled history, such as problems in wartime because of the refusal of its members to serve as regular soldiers. Moreover, the Adventist message of warning concerning an impending apocalypse was less appealing to an increasingly materialistic generation. Meanwhile, the Adventist Church found that its white youth were also increasingly unwilling to embrace the costs of Adventism. That is, the growth-rate through conversions prior to the influx of the immigrants had been barely sufficient to make up for Adventist losses to death and apostasy.

As Adventist growth had slowed, the demographics of its membership became less suitable for internal growth, as its members passed the age of reproduction, thus making decline more likely since there were fewer children to replace the deaths among the aged. That is, the profile of white Adventism had been approaching closer to that of the declining mainline denominations, and had moved away from those sectarian groups, such as the Pentecostals, which were still experiencing growth among whites.

An influx of racially different immigrants was then injected into each of these situations. Nancy Ammerman, reviewing an array of case studies of congregations undergoing community change in the US, remarked that such challenges often kill churches (1997:3). The latter may, for example, fade away because their memberships and programs no longer match their communities, or they may choose to sell their buildings and move elsewhere. These Adventist churches did not fade away – indeed, they typically grew considerably, for the immigrants mostly spoke the same language as the white members and, being Adventists, assumed that they belonged in the existing congregations; nor could they sell their houses of worship and move their congregations elsewhere, since title to Adventist buildings is vested in the conferences, which would not consider such an option since there were new members operating the churches, filling their pews, and returning tithes. Nevertheless, these Adventist congregations did experience the problems that many congregations which become multicultural face: tensions caused by clashing cultures and sharply differing social classes (Ammerman 1997:198-208).

These Adventist case studies echo the tensions suggested by other studies. Immigrant congregations (and members) are often more conservative than indigenous congregations (and members), as for example

the Presbyterian Church USA found with Korean members (Chai 1998:327; Warner 2001). Similarly, less educated groups, such as most immigrant groups, tend to be more conservative than their better educated co-religionists. This is true even when they gain opportunities for upward mobility in their new societies: Weber found that the upwardly mobile are ascetic (1958). Their faith may become more important to immigrants in their new societies than it was at home, since it becomes more central to their identity and sense of community, and assists their acculturation (Herberg 1960; Warner 1998:15-17). A strict adherence to the beliefs and behavioral rules of their faith allows immigrants to assert their identity: they feel more holy than most white members, whom they see as following compromised versions of faith and practice.

The tensions which developed among Adventists in these case studies as the number of immigrants in their ranks burgeoned had the effect of further eroding the previously dominant white groups. Once the flows of black immigrants increased from trickles to floods, creating tensions in urban congregations as newcomers took control, Adventism in all these cases experienced white flight. White members were not only offended by what they saw as unacceptably exuberant worship behavior and legalistic beliefs, but they felt uncomfortable being identified with an immigrant church—an identity that increased the cost of membership further by lowering its status another notch. Moreover, not only did their internal tensions distract Adventists from any outreach they might have otherwise engaged in, but their changing racial demographics made it increasingly difficult to attract potential white converts to Adventism.

The demographics of white Adventism in all these cases became increasingly unfavorable to growth, as the white membership aged and the profile of the denomination shifted, until it gained the reputation of being a black immigrant church. For the indigenous whites, Adventism had become distinctive in yet another way, thus increasing the cost of becoming or remaining a member.

Accounting for the Rapid Growth of Immigrant Members

Each of these cases occurred against the background of the numerical center of Christianity shifting from the Developed World to the Developing World, and of this process occurring much more dramatically within Adventism. A second feature of this context has been the strong flow of immigrants from the Developing World to parts of the Developed World. Where there has been a strong flow of immigrants from parts of the world where Adventists are well represented, such as the Caribbean, it has been inevitable that Adventists would be among them.[2] Since Adventism attracts converts who are looking for opportunities for upward mobility, and often provides the means for this to occur and teaches members to expect it, it may well be that the Adventist representation among immigrants moving from areas where economies are weak to areas where they are strong is greater than a random selection of citizens would provide.

[2] Similarly, when there is a strong flow from regions where Adventists are poorly represented, as with the recent torrent of refugees fleeing from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Muslim areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, it is rare to discover Adventists participating. I was surprised, however, and disappointed, to find few Adventist efforts to provide help to these refugees, in spite of their presence in all three countries studied.

Studies among immigrants to England showed that Adventists were much more successful in retaining the participation of members arriving from abroad than were the established and mainline denominations. This was found to be related to the welcomes they initially received from Adventist congregations, from their sense of the correctness of their beliefs, which they had been taught so well in their homelands, and from the extent to which the immigrants succeeded in creating strong communities in their new congregations. In the opportunities it provided for participation and internal status and in its perspective on the "world," Adventism, like Pentecostalism, offered compensation for the various status and other deprivations which a racial minority faced in British society—compensations which were not available in the more staid, white-dominated denominations (Hill 1971:121-123; Theobold 1979:318; Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Such compensators bind underprivileged groups to strict churches.

The number of Adventist immigrants were also swelled because of their enthusiasm in reaching out to their backslidden-Adventist or non-Adventist peers. The latter were often open to such outreach, having been shaken loose from their customary ways and ties (including their religious ties) by their migration, and often feeling the need to re-establish communal networks. As immigrants, they had few established opportunities to lose by embracing Adventism and much to gain, such as fellowship in situations where they could celebrate their culture and a new, enclosed status system where there were opportunities for them to rise rapidly. Moreover, because Adventism was much better known in the Caribbean than in Europe, they often had a positive image of it rather than, as among the English, French, and Dutch, being suspicious of it as possibly an unknown cult.

The demographics of the immigrants in turn helped their growth, for they were typically much younger than the indigenous members, eager to bear children, and their families tended to be larger than those of the whites. Consequently, they rapidly took over the children's divisions in their new churches. They therefore also experienced rapid natural increase.

The immigrants, in spite of their numbers, proved to be slow to assert themselves. Initially they were marginalized in society and also the church because of their poverty, relative lack of education, and the prevailing racism – a racism that was expressed in the church as assumptions that immigrants could be neglected because they were temporary visitors who would in due course return home. Those who eventually took the lead in politicizing the immigrants were youthful members who had graduated from universities. Having gained access to opportunities, they now possessed a stake in society and set out to fight for their rights there.

Once the immigrants took control of their congregations and then, in turn, also their conferences, the Adventist Church shifted its focus to meeting their needs, providing them with schools and turning its evangelical thrust towards the newcomers, so that the conversion rate among them increased further.

However, once legislation slowed the influx of immigrants, so that Black Adventism became increasingly a second-generation phenomenon in these societies, and as black Adventists attained higher levels of education and experienced upward mobility, they increasingly mirrored white Adventism in their new

societies: they lost more of their youth from the church, became less strict so that they were less eager to be involved in personal outreach, and their demographics became less favorable to growth. This pattern mirrored that found in other studies (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 431-446). Meanwhile, their non-Adventist peers, having themselves put down roots in their new societies, became less disposed to use foreign churches as their social centers, and were more reluctant to respond to evangelistic outreach, since they now had more to lose by joining a group that still clung to distinctive behavioral norms such as Sabbath observance.

Conclusion

This paper has tested the usefulness of "strictness theory" in a new role: that of explaining why one religious constituency grows while another declines. It has proved to be effective in this. Adventist distinctiveness and strictness encouraged both close ties and zeal among immigrant Adventists. It fitted their needs in their new countries, providing them with community, purpose, a status system where they could easily climb, and help with their problems. Consequently, most of those who arrived with Adventist roots clung to them, and others were drawn in by their outreach. They had much to gain from their Adventist connection in their new situation, and as newcomers had little to lose by so separating themselves from the broader society.

In contrast, few whites were drawn to peculiar Adventism, for they had much more to lose. Those who had grown up as Adventists had already moderated the rules in order to reduce the costs of membership, making Adventism less distinctive. However, when the immigrants took over they brought a more distinctive brand of Adventism, with higher costs, and also further raised the cost for white Adventists as the denomination gained the reputation of being a "black church." This led to tension, a sense of loss among the whites, and the exit of the majority of them as the impact of the immigrants resulted in a new homogenization of Adventism. Only isolated attempts to create or maintain niche congregations meeting the needs of different kinds of Adventists – different cultures, different educational levels, different music and styles of worship – survived the rapid changes brought about by an overwhelming shift in the makeup of the membership.

These case studies illustrate the continuing relevance of Adventism to many of the people yearning for better opportunities in the Developing World – and especially to the new immigrants from such societies seeking a sense of community in the Developed World. However, they also starkly illustrate the decline of Adventism in the Developed World, a decline that increasingly parallels that of the mainline denominations active there but not the more vibrant sects. Indeed, the failure of Adventism to appeal to second-generation immigrants and its huge losses among the children of its immigrant members underlines the problem that Adventism faces in the Developed World.

The problems that indigenous and immigrant Adventists have had worshiping, fellowshipping and working together in the same congregations and conferences in turn illustrate how difficult it is proving to practice Christian love, brotherhood and servant-leadership in a global church. This difficulty is likely to escalate

as the relative financial decline of the American church renders it increasingly less able to exercise control through the power of the almighty dollar.

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