

Importing God

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Importing God

The Mission of the Ghanaian Adventist Church
and Other Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands

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*To my parents -
God-given sources of everything
that is beautiful in my life*

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1 Immigrant churches on a mission: setting the stage

(Fieldwork Report, 12/03/2006)

This is my very first field visit – almost a year before I am scheduled to go, but I cannot contain my curiosity. From a list of immigrant churches, I have selected one that caught my attention: a multi-ethnic, Arabic-speaking Protestant congregation in the Northern part of Amsterdam. Excited, yet a bit nervous, I enter the church room. It is small and there are only about 25 people present. Most, I later find out, are Syrian, though others included in the group are Egyptian, Iraqi and Palestinian. There are hip-looking youngsters and women who loosely cover their heads with scarves. Most of the church service transpires in a familiar Protestant manner. After the service we enjoy coffee, tea, and cake. Elia, the hospitable Palestinian man who translated for me, asks about my church background. I tell him that my family is Seventh-day Adventist. To my surprise, he knows the church. He knows that Adventists have the specific practice of worshipping on Saturdays, what they call ‘Sabbaths’. Elia subsequently introduces me as an Adventist to a couple of male Syrian church members. Both men appear very interested in talking with me and finding out who I am. One of them immediately notes: ‘Oh, I’ve seen Adventists on TV, and they don’t believe in an eternal hell. That is not logical, it makes God look unjust – how can one group of people live forever in happiness and another group not live forever in sadness? That would not be balanced. Besides, texts about hell are abundantly found throughout the Bible, like the passage about Lazarus who rests in the arms of Abraham in heaven, amongst others.’ I am a bit caught off guard by this man’s wish to enter into a serious theological discussion with me. I attempt to recollect what I know on this topic and reply that the Bible speaks about the consequences of death as eternal, and that ‘eternal’ in Hebrew can also mean something that has an end. In response, Elia calls his wife, who is Palestinian and speaks Hebrew fluently, to check whether this linguistic argument holds water. She refutes my point by noting that ‘eternal’ in Hebrew simply means that, ‘eternal’. One of the Syrian men contests my reasoning with another Bible text. He appears a bit cynical towards me, and the other Syrian man has a dead serious appearance. Finding myself attempting to still back up a view I am myself not even fully settled on, I stress that I just cannot imagine that a loving God would let people suffer for eternity. Elia replies firmly that we should not *imagine* how things are, but rather look at the biblical text to see what God says, and that we must remember that God is both loving and judging. After some more moments of deep discussion, some church members start leaving the church. Elia and his wife kindly invite me to join them in their visit of an Iraqi couple that lives in the neighbourhood, which I curiously agree to. In the living room of this Iraqi family, which is decorated with various symbols of Jesus, the theological discussion continues. As we converse collectively, the topic of the Sabbath comes up, and the charming Iraqi lady of the house asks Elia: ‘Did you already talk to her [that is, me] about this?’. Elia answers her call by refuting the Sabbath practice on the basis of chapter 23 of the biblical book of Leviticus. On the basis of this text, he argues that in the future, the day succeeding the Sabbath, that is Sunday, will be celebrated as the true day of worship.

This account of my very first field visit in a study on immigrant churches in the Netherlands illustrates several things. For one, my personal identity appeared inextricably caught up with the practice of fieldwork – a methodological issue to which I will return later in this chapter. More importantly for this introduction, this fieldwork report demonstrates a theme that recurred in my early, exploratory contacts with immigrant churches: the significance of conveying specific religious beliefs and practices. Due to an

interest in Islam stemming from previous research (Koning 2005), I initially sought contact with immigrant Christians from Muslim-majority ethnic or national groups, such as Palestinians, Kurds, Moroccans, and Iraqis. Some of them had converted to Christianity in the Netherlands. Others were subtly or explicitly involved in sharing their faith with Islamic fellow ethnics in the country. As my contacts widened to include Christians and churches from African, Asian and Latin American backgrounds, the topics of mission and conversion kept coming up. Fascinated by the assortment of overlapping, complementing, and contrasting soul saving agenda's, I developed an enthusiasm to explore these specific facets of immigrant churches.

To my regret, in my pursuit I discovered that a quest for literature on the topic delivered next to nothing. The field seemed unexplored. Both within migration and mission studies, there were few studies that tackled the topic systematically and in-depth. Research on migration and religion primarily hinged on the role of religion in the process of adaptation to the host society, either as a source of (ethnic, linguistic, gender) identity or (bridging and bonding) social capital, and the way religion changes in organisation and meaning under the influence of the host society (cf. Stepick 2005). Although the topic of evangelism can be connected to these themes, this was largely left undone. Nor was evangelism studied in its own right. In mission studies, mission was generally considered to be multi-centric or 'from everywhere to everywhere' (Escobar 2003a; Walls 2008), but the particular missionary role of non-Westerners who immigrate to the West remained understudied – an observation confirmed by missiologist Hanciles:

With millions of non-Western migrants fulfilling a 'missionary' function within their own continents and in Western societies, the inattentiveness within Christian historiography to the role and significance of migrants as key actors in the Christian missionary movement translates into a major analytical flaw. (Hanciles 2006: 65)

Observing both the empirical significance of and lack of research on evangelism by non-Western immigrants in the West, it appeared to me that a study in this direction would contribute to a fuller understanding of contemporary mission dynamics by including the role of non-Western immigrants in the West. This thesis is therefore intended as a contribution to the study of contemporary missions, and will draw on both social science and missiological perspectives. In the course of the research, a number of comparable studies recognising the gap in knowledge on the issue of immigrant mission have emerged. These studies form the more specific context against which this thesis has been shaped, as will be laid out below. In this chapter I will set the stage of this study by delineating the field (non-Western dimensions of contemporary mission), the case (immigrant churches in the Netherlands), research questions, cues for analysis, and methodological reflection.

1.1 Contemporary mission dynamics: non-Western dimensions

1.1.1 Non-Western Christianity as a global mission force

If Christianity ever was a Western religion, it is hardly so anymore. According to Jenkins' famous thesis, Christianity is becoming 'Southernised': its centre of gravity is rapidly shifting to the Southern hemisphere of our globe (Jenkins 2002)¹. The largest Christian communities today can be found in Africa and Latin America, and also increasingly in Asia. Jenkins predicts that in 2050, only one in every five Christians will be a non-Hispanic white person, and notes that we should start to visualise a 'typical' contemporary Christian as a "woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*" (Jenkins 2002: 2). Worldwide denominations are impacted by this change. Elsewhere Jenkins predicts that in 2025, 75% of the Roman Catholic Church will live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (2007: 16). Roughly a third of the College of Cardinals today is from the global South, which may lead to the election of a non-European pope in the nearby future. The world's largest Catholic seminary is in Nigeria (NY times 2009). Similarly, the historically English Anglican Communion is increasingly African-dominated and will soon have Nigeria as its largest representative (Jenkins 2007: 16; see also Presler 2000). The Seventh-day Adventist Church, originally North American, now draws most of its members from the non-Western world, producing a strongly localised leadership all over the globe and dissension on certain theological issues along cultural lines (Bruinsma 1994: 92-102). In the UK, membership is predominantly black (Ackah 2008), with the current president of the national church body being African Caribbean. In the light of the rise of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Sanneh's book title (2003), "Whose religion is Christianity?", is a fair question to ask.

The 'Southernisation' of Christian adherents, in addition to strong migration currents all over the globe, simultaneously 'Southernises' Christian missionaries². In fact, missiologist Keyes (1983) argues that mission from the non-Western world is the 'last age of missions'. Keyes depicts four geographical centres in Christian mission history: 1. The Middle East (until 400 AD), 2. Europe (from 400 - 1800), 3. North America (1800 - now), and 4. The 'Third World' (today), referring to the nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania, including their emigrants to the West. Keyes emphasises that the 'Third World' has been active in cross-cultural Christian mission for nearly 200 years, with Tahitian missionaries preaching in the Samoa islands in the 1830s, Jamaicans evangelising in the Cameroons in the 1830s, and Methodist Indian missionaries heading for Malaysia in the 1880s. He catalogued 472 active missionary sending agencies from the 'Third World' in the 1980s. In their reports on 'missiometrics' (statistics on global mission and world Christianity), Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing stress that global evangelistic plans are increasingly initiated and led by Christians from the 'Global South': Africa, Asia and Latin America (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing 2008: 28; Johnson, Barrett, and Crossing 2010: 30, 31). The authors show that among the 11 countries with the highest number of sent

¹ Jenkins uses the term 'Southernisation' to refer to Africa, Latin America and Asia. I however find the term 'non-Western', referring to those countries outside of Western Europe and North America, descriptively more accurate since many booming Christian nations (e.g. Korea, Nigeria) are located not in the Southern but in the Northern hemisphere. I will therefore employ the term 'non-Western' rather than 'Southern', unless discussing specific authors like Jenkins who make use of the latter.

² Christianity is not the only expansionist religion drawing strength from the 'South'. See for example on Islam, Chesworth 2007.

missionaries, two are non-Western, namely Brazil³ and South Korea, and that Europe receives more missionaries today than does Africa or Asia (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing 2007)⁴. Although the mission work by Western agencies is still numerically predominant (see Jaffarian 2004), non-Western ‘senders’ and Western ‘receivers’ are on the rise. This has been translated into the promotion of partnerships between non-Western and Western agencies at international mission conferences, as well as to non-Western-led missionary networks, such as the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, aiming at world evangelisation (Adogame 2008a: 331-333).

Missiologists generally consider this mission movement from non-Western regions as a great opportunity for reaching the globe with the gospel. For example, Latin Americans are considered better equipped than Europeans to do mission work in Muslim countries, because of their greater cultural, spiritual, political, socio-economic, and even phenotypical similarities, and the lesser amount of negative prejudice faced (Heikes 2003; see also Freston 2005 and 2008: 132-133). Similarly, Keyes notes that missionaries from the ‘Third World’, not associated with colonialism or imperialism, receive a greater hearing from un-Christianised people in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and are more financially efficient and organisationally flexible (1983: 12-15). Non-Western missionaries are further depicted as modeling a specific kind of Christianity that Western Christians have neglected, i.e. a holistic type combining spirituality with social justice (Wijzen 2007; Verstraelen 2007: 109; Keyes 1983: 40-43; Gerloff 2001: 285;). However, many also raise the issue of insufficient funding and training, as well as difficulties in partnership with Western agencies (Heikes 2003; Keyes 1983). Freston additionally suggests that non-Western missionaries serving in non-Western countries may be protected less quickly by local governments in case of trouble than those coming from powerful Western nations (Freston 2008: 133).

Non-Western missionaries are active in non-Western regions. Scholars of mission history have often pointed out the crucial role played by indigenous non-Western converts in missionising their own people groups. Today, countries like Brazil, India, and China have large numbers of national mission workers - India has as many as Germany (Johnson, Barrett, and Crossing 2010: 30). Non-Western missionaries furthermore cross national boundaries in their work in non-Western regions. Mwaura (2008), for example, discusses the evangelistic activity and influence of Nigerian Pentecostal churches in Kenya. Kalu refers to Africans leading non-African congregations in Southeast Asia, often on the basis of visions⁵ (Kalu 2008: 288). Others point to other ‘South-South’ relations such as Brazilian and Ghanaian missions in Southern Africa (Van de Kamp and Van Dijk 2010; Freston 2005), and ‘East-East’ relations such as Korean missionaries in Japan (Noguchi 2008) and Russia (Kovalchuk 2008). Non-Western missionaries are not only

³ Freston, who extensively studied Brazilian missions, counts 2500 Brazilian evangelical missionaries abroad, 90% of whom are sent by Brazilian-initiated missionary societies (2008: 114).

⁴ These ‘missiometrics’ are based only on personnel that is full-time employed by churches and mission agencies, and therefore do not capture the less established mission dynamics of most immigrant churches (Ter Haar 2008: 47). Mission involvement from the South may thus even be stronger than these numbers suggest.

⁵ Visions, prophecies, and dreams play an important role in the missionary narratives of African and other non-Western individuals and churches engaged in international missions (see for example Währisch-Oblau 2009: 90-104).

active in non-Western regions, but also in the West. We will now turn to this phenomenon, which is at the heart of this thesis.

1.1.2 Non-Western missionaries in the West: the ‘reversed mission’ debate

In recent years, a small but growing number of scholars have begun to show interest in the issue of mission activity of non-Western Christians in the West. A most prominent aspect of this is the discussion about ‘reversed mission’: the idea that non-Westerners are bringing back the gospel to the West, which seems to have forgotten what it once preached⁶. Reversed mission is expressed in various modes such as the intentional mission of (affluent) non-Western individuals or organisations in the West, the work of immigrant churches, non-Western Christian ministers leading ‘indigenous’ congregations in the West, and partnerships between Western and non-Western churches (Catto 2008b: 223; Freston 2010).

The term ‘reversed mission’, which has now been included in the ‘Encyclopedia of Mission and Missionaries’ (Ojo 2007), has historical roots. Kalu traces the idea back to the 19th century mainline churches in Africa, where a missionary coined the term ‘blessed reflex’ to refer to the expected renewal that African, Asian, and Latin American churches would bring to the Western missionary churches. In the late 1970s, the term became ‘reverse flow’ in African missiological discourse in the context of the debates on the indigenisation, moratorium⁷ and decolonisation of the African church (Kalu 2008: 272). As many others have observed, the term ‘reversed mission’ is rather problematic. It assumes a ‘standard’, unidirectional path of mission that can be ‘reversed’. In this thesis, it is not my aim to engage in a thorough critique of the theoretical underpinnings of this concept (see Knibbe *forthc.* for an excellent discussion on this⁸). Rather my ambition is primarily empirical: to investigate what non-Western missions in the West look like ‘on the ground’ and allow patterns to emerge. The idea of reversed mission is sometimes proposed without much reference to empirical realities. Recently, more empirically oriented studies have emerged, discussing to what extent and in what modalities the phenomenon of reversed mission exists. These projects form the setting within which this study is situated. Taking this setting as my point of departure, I will continue the use of the term ‘reversed mission’ in this thesis. My data, however, will confirm that the field is much more complex than the term ‘reversed mission’ suggests.

⁶ This definition of the ‘reversed mission’ concept freely summarises the most common understanding of the term. There are however alternative ways of understanding it. Freston (2010) for example includes Korean missions to Japan as a form of reversed mission, referring to ‘reversed’ in the post-colonial rather than geographical sense. In a study of Indonesian and Moluccan Reformed congregations in the Netherlands, Jansen specifically understands ‘reversed mission’ to imply the imitation of goals, motives, and practices of the previous evangelisers (the Dutch Reformed missionaries that worked in Indonesia and the Moluccas), proposing the alternative and in her view more accurate term ‘revised mission’ to depict the creative re-appropriation of mission styles (2006).

⁷ This refers to the call for an end to Christian missions from the Western to the non-Western world, initiated in 1971 by John Gatu, leader of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa (see Adogame 2008a: 329-333).

⁸ Knibbe (*forthc.*) argues that the idea of ‘reversed mission’ seems to depart from an evolutionary perspective that assumes the problematic relation between religion and modernity. She proposes instead that the presence of Nigerian missionaries in Europe can best be understood as a “meeting of modernities”.

Empirical studies of reversed mission draw out several common conclusions. First, it is generally agreed that non-Western Christians in the West often do have a mission agenda to reach Westerners. Ter Haar (2008) has observed, for example, that African Christian immigrants consider secular Europe a spiritual desert in need of re-evangelisation: a ‘valley of dry bones’ (referring to the Bible book of Ezekiel 37:1-14, pp. 39, 40). She underscores that these immigrants see themselves as sent by God to fulfil this goal. This is exemplified by mission organisations of African Christians in Europe such as the European GATE, ‘Gift from Africa to Europe’⁹ and the Belgian DAWN, ‘Discipling A Whole Nation’. A specific, much-researched case is the Nigerian-initiated Pentecostal ‘Redeemed Christian Church of God’, which is one of the fastest growing and most popular churches in Nigeria, and has spread to about sixty countries with over two million members in Africa, America, Europe, Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world (Adogame 2004a: 30). Part of its strongly territorial mission statement reads: “In order to take as many people with us [to heaven] as possible, we will plant churches within five minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries; and within five minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed countries”¹⁰. Whilst most studies of reversed mission centre on African Pentecostals (e.g. Adogame 2004a; Knibbe 2009; Olupona 2010; Fatokun 2010; Obinna 2010), a similar conclusion holds for non-Pentecostal African Christians. Having extensively studied the African Christian diaspora in both Europe and North America (e.g. 2000, 2003, 2005), Adogame has drawn particular attention to African-Initiated Churches located in the West, such as the Celestial Church of Christ (1998; 2000a) and Aladura churches in general (2004b). He stresses the self-consciously global missionary outlook of these churches, expressed in their names (adding epithets as ‘worldwide’, ‘global’, and ‘international’), symbolic display of flags in the church, use of new media technologies, and networking strategies.

Second, most studies of reversed mission agree that, in spite of the ambitious mission agenda, few Westerners are actually reached. Thus, even though their analyses are full of nuances, the most wide-ranging empirical studies of reversed mission by Währisch-Oblau (2009; see also 2000, 2006)¹¹ and Catto (2008b; see also 2008a)¹² conclude that few Westerners are converted by the mission attempts of non-Westerners. In this context, the case of the oft-cited archetype of successful reversed mission, the ‘Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations’¹³, is presented as exceptional. This mega

⁹ The vision of GATE as depicted on its website is “gathering all African Christian lay and trained ministers, all African Christian businessmen and women, and all African Christian students living and/or working in Europe, for the purpose of stimulating the faith of the European Christian community, and in partnership with them to evangelize the non-Christian European community”. See the website: <http://www.gate-mission.org>.

¹⁰ See the official website of the RCCG: <http://rccg.org>. The site of the RCCG Netherlands Mission is: <http://rccgnetherlands.org>.

¹¹ Währisch-Oblau studied Pentecostal/charismatic pastors of different ethnic backgrounds in especially Western Germany in terms of their missionary self-perception.

¹² Catto investigated ‘reversed mission’ in the UK among different ethnic groups and in different modalities (non-Western individual missionaries associated with missionary organisations, diaspora congregations, and a short-term mission trip from the Anglican Melanesian Brotherhood to the UK).

¹³ See the church website: <http://www.godembassy.org>.

church was initiated by the Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja in the Ukraine¹⁴, where, according to a recent estimate, it has nearly 25.000 members (Wanner 2007: 210), of which the vast majority is indigenous European (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; 2006). It has branched out throughout Russian-speaking territories and in Nigeria, Germany, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, the USA and elsewhere (Adogame 2008a: 319). Drawing its core membership from recovering alcoholics, drug addicts, and their families, aiming for the full permeation of religion in social, economic, and political spheres, and combining Ukrainian patriotism with evangelical cosmopolitanism, this congregation is now the “largest evangelical church in Europe” (Wanner 2007: 210). It is at the forefront of the growth and revival of evangelicalism in a post-socialist Ukraine (ibid. 210-248). Adogame (2008a) primarily attributes the exceptional ‘success’ of this church in reaching white Europeans to its serious engagement with the existential problems in a society pervaded by, yet not competent in dealing with poverty, alcoholism, and family problems.

I would like to conclude this brief overview of the reversed mission debate to make some observations. In contrast to the attention for explaining the triumph of Adelaja’s church, I would propose that the ‘failure’ of other churches, or the apparent gap between ‘reversed mission’ ideals and results, remains underexplained. Few studies have paid systematic attention to this issue. Mostly, the gap is explained by pointing to the marginal position of immigrants and the taxing relationship between the non-Western missionary and Western society, expressed in matters such as racism and other forms of prejudice (e.g. Adogame 2008b, Catto 2008b, Freston 2010). Further, as said above, most studies centre on African Pentecostals¹⁵, which may limit our understanding of all the relevant factors. Finally, the appeal of the idea of reversed mission diverts the attention away from other, perhaps more significant forms of non-Western mission in the West. There has for example been little attention for ‘internal mission’ (a term used by Jongeneel 2003), which deliberately focuses on immigrant groups. I suggest that in order to get a more complete picture of non-Western mission in the West, it is important to include these other dimensions. In this study, I will take these three critical observations into account, as will be outlined in 1.3.

1.2 The case: immigrant churches in the Netherlands

This study will contribute to an understanding of non-Western missions in the West through the lens of immigrant churches in the Netherlands. This is a largely unexplored terrain, with the exception of a few pioneering scholars such as Knibbe (2009), who studied the mission of the Nigerian Redeemed Christian Church of God in the Netherlands, and Jansen (2006), who examined the mission of Indonesian and Moluccan Reformed congregations in the Netherlands¹⁶. Whilst studies comparing different ethnic

¹⁴ As Freston points out, this case illustrates the messiness of the concept of ‘reversed mission’, since the Ukraine is not part of ‘the West’ (Freston 2010).

¹⁵ There are exceptions, such as Pasura’s study of Zimbabwean Catholics in the UK (2010a) and Kim’s study of Korean missionaries in the US (2010).

¹⁶ Since the academic contributions to this topic are relatively sparse, brief mention must be made of non-academic references: a Dutch newspaper article (Trouw 2007) and a magazine of the Dutch Evangelical Mission Alliance (Evangelische Zendings Alliantie) devoted to the topic (Zending Nú 2007). Further, a BA thesis was written by a student of the Evangelische Hogeschool Ede on this theme, discussing the missionary contributions of immigrant churches in the Netherlands (Van Ingen 2007). The research for

groups have recently been conducted in the UK (Catto 2008b) and Germany (Währisch-Oblau 2009), no such study has been conducted in the Netherlands. In general, the research on religion and migration in the Netherlands has neglected Christians and largely focused on Muslims. However, in the last decade, the number of studies on Christian immigrants and their churches in the Netherlands has gradually expanded and covered a variety of groups and themes¹⁷.

The Netherlands is a generally secularised country, at least in the sense of institutional Christianity. Though there are a few indigenous churches in the country that are growing, the general trend is a decrease in church attendance and membership. In the period 1971 - 2004/05, the churches that became the PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) lost 51% of their members (Becker and De Hart 2006). However, trends of secularisation are mixed with 'sacralisation'. Religion has not disappeared, but emerges in different forms, which are often more individualised (Borgman and Van Harskamp 2008). Beliefs and practices in the realm of alternative spiritualities, for example, have gradually become popularised, though relatively small numbers of people are active in this realm (Becker and De Hart 2006). An important religious trend in the Netherlands is also Islam, the adherents of which are estimated to be between 850.000 and 950.000 in the country, though within this community there are also tendencies towards secularisation (Sengers 2008).

In this diverse context, the Netherlands today is also the residence of hundreds of thousands of immigrant Christians. The presence of non-native believers in the country has a long history. For example, French-speaking Protestant refugees from the Southern Netherlands and France established the first Wallonian churches in what is now the

this thesis was conducted in assignment of the Mission Committee of the World Evangelical Alliance (affiliated with the 'Welcome Project', which aims at welcoming and supporting non-European Christians in Europe), with the purpose of enhancing the support of the mission work of immigrants. Van Ingen's most important conclusions include that immigrant churches prefer a supporting rather than an initiating role in reaching the 'native' Dutch, have special expertise in evangelism among Muslims, and combine evangelistic with diaconal work.

¹⁷ After the early inventory by Jongeneel, Budiman, and Visser (1996), various academic and non-academic studies were published. Some have been concerned with creating overviews (Ferrier 2002; Euser 2006a), others have focused on specific ethnic groups, denominations, places, and themes. The largest group of immigrant Christians in the Netherlands, African and especially Ghanaian Christians and their churches, has received the most attention (e.g. Van Dijk 1997, 2000, 2002; Ter Haar 1998; Tichelman 1996). Few studies have come out on other ethnic groups, such as Asians (exceptions are Euser 2006b; Jansen 2008a). Further, books have been published specifically on Catholic immigrants (Maaskant 1999; Castillo Guerra, Wijsen, & Steggerda 2006; Van der Meer 2010), Pentecostal immigrants (Droogers, Van der Laan and Van Laar 2006), and Syrian Orthodox immigrants (Schukink 2003). Other work is place-centred, such as the early study on religion in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district, a majority-immigrant neighbourhood housing both Christians and Muslims (Oomen 1994), and the overview of immigrant churches in Rotterdam (Calvert 2007). Again others particularly address social issues related to immigrant churches, such as their social and economic contributions (Van der Sar and Visser 2006), interaction with undocumented immigrants (De Vries 2006; Van der Meulen 2008), identity formation of youth (Wartena, Bertram-Troost, Miedema 2008), sexual and reproductive issues (Derks and Shiripinda 2010) and the quest to find an appropriate space to worship (Goossen 2006; Van der Meulen 2009). Lastly, theological topics are also attended to, such as liturgy (Barnard 2008; Klomp 2008), homiletics (Stark 2008), deliverance (Jansen 2008b), and pluralism, dialogue, and healing (see the various contributions in Droogers, Van der Laan, and Van Laar 2006). Several church related organisations have further reflected on the relation between 'native' and immigrant churches in the Netherlands (Van 't Kruis 2001; Pluim & Kuyk 2002; Broersen et al. 2006).

Netherlands as early as 1571¹⁸. There are still 14 Wallonian churches in the Netherlands today. The oldest non-Western church in the country is the Armenian Apostolic Church. Christian Armenians in Amsterdam already had their own priest in 1665 and had their own church built in 1714 (Bekius and Ultee 1985). Today there are still two Armenian churches in the Netherlands that gather on a regular basis¹⁹. Immigrant Christians and churches in the Netherlands are thus not a new phenomenon. However, most immigrant Christians that still have an organised presence in the country today, have come after the Second World War. These arrivals roughly came in two waves. The first wave was in the 1950s-1970s and mostly included immigrants from former Dutch colonies - Indonesia, the Moluccas, Suriname, and the Dutch Antilles. The second wave started from the late 1980s on and included immigrants from various African countries and Eastern Europe. A recent estimate brings the total of non-Western immigrant Christians in the Netherlands at over half a million (Stoffels 2008: 15). About 900 immigrant churches and 200 churches with foreign language services (Van den Broek 2004) are scattered all over the country, particularly in the larger cities. Worshippers speak over 75 different languages and come from lands as varied as Brazil, Turkey, Ghana, and Korea. Theologies range from Aladura²⁰ to Serbian Orthodox, and even new ‘mother churches’ are established by immigrants on Dutch soil (e.g. Ter Haar 1998: 30-33). In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the specific immigrant churches in the Netherlands that I researched for this study.

1.3 Research questions and concepts

1.3.1 Formulating the questions

Having outlined the wider field (non-Western dimensions of contemporary mission dynamics) and the specific case (immigrant churches in the Netherlands) of this study, I will now move to a discussion of research questions and concepts. In 1.1.2, I outlined three limitations in studies of non-Western missions in the West to which I will respond in my research design. First, I will complement the focus on African and Pentecostal churches by conducting a study that looks at a wide variety of immigrant churches. This selection of churches will be further discussed in 1.5.1. Second, I noted that the discussion about non-Western missionaries in the West is dominated by the debate around ‘reversed mission’. In this study, I will seek to engage with the ‘full scope’ of immigrant mission, that is reversed mission (directed to the Dutch/Europeans²¹), internal mission (directed to particular ethnic/linguistic immigrant groups), as well as mission to ‘third party’ ethnic groups (directed to all other ethnic groups). Third, I observed that in studies of reversed mission, the gap between mission ideals and reality remains underexplained. Therefore, in this study I aim to uncover *how* directions of mission and directions of conversion are produced. I will examine both immigrant churches and their audiences, which I refer to as those groups that the immigrant churches wish to convert, attempt to convert, and/or actually do convert.

¹⁸ See (in Dutch): <http://www.waalsekerk-amsterdam.nl>.

¹⁹ These churches are located in the cities of Amsterdam (see [in Dutch:] <http://www.armeensekerk.org>) and Almelo (see [in Dutch:] <http://www.armeensekerk.nl>).

²⁰ The Aladura is an indigenous African religious movement that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in Western Nigeria. It places strong emphasis on prayer, healing, prophecy, exorcism, trances, visions, and dreams (Adogame 2004b). Examples are the Celestial Church of Christ and Christ Apostolic Church.

²¹ In the empirical chapters, I will make use of emic definitions to account for this term.

For the purpose of understanding how directions of evangelism and conversion emerge, I will draw upon a conceptualisation of the missionary enterprise as an assortment of including and excluding group dynamics. Mission requires the construction of boundaries²² - symbolic and social classifications of who is 'in' and who is 'out'. This can be seen at all levels of mission: discourses (patterns of symbolic boundaries), practices (patterns of social boundaries), and responses (patterns of symbolic and social boundaries)²³.

Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions that demarcate group membership (Lamont and Molnár 2002). In mission discourses, symbolic boundaries are constructed by delineating who is/is not and should be/not be part of 'us'. For example, an evangelistic discourse of 'reaching the world for Christ' implies that the whole world should become part of 'us', while a discourse of 'winning those who don't know Christ' implies that all those who know Christ are already part of 'us'.

Social boundaries are "objectified forms of social differences" (ibid. p. 168) manifested in patterns of social interaction that include and exclude. In mission practices, boundaries are constructed by (consciously or unconsciously) targeting some groups but not others. For example, advertising a Bible seminar in a specific neighbourhood includes the residents of the local area, while inviting only white people to one's church is an act that excludes non-whites. At the same time, the symbolic boundaries expressed in mission discourses, and the social boundaries expressed in mission practices, emerge in part from the ways in which the missionaries themselves are socially and symbolically included and excluded by other parties. Mission can thus be seen as a field where different practices of inclusion and exclusion intersect.

Finally, symbolic and social boundaries are constructed in the responses to mission. Audiences categorise the evangelising group in specific ways, and respond by becoming a member of this group in some ways or not. In short, the missionary enterprise essentially consists of an ongoing process of constructing and being constructed by boundaries, of intersections of including and excluding. In light of these links, it is not surprising that Barth notes that boundaries help "envision the processes of recruitment and shedding of members" (2000: 34), Montgomery locates the distinctiveness of a sociology of mission within the wider sociology of religion in its interest in religious boundary crossing (1999: 2), Tweed sees mission as a kind of "terrestrial crossing" of boundaries (2006: 127-131), and Jansen defines missiology as "theological assistance in crossing boundaries" (2008c;

²² I use the verb 'constructing' to point to the contextual nature of boundaries. By 'contextual' I however do not mean 'fluid' in an absolute sense. In the study of boundaries, a major theme has been whether they demarcate 'fixed' or more emergent (e.g. Abbott), fluid, and contested phenomena. In the study of ethnicity, this issue is often referred to as the debate between 'primordialism' (ethnicity is inherently stable and autonomous) and 'situationalism' (ethnicity is inherently fluid and an outcome of tactics) (see Verkuyten 1999: 50-52). In his widely cited introduction in "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries", (1969), Barth already sought to bridge this divide by showing that ethnic groups communicate fixed *and* fuzzy boundaries in different contexts. Baumann refers to this phenomenon as "double discursive competence": the ability to know when to reify an identity and when to question one's own reifications (1999: 139). Wimmer concurs that the either-or discussion is unhelpfully coined, and posits that the true challenge is to determine under what conditions boundaries take up which properties (2008b: 970-973). In line with these voices, in this study I assume that boundaries are fluid and fixed in a continuous rather than dichotomous fashion.

²³ I distinguish these three dimensions in this thesis for analytical purposes, but assume that they are interrelated in practice. Discourses and practices are mutually constitutive and both shape and are shaped by responses.

my translation). The relationship between mission dynamics and the study of boundaries will be further explored in 1.4.3.

The focus on mission as a field of boundary constructions will function as an analytical tool to explore the breadth of immigrant mission as intended, including reversed mission, internal mission, and mission to other ethnic groups. This study will thus embed itself in the wider field of research on non-Western missions in the West by the following research question:

How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands and their audiences construct boundaries in evangelism and conversion?

The central question will be guided by three sub-questions, which are based on the three components of mission distinguished above:

1. *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic discourses?*
2. *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic practices?*
3. *How do the audiences of immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their responses to immigrant churches?*²⁴

In the next two sections, I will elaborate on my use of the terms ‘immigrant churches’, ‘mission’, ‘evangelism’, and ‘conversion’.

1.3.2 Defining immigrant churches

Defining the diverse domain of immigrant churches is not a straightforward task. One could propose that they are churches with an explicit non-Dutch ethnic identity in the church name, language and/or practices. This runs into problems, however, when it comes to those churches that prefer to depict themselves as international, use English and/or Dutch, and worship in common denominational formats. A more useful option would be to focus on the composition of church membership. Studies on race and gender relations point out that 20% constitutes the point of critical mass at or above which an organisation is significantly impacted by the presence of a race or gender different from the largest racial/gender group (see Emerson and Kim 2003). Immigrant churches, then, would be those churches that have a 20% or higher first and/or second generation immigrant membership²⁵. The difficulty with this statistical approach, however, is that this

²⁴ With the term ‘immigrant churches’ in these questions, I refer to both the leaders and members of these churches. However, the first two sub-questions will predominantly be answered on the congregational level, since this is the chief level of analysis in this study, due to its comparative focus. Discussing discourses, this means that I will mostly refer to the views of leaders (i.e. senior and junior pastors/priests, elders, and coordinators of specific congregational departments or activities like youth and music leaders). Discussing practices, this means that I will mostly refer to congregation-wide practices.

²⁵ With the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (‘Statistics Netherlands’, responsible for Dutch national as well as European statistics), I understand first generation immigrants as those people who have been born outside of the Netherlands and second generation immigrants as those of whom one or both of the parents have been born outside of the Netherlands. This broad definition is compatible with the diverse category of immigrants (including legal and illegal, social and political, post-colonial and labour types of immigrants) and therefore suits the comparative nature of this study.

means that indigenous churches²⁶ can turn into immigrant churches when sufficient numbers of immigrants flock in. Although the 20% rule underscores rightly that this influx will affect the indigenous church, such a case (assuming immigrants would not fully take over) would still function quite differently from a church that has actually been *initiated* by immigrants. This consideration brings me to the definition that I would like to propose, which adds a historical dimension to the numbers. In this study, I will take immigrant churches to refer to those churches that have a 20% or higher first and/or second generation immigrant membership *and* have been explicitly established for and/or by first and/or second generation immigrants.

It is important to acknowledge that the term ‘immigrant churches’ does not go without criticism from both the churches themselves and scholars in the field. The term is considered to reflect a host society/state perspective, keep immigrant Christians and churches at a distance from Dutch society and churches, and negate the international nature of their identity and mission (see Ter Haar 2008: 51, 52). Admittedly, the word ‘immigrant’ in ‘immigrant church’ may conjure up divisive connotations and reveals a methodological nationalism, at least in the sense of taking the nation-state as the natural point of reference²⁷ (see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). There are two issues at stake here. The first is a matter of methodological choice. Studies of immigrant churches/Christians that adopt a transnational perspective, which highlights the structures and meanings that are constructed beyond any particular nation-state, usually are limited to specific ethnic groups as they require intensive multi-sited fieldwork. In this research project, the central point of departure is to conduct a comparative study of immigrant churches in the Netherlands. The energy has therefore gone into doing multi-sited fieldwork within the Netherlands, rather than between different countries. The nationalist framework was the natural fit for this methodology.

The second issue concerns terminological choice within a specific methodological terrain. Some scholars have suggested referring to immigrant churches as ‘international churches’, due to their sometimes heterogeneous make-up and global claims (e.g. Wartena 2006; Ter Haar 1998: 24, specifically for African churches). This would likely suit some churches better; particularly African Pentecostal churches. However, it does not adequately describe the substantial number of churches, like many Asian ones, that are self-consciously focused on a single ethno-linguistic group. In contrast, the migration aspect is applicable to all of these churches and seems to be the highest common denominator of an otherwise eclectic assortment of entities. In conclusion, because of the comparative, multi-ethnic focus of this study, I will make use of the term ‘immigrant church’.

²⁶ I am aware of the problematic character of terms like ‘indigenous’ and ‘native’. Appadurai (1988) insightfully observes that the idea of the native is a construction of the anthropological imagination, rooted in the fictive supposition of the boundedness of cultural units, in which ‘natives’ are frozen. I would like to stress that I do not consider the boundary between the ‘native’ and the ‘non-native’ to be a natural given, but that I invoke the construction for the analytical purposes of this study. Considering the delineation of immigrants as those who belong to the first and second generations, I consider third generation immigrants and their offspring as ‘indigenous’ or ‘native’. In the empirical chapters however, I will draw on emic definitions, which centre on skin colour and mother tongue.

²⁷ This methodological nationalism thus does not imply blindness to the transnational aspects of the churches, but does entail a limited view of these dimensions due to mainly locating the fieldwork in the Netherlands.

1.3.3 Defining mission, evangelism and conversion

Who defines what mission, evangelism and conversion are? The definition of these terms is the contested terrain of both missiologists and social scientists. The history of missiology reveals some widely differing paradigms, as demonstrated in Bosch' standard work (1991). Bosch distinguishes between the apostolic, Patristic/Orthodox, Medieval Roman Catholic, Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment, and ecumenical mission paradigms, which vary immensely in terms of their ecclesio-, eschato-, Christo-, and soteriologies. Evangelism and mission have also been a significant subject of study in the social sciences²⁸, and cultural anthropology in particular. Anthropologists already studied missionary phenomena at the end of the 19th century, with a particular interest in mission as the diffusion of cultural items (Munters 1970: 7). Anthropological work on Christianity has revealed an enduring interest in mission, disentangling local appropriations of Christianity and the power regimes involved in colonial and postcolonial Christian missions and expansion (Hann 2007). Work on local appropriations of Christianity has often stressed the continuity of pre-Christian traditions, and thereby the syncretistic and opportunistic character of local Christianities (Robbins 2007). Work on mission and power has highlighted the political, economic, and social factors shaping mission and expansion, such as the colonialist context and the 'macrocosm' of modernity (Hefner 1993).

Historically, sociologists have had a less strong interest in mission, which may be attributed to associating the missionary enterprise with trans-empirical dimensions and non-Western locations (Munters 1970: 4-8, 52). Some contemporary sociologists however seek to place mission on the sociological agenda. Montgomery (1999), for example, calls on sociologists to complement the chiefly anthropological study of mission, elaborating how mission relates to theoretical issues of general sociological significance such as social change, diffusion, social movements, and intergroup relations. In an epilogue in a book on proselytisation, Richardson (2008) connects the topic to the sociology of inter- and intra-group conflict, social control and regulation, and religious freedom. A more dated example is Munters (1970), who explores the missionary enterprise (in particular that of Jehovah's Witnesses) by developing a sociological vocabulary to conceptualise it. Conversion has been much more investigated sociologically. In both sociology and anthropology, the nature of conversion is of much debate (see for example Gooren 2007 and Rambo 2003).

To navigate through the variety of missiological and social science approaches and conceptualisations of the phenomena of mission, evangelism, and conversion, I choose a pragmatic stance by letting methodological considerations reign. The definitions will need to be able to account for a vast ethnic and theological variety, and thus missiological diversity, that makes up my sample of immigrant churches. For this reason, I will use the terms 'evangelism' and 'mission' interchangeably. These terms have been associated with a variety of meanings (e.g. Bosch 1991: 409-411), which I here like to combine together by

²⁸ This is not too surprising, given the fact that historically and currently, Christian evangelism has been and is a major socio-cultural phenomenon. A few numbers alone are indicative of this: Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing estimate that worldwide today, 200 billion hours are spent on evangelism annually (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing 2009), and Barrett and Reapsome (1988), though explicitly stressing the list is not exhaustive due to the incomplete availability of records, have documented 788 plans for world evangelisation since the onset of Christianity.

looking for the highest common denominator of these phenomena. I will follow Munters (1970) where he attempts to extract the most general characteristic of mission/evangelism from a variety of mission practices. He distinguishes four types of Christian missionary goals: winning souls, expansion of church and Christian faith, expansion of Christian civilisation, and the improvement of micro- and/or macro-structures. His argument is that these varying goals all implicitly or explicitly, and inclusively or exclusively, point to 'recruitment' and 'incorporation'. The goals refer to making perceived outsiders accept one's faith, become members of the Christian community or partake in Christian civilisation, and adopt new practices and insights. Christian mission as 'recruitment' and 'incorporation', then, covers the whole terrain of goals and attempts to attract others to beliefs, practices, and states of being associated with (certain types of) Christianity. This definition is methodologically advantageous, since it allows for a great variety of emic Christian interpretations of these goals, attempts, beliefs, practices, and states of being. Goals and attempts could range from preaching doctrinal truths to organising a pilgrimage. Beliefs, practices, and states of being could involve believing in God's existence, following the liturgical calendar, and becoming healthy and wealthy. I will thus refer to evangelism as recruiting others to beliefs, practices, and/or states of being that from an emic perspective are 'Christian'. From the same point of view, I will refer to conversion to Christianity or a type of Christianity as being incorporated into beliefs, practices, and/or states of being that from an emic perspective are 'Christian'. Following Rambo (1993: 13-14), but limited here to conversions to Christianity, in my understanding of conversion I will thus include 'tradition transition', a shift from a non-Christian religious tradition to a Christian tradition (e.g. from Buddhism to Christianity), 'institutional transition', a shift from one type of Christianity to another (e.g. from Methodism to Roman Catholicism), and 'intensification', a revitalised commitment to a type of Christianity with which one has had previous affiliation.

1.4 Cues from studies on immigration, religion and boundaries

Since the phenomenon of immigrant mission has not been studied widely, this study will be largely inductive in nature. I will seek to answer the main question of this thesis primarily on the basis of empirical data. However, it is analytically useful to get sensitised to themes and patterns that may emerge from the data by drawing on findings in the study of immigration and religion (1.4.1 and 1.4.2), as well as in the theoretical debate about boundaries (1.4.3). In the following, I will discuss some of these cues, which I will engage in the discussion of research findings.

1.4.1 Religious immigrants as boundary making agents

In the study of immigration and religion, the construction of boundaries is a recurrent theme. This concerns both 'agency-rich' conceptualisations of boundary making (Wimmer 2008a: 1027-1028), which focus on the ways in which immigrants are engaged in constructing boundaries, as well as structural parameters (Wimmer 2007; Wimmer 2008b: 990-997), which point out how immigrants come up against boundaries made by others or those beyond their control. In this section and the next (1.4.2), I will discuss these two sides of boundary making subsequently for analytical purposes, though it must be borne

in mind that they are closely linked and mutually constitutive in social reality²⁹. In these non-exhaustive overviews, I will look at the study of immigration and religion in general, but draw as much as possible on studies of Christian immigrants and their organisations.

There is a general agreement in the literature that immigrant religion maintains and reinforces national/ethnic identity (Stepick 2005: 15). Immigrant religion plays a significant role in the reproduction of ethnicity, through a variety of means such as architecture, ritual, language, food, dress, and music (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 80-119). Immigrant Christian communities may also continue to reflect the ethnic divides from the home land (see for example Ward 2000; Asaju 2008: 288). Generally speaking, ethnic boundaries are therefore very important markers of identity for 'religious immigrants'.

In some cases, however, immigrants come to favour their religious identity over their ethnic/national identity. The conditions of this have not often been addressed (Stepick 2005: 17). Some factors can however be mentioned. First, religious immigrants may seek to separate religion from culture in order to get to the 'essentials' of the faith - theologies become 'purified' or 'pristinised', detached from ethnic baggage. This dynamic is due to organisational changes and increased contact with sub-traditions and ethnic groups within one's religion, as well as other religious and cultural groups in the host society (Yang and Ebaugh 2001: 278-281). Further, generational changes are a factor. In the course of generations, immigrant religions tend to become more ethnically and linguistically inclusive (Yang and Ebaugh 2001: 281-283). Inter-generational tensions often arise in that process over the use of home land tongue and practices, with the younger ones generally seeking to 'bridge' to a wider audience (although there are exceptions, see for example Chong 1998) and the older ones more strongly valuing a continual emphasis on ethnic 'bonding'. Stevens (2004), however, innovatively proposes that favouring religious over national/ethnic identity may also happen in first generation congregations due to religious culture. In his study of a Ghanaian Pentecostal church in Chicago, he found that the zeal to evangelise across ethnic boundaries created an incentive to adopt English-language services. Moreover, this case only illustrates the international outlook with the priority on religious identity that characterises African Pentecostalism in general (see 3.1). Ethnic inclusivity in immigrant religious organisations appears therefore not only to be related to the course of generations, but also to the content of ideologies.

Another well-established finding is that transnational networks are highly significant to religious immigrants and their organisations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002; Levitt 2006). Such networks link immigrants and congregations to the land of emigration, fellow ethnics in diaspora, and the wider world. Along transnational ties flow goods of money, materials, ideas, behaviours, identities, and people. As transnational senders, immigrant churches may, for example, financially support social projects in the home land, send keyboards to churches in their native villages, and bring home the idea of running an adult Sunday school. As transnational receivers, they may fly in fellow ethnic pastors from

²⁹ The nature of boundary making is strongly influenced by the specific character of each context (e.g. social, ethnic, and geographical factors), but to keep with the diverse sample of this study, I will discuss the patterns in general and optional terms. Also, I will draw on studies in both the Netherlands and wider Europe and the US, since the literature on immigrant churches in the Netherlands is still relatively scarce and limited in thematic focus.

back home or other places in the diaspora, order books and DVD's from the land of emigration, and pray about social and religious developments in the home land.

The transnational production of (religious) identities may affect a limited identification with the host nation state. Van Dijk, in his study of Ghanaian churches in the Netherlands, insightfully comments that the churches' engagement with transnational domains renders the host society's discourse on national 'integration' hardly applicable (Van Dijk 2004). Transnational networks may also empower immigrants to construct alternative authorities to that of the host nation-state. Van Dijk observes how Ghanaian churches in the Netherlands function as moral authorities, which restore a sense of dignity for church members who work in menial jobs and face the stringent Dutch politics of identity control (Van Dijk 2002). An example of this is that some African immigrant churches, often having undocumented members in their midst, respond to the public notion of 'illegality' with an alternative discourse that stresses that God is beyond human borders (Van der Meulen 2008: 55). The moral authority appropriated by the churches can even affect an excluding approach to the host society. Daswani (2008), for example, depicts Ghanaian Pentecostals in London as replacing national or racial boundaries with moral boundaries, which are drawn between born-again believers and the 'Sodom-and-Gomorrhah'-like UK³⁰. Van Dijk (2000: 210-212) similarly notes that Ghanaian Pentecostals in the Netherlands take distance from 'immoral' aspects of the country such as liberal views on sexuality, drug use, and the availability of alcohol.

However, the transnational lives of and moral critique by religious immigrants can, at the same time, function as springboards to 'integration' in the host society. In the study of African Pentecostal immigrant churches in Germany, Glick Schiller and others (2005) have observed how these provide pathways of incorporation not only into transnational networks, but also into the host society. The immigrant churches linked themselves to German life through participation in Christian German organisational structures, specific religious beliefs and practices focused on deliverance and prosperity (e.g. getting jobs and legal documents in Germany) and, interestingly, evangelism. As for evangelism, Karagiannis and Glick Schiller (2008) found, for example, that African Pentecostals in the spirit of Christian universalism found it very important to translate church services into German, even when there was only one German visitor present. Likewise, in his study of Zimbabwean Catholics in the UK, Pasura (forthcoming) underlines the integrative potential of reversed mission:

It is the awareness and ability to influence and shape the face of Christianity in Britain, which gives African Christian migrants the agency to participate in other aspects of British society. It represents one way in which migrants 'give back Christianity' to the host society in contrast to discourses of taking away our jobs, over-crowding our schools and depending on state benefits.

³⁰ Daswani (2008: 16) for example cites one of his respondents, who says in the context of critiquing the sexual freedom in British society: "In the Bible God allowed the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah to survive because he had said that if he could find at least ten righteous men in the land, he would not destroy it ... In the same way our presence in London and our prayers for them as Christians have helped save England from God's wrath. Again why doesn't He just ask us to go back to Ghana? It is our presence here that protects England."

Pasura thus argues that the practices and attitudes implied in evangelism provide a specific pathway to national integration.

Finally, I wish to highlight the relationship between migration and conversion. Some missiologists propose that migration is an opportunity for mission, as people in transit would be more open to be Christianised (Escobar 2003b; Wan 2003). This suggestion is confirmed by empirical studies that demonstrate a link between migration and conversion. For example, significant numbers of Hispanic Catholics in the US convert to Protestantism (Roof and Manning 1994), mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong convert to charismatic Christianity or Islam (Cruz-Chia 2007), and Iranian Shiite Muslims in Turkey convert to Christianity (Koser Akcapar 2006). Although the reasons for these conversions are specific to the contingencies of the different contexts, there is a general logic underpinning the conversion of immigrants. First, changes in attachments affected by migration make conversion among immigrants more likely:

Marriage and migration are major factors tending to produce shifts in attachments. Newcomers must make new friends. Marriage tends to attach each spouse to a new kinship network. Age also plays a role, because people are more apt to marry or migrate when they are young, and many people shift their social networks upon leaving their parents' homes. Consequently, reaffiliation and conversion will be more prevalent among the geographically mobile, teenagers, and young adults, at marriage and following a divorce. Each of these generalizations is supported by a wealth of research. (Stark and Finke 2000: 119)

The role of shifts in attachments in the conversion processes of immigrants is illustrated by the work of Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000). They show that immigrants may feel lonely in a new and foreign land and consequently flock to immigrant religious institutions to experience familiarity: to make friends, to share culture, to speak one's native language. Such a process is reinforced when a religious institution is the only local ethnic organization available (pp. 39, 40, 110). A second factor that underpins the link between migration and conversion is that immigrant religious institutions often play a significant role in helping immigrants adjust to the host society. They help with getting documents, jobs, and a place to live, filling in paper work, learning the local language, mediating family problems, providing transportation and so on. Such help may bring about conversions, such as in the case of the Vietnamese Buddhist and unaffiliated immigrants in Houston, Texas, who converted to Catholicism because of the generous support of the local Vietnamese Mission (ibid. pp. 37, 38). Further, certain religious institutions may spark conversion in immigrants by offering an attractive 'middle way' between ethnic identity and assimilation in the host country/modernity (Roof and Manning 1994; Koser Akcapar 2006). Another factor is the shift in status of a religion or denomination as compared to the country of origin. Immigrants may come from a country where (a type of) Christianity is a minority and/or stigmatised and persecuted, and move to a country where this religion forms a majority and/or is legal and powerful. That such transitions can affect conversions was demonstrated by the case of a Chinese Protestant church in Houston, which had a predominant membership of Chinese immigrants who had converted to Christianity *after* their arrival in the US (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 32, 33). Finally, conversion may be used as a migration strategy. This was demonstrated by Iranian

Shiites in Turkey, who used their new Christian identity as a defense against being deported to their country of origin, where apostasy was a crime and converts were subject to death (Koser Akcapar 2006).

Having outlined some of the relevant ways in which religious immigrants act as boundary making agents, I will now discuss some of the structural boundaries they come up against.

1.4.2 Religious immigrants and structural boundaries

To discuss structural boundaries in the lives of religious immigrants, I will start on the level of the host society, followed by a depiction of the relationship with indigenous churches. In Western host societies, there is a variety of ways by which immigrant Christians and churches are excluded through symbolic boundaries. One way is the attribution of a selective identity to immigrant Christians. In particular, immigrant Christians can be subtly excluded by insisting on their 'ethnic nature'. Ter Haar (1999) for example notes that while African immigrant Christians often prioritise their Christian over their African identity, white Christians and intellectuals in the Netherlands persistently ethnicise them. Another type of symbolic exclusion comes in the form of assigning undesirable types of 'proximal hosts', i.e. older immigrant groups in the host society, to which natives assign newer immigrant groups by conflating or lumping together identities (Warner 1998: 18-20; Feher 1998)³¹. Thus, Zimbabwean Christians may be referred to as 'Africans' or 'blacks', and Egyptian Christians may be mistaken for Muslims. A third form of symbolic exclusion is the attribution of negative identities. Knibbe (2009), for example, analyses how Nigerians in the Netherlands are criminalized. This is a 'map' that comes up against the missionary self-image of Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Similarly pointing to negative identities, Adogame (2004) notes how Aladura immigrant Christians are diabolised and perceived as sects and cults in European media. He observes, for example, the sensationalised association of these churches with sex trafficking and the 'Torso in the Thames' case³². Olupona (2010) affirms that immigrant churches are often controversially portrayed. Illustrating, he notes that the African pastor who prayed for Sarah Palin when she was the Republican nominee for Vice President of the US in 2008, was misrepresented in the press and portrayed as a kind of 'witchdoctor'. Similarly, Gampiot (2008) states that Europeans seem to "reappraise African identity exclusively in terms of dance, drums, the phantasm of exotic sexuality or even witchcraft" (p. 312) while Kimbanguism³³, immigrant branches of which she studied in Europe, strictly forbids such things. Yet another form of exclusion through symbolic boundaries is that immigrant churches may not receive much public attention or recognition. In comparing a Taiwanese Buddhist temple and a Taiwanese evangelical church in the US, Chen observes that the latter were less invited to sit at the multicultural table than the former. He attributes this to the idea that they were considered to be too much like religious insiders,

³¹ When proximal hosts are supportive of integration or certain needs, immigrants may also experience them as positive (see Warner 1998: 19).

³² The 'Torso in the Thames' case concerned the decapitated body of a five-year-old boy found floating in the Thames river in September 2001, allegedly victim of a ritual murder or human sacrifice (Adogame 2004: 511-512).

³³ Kimbanguism, or 'The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu', is an African-Initiated Church that emerged in Congo with the prophetic figure of Simon Kimbangu. The church has various branches in European countries, amongst which one in the Netherlands.

hence not sufficiently foreign like the ‘exotic’ Buddhists (see Chen 2002). The fact that immigrant Christians in the Netherlands have only recently started to receive scholarly and media attention, may likewise be attributed to the dominant public focus on Islam, a religion often perceived to be a questionable match with Western culture.

A form of symbolic exclusion that deserves special attention is that of race. This issue is widely referred to when it comes to (especially black) immigrant churches. Kalu (2008) reports the high level of racism experienced by African and Caribbean churches in the EU, which in 1999 led to a binding of forces in the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe, a “pressure group and strategic partnership of vulnerable immigrant churches” (p. 284). In the Dutch context, the significance of racial boundaries was illustrated by a church building project in Amsterdam Southeast, where a “layer of white helpers” encapsulated the involved African pastors, whose competence was lowly esteemed (Van der Meulen 2009: 172-173; see also Goossen 2006). In the overtly racist Ukraine, the Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja, discussed above, was convinced that except for outcasts, Ukrainians would never ‘lower’ themselves to be taught by a black man (Wanner 2007: 219, 220). Währisch-Oblau (2009) tells of Pentecostal/charismatic immigrants fighting the demon of racism in all-night prayers (p. 31), and notes that the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Germany held a lecture on how to cope with racism, entitled “Renewing a battered self-image” (p. 333). Such data reveals that racism is a pervasive experience of (black) immigrant Christians, which is intimately linked with their social marginalisation in a wider sense.

Forms of symbolic exclusion are usually closely tied to social practices of exclusion. We can think, for example, of the legal boundaries imposed by the host state. In some cases, immigrant missionaries and pastors are denied visas, receive other than missionary visas, which results in a limited ability to do their work, or are expelled from the country (Hoekema 2008: 318; Catto 2008: 191, 215). Legal boundaries are also effective beyond border issues in the daily functioning of churches. Immigrant churches of the Aladura type, for example, have been prosecuted, fined, and emitted from their church buildings because of local complaints about their loud-volume services (Adogame 2004: 511), leaving members in culture shock (Adogame 1998: 157). The Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja faced opposition in the Ukraine from multiple local parties, including attempted deportations and lawsuits aiming to close down the church (Adogame 2008a: 318-319).

Immigrant churches further bump into physical boundaries in going to or being in certain places and spaces. The difficulty of immigrant churches to obtain appropriate worship space, for example, is widely noted (see for example Van der Meulen 2009). The famous Kingsway International Christian Centre, a mega church in London with a predominant West African-originated membership, had to relocate to make way for the 2012 London Olympics. It is now temporarily based elsewhere, while having difficulty getting planning permission for a new site, due to local opposition (Catto 2008: 203). The Celestial Church of Christ in Munich, Germany, also had to move frequently in its founding years. This was in large part due to the fact that neighbours complained about traffic obstructions, which were caused by church members’ cars that flocked the streets on Sundays (Adogame 1998: 157-158). Another form of physical exclusion was limited access to sacred sites. To Kimbanguists, a few European sites are held sacred for their association with their founder-prophet Simon Kimbangu and his family: the hospitals in Brussels and Geneva where his first and last sons passed away. However, host authorities do not let Kimbanguist immigrants access these places freely (Gampiot 2008: 310-311).

Moving from Western host societies to Western Christians and churches, we see a mixture of including and excluding practices in regard to immigrant churches. To start with the excluding practices, it is widely noted that the very *raison d'être* of immigrant churches is their leaders' and members' experience of being unwelcome in indigenous churches, next to finding them spiritually and socially unfulfilling. Dedji (2005: 113) notes that for the British context, immigrant Christians were initially rejected by established denominations, which spawned the enormous proliferation of black-led churches. For Germany, Währisch-Oblau (2009: 180) observes the unwelcoming reception by German Christians as a common motif in the narratives of founders of immigrant churches. This inhospitality consisted of not being greeted, people leaving the church building right after worship, and, for black Christians, explicit racism. She recounts:

I have been told how white worshippers moved away when an African sat down next to them, how Africans were told to find a church of their own people where they would fit in better, and even, in one case, how the participation of an African in Holy Communion created a big stir as several people were not willing to take wine from the common cup after he had drunk from it.

The point of being encouraged to find a church “where they would fit in better” can again be understood as an imposition of cultural identity on immigrant churches, something which Währisch-Oblau defines as a “culturalist ecclesiology” (p. 327). Ter Haar (1995a: 131-142) notes a similar phenomenon in the Netherlands, where African Christians are further removed from Dutch Christians than from local Muslim or Hindu immigrant groups due to the cultural demarcations imposed by Dutch Christians. Asaju (2008: 288, 289) likewise highlights exclusion by noting the obstacles for African priests and bishops to preach in British churches.

There are more difficulties in the relationships between immigrant and indigenous churches. There is a general lack of cooperation and there are layers of conflicting understandings. In a report of the Dutch Council of Churches, it is observed that most established churches are still hardly aware of the existence of immigrant Christians (Broersen, Hogenhuis, Bakker and Beckx 2006: 8). Währisch-Oblau points out that where contact does exist, understandings differ. While immigrant churches expect to join German churches in prayer meetings and street evangelism, the Germans keep a distance except for welcoming ‘exotic’ contributions such as African drumming and Korean cooking. Also, whereas immigrant churches expect their relationship with indigenous churches to be ‘holistic’, including financial support for places of worship and pastors’ salaries, indigenous churches cannot meet these demands and have their own interests more narrowly confined to theological dialogue (2009: 306-310). Further, some indigenous churches feel threatened by immigrant churches that “break out of their role as clients and receivers of pastoral-diaconal care” (Währisch-Oblau 2006: 45) by beginning to attract native Germans. In Germany, church officials in charge of warning against sects and cults explicitly advise indigenous churches against cooperating with immigrant Christians, whom they accuse of sheep-stealing and sectarianism (*ibid.* p. 45). Further, there is the issue of shared church buildings. Some immigrant churches rent buildings of indigenous churches. Often this economic relationship is complicated by rental payments that are overdue, as well as complaints about noise and parking (Broersen, Hogenhuis, Bakker and Beckx 2006: 16; Währisch-Oblau 2009: 306). Smit

(2009) has analysed a particular case of an Angolan Pentecostal church that rented the space of a European Presbyterian church in Rotterdam. The relationship was filled with conflicts and ended up with the Angolans having to move out, due to persistently differing understandings about and practices of theology, aesthetics, and hygiene in regard to the church building.

There are, however, also strong indications for growing connections between indigenous and immigrant churches. On a worldwide level, there are signs that some conservative Western Christians seek alliances with non-Western Christians, whom they consider to share their theological views (Jenkins 2007: 28-30). Such tendencies may find reflection in the way host and immigrant churches relate. Währisch-Oblau (2009: 12-18) gives an overview of connective initiatives on the European level and in various European countries. In the Netherlands, since 2005 the Roman Catholic Church officially integrated all Roman Catholic immigrant communities into its diocesan structure. It is expected that fusions and cooperation will bring about many multicultural parishes (Castillo Guerra, Wijsen, & Steggerda 2006: 11). Among Protestants in the Netherlands, the churches that became the PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) have made the relationships with immigrant churches a key aspect of their policy (Van 't Kruis 2001: 10). This is for example expressed in the online inventory of immigrant churches in the Netherlands on the PKN website³⁴. Plum and Kuyk (2006) depict cooperation projects between immigrant churches and indigenous churches that became the PKN. The former 'Kerkhuis' (House of the church), a service centre that was initiated by the diaconal office of the Protestant Church of Amsterdam, supported the social work of immigrant churches in Amsterdam Southeast, and mediated contact between indigenous and immigrant churches. However, in a comparative study of the ways by which the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands engage with immigrant Christians, it is concluded that "Christian immigrants are recognised, sometimes respected, but only rarely given an equal opportunity in communication and cooperation towards a joint future of the Dutch church" (Frederiks and Pruiksma 2010: 151).

Having looked at studies of immigration and religion through the lens of boundaries, I will now look for some cues from the theoretical study of boundaries.

1.4.3 Properties of boundaries: including and excluding

The study of boundaries is a significant project in the social sciences³⁵. Chan and McIntyre (2002: xiv) call boundary studies a 'growth industry' in academia³⁶. One of the

³⁴ See <http://www.pkn.nl/4/info.aspx?page=7235>.

³⁵ This is part of the increasing use of spatial metaphors in sociological theory in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the shift from spatial imagery delimiting stable and closed entities associated with holism (e.g. social system) to metaphors pointing to the contextuality and variability of social life (e.g. boundary) (Silber 1995).

³⁶ That the boundary concept is considered important is particularly emphasised in recent studies, which attempt a greater synthesis of extensive previous work on boundaries and call for a more systematic approach in further studies (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007; Tilly 2004; Wimmer 2008a, 2008b). The continued relevance is attributed to the centrality of boundaries in significant social processes. Tilly (2004: 232) notes, for example, the "great generality of boundary change as a social process", Cohen (2000: 4) links up boundaries with concerns that "have endured throughout the modern history of our subject", Chan and McIntyre consider the study of boundaries "essential for

core theoretical endeavours in this field of study concerns the *properties* of boundaries. This project tackles the way boundaries, under particular conditions, score on characteristics such as permeability, (political) salience, durability, visibility, ‘groupness’, ‘enclosed’ cultural particularity, and stability (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 186; Wimmer 2008b: 976-985, 1001-1004). For the purposes of this study, I will look a bit more closely at one variable property of boundaries: the closed/open property.

Do boundaries divide or connect? Clearly, boundary making implies creating an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’ and thereby inherently connects and divides simultaneously. This connecting, then, is usually taken to refer to internal connecting (bonding), and this dividing to external dividing (lack of bridging). These two sides of a boundary are often juxtaposed, however fluidly, as if exhausting the relational properties of boundaries. For example, Sreberny (2002: 296) sums up:

The boundary can be constructed positively, it does good things. It contains, holds in, supports. Where there is a boundary, there might also be a center, a place of belonging. But the boundary also limits, divides, cuts us off from others. In holding in, it might constrain. It can also hold out, at bay, those who are not wanted, who are not like us.

It is further often implicitly assumed that the externally dividing side of boundaries can either dissolve or weaken into unity or hybridity, or reassert itself into differentiation. However, let us examine the less noted possibilities that the externally dividing side of boundaries may simultaneously be their externally connecting side, and that the weakening and strengthening of boundaries may coincide in a single act. Barth (2000: 27-30) is one of the few scholars who considers these options. He stresses that although we are cognitively inclined to construe boundaries as separating, humans creatively reconnect supposed separations. For example, the activity of neighbours who talk over a garden fence illustrates how demarcation enables connection - the fence gives a relaxed sense of distance that makes contact less risky. A fence is an object that by its separating nature has externally connecting effects. The subjective understanding of the meaning of boundaries can produce similar phenomena. In some cultural views, dividing boundaries inherently imply external connections. For example, the Maori categorise the world around them, but consider that which they distinguish as intimately connected in a relational universe (Salmond 2000). To them, “the boundary energizes relationships” (Cohen 2000: 8).

I would like to propose that the phenomenon of evangelism central to this study likewise demonstrates the possibility of divide-connect simultaneity. Potential recruits are constructed in evangelistic discourse both by excluding (‘you are not part of us’) and including (‘you could be part of us’). The act of evangelism is based on seeking to connect *because* division is constructed. The very fact that the boundary is there, is a powerful incentive to cross it. Division triggers connection³⁷. Warner affirms this paradox of

the understanding of human interactions”, Barth (2000: 34) stresses that the boundary image “has proved analytically powerful for many purposes in social science”, and Lamont and Molnár (2002: 169) state that boundaries capture a “fundamental social process, that of relationality”.

³⁷ Währisch-Oblau (2009: 332, 333) however considers the option whether specific theologies such as the ‘spiritual warfare’ view may be evangelistic yet non-relational as they 1) construct such a dark and dangerous image of those at the other side of the boundary that they are not drawn close to them and 2)

evangelism. He observes that since evangelising groups presume that outsiders can become part of their community, they are more connective than religious groups that merely seek to meet outsiders' secular needs (1988: 293). He also notes that since evangelising groups express a desire to expand the boundaries of their community, they are more 'bridging' than religious groups that seek to protect ethnic purity (1997: 230). The paradox, however, also works the other way around: connecting triggers division. This is because the crossing of boundaries for missionary purposes reinforces the latter's very existence. In the evangelistic act of connecting with outsiders, the us-them divide is confirmed³⁸. Evangelism as a discourse or praxis of crossing boundaries to the out-group affirms the identity of the in-group (Shaffir 1978; see also Coleman 2003).

The theoretical question of under what conditions boundaries become 'open' or 'closed' thus becomes complicated by the possibility of divide-connect simultaneity. To contribute to this debate is not a direct goal of this thesis, but the awareness of the complexity of including and excluding, especially in the case of evangelism, will serve as a sensitising tool in the discussion of research findings.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Strategy, selection and management

This study emerged within a wider project on immigrant churches in the Netherlands. As such, it was comparative in nature and breadth-focused from the outset. However, my specific focus on evangelism also required a depth-focused, exploratory methodology due to the limited availability of similar studies and the complexity (i.e. empirical diversity) of the phenomenon. Based on these two foundational ingredients, my goal was to construct a research design that would allow for the gathering of both 'broad' and 'deep' data.

In the beginning of the research, I aimed for a "mixed methods" design³⁹ that would combine an in-depth qualitative study with a data bank that would cover a statistically significant number of immigrant churches. However, when I started to develop a data bank together with a fellow researcher, we soon discovered that this was an ineffective tool of study for the groups we wanted to research. For reasons of lack of trust and our limited knowledge of the field, we learned that it was better to approach immigrant churches by personal contact than by mail or phone. The idea of the data bank was dropped. Instead, I focused on an in-depth study of one church, combined with a qualitative study of a limited number of other churches for comparative purposes. In this way, the aim to combine depth and breadth was maintained. I studied 15 immigrant churches in total. In the next chapter, I will introduce the total of 15 immigrant churches

emphasise 'impersonal' evangelistic methods such as prayer. However, she notes that this issue has not yet been researched, and that her own research data contradicts the alleged connection between a 'spiritual warfare' theology and a lack of direct engagement with the mission target group.

³⁸ Tilly (2004: 223-225) notes this process also in regard to a group's internal boundaries, i.e. those associated with initiation ceremonies. Transferring persons from being uninitiated to being initiated changes the locations of persons towards the boundary involved, but dramatically strengthens the place of this boundary.

³⁹ Mixing methods is a way to profit from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (obtaining both 'breadth' and 'depth') while neutralising or minimising their biases and weaknesses (Creswell 2003).

that were studied for this thesis, and outline what specific research methods were used for each site.

For the study of the in-depth case, I selected the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist church (in short Ghanaian SDA church or Ghanaian Adventists) located in Amsterdam Southeast. This church was selected for a variety of reasons. As a Seventh-day Adventist church, it complements the emphasis on Pentecostalism in studies of reversed mission. Further, the study of a Seventh-day Adventist church substantiates the much thinner study of non-Pentecostal immigrant churches⁴⁰ whose presence is burgeoning (Kalu 2008: 283) and of which the Seventh-day Adventist ones, not unlike Seventh-day Adventism at large⁴¹, are particularly neglected⁴². Further, the choice for this congregation was intimately linked with my personal upbringing in the Seventh-day Adventist church in the Netherlands, where my father is a pastor and previous president of the national church body. This had practical advantages, because of pre-existing contacts and pre-existing knowledge accumulated through these lines. The personal connection also raised reflexive issues, as will be discussed in the next section and throughout the thesis where significant.

Basic data about the 14 'broad' cases are found in the table on the next page. These churches were selected from a variety of inventories of immigrant churches in the Netherlands, by striving for the heterogeneity of independent variables⁴³ such as ethnicity, theology, size, and duration of stay in the Netherlands⁴⁴. Since the number of churches studied was however limited, these cases do not constitute a statistically representative sample⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ For Ghanaian immigrant churches, exceptions are Fumanti's study of Ghanaian Methodists in the UK (2010) and Biney's study of Ghanaian Presbyterians in the US (2007).

⁴¹ Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an expanding global movement with over 16 million members worldwide, only a few social science studies on the church have emerged. These include work on Tanzania (Höschele 2007), Madagascar (Keller 2005), South Africa (Parker 2005), Papua New Guinea (Jebens 2005), and the US (Bull and Lockhart 2007).

⁴² An exception is a study of religion in Amsterdam Bijlmer that includes a case of a multicultural Seventh-day Adventist church (Oomen and Palm 1994), which is the mother church of the Ghanaian SDA church studied for this thesis (see the next chapter). To the best of my knowledge, the only research on Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventists in the West is the work of Ackah on their presence in the UK (Ackah 2008) and their use of ICTs (Ackah and Newman 2003).

⁴³ This is a methodological choice that fits a study that expands on a more homogeneous sample used in previous, comparable studies (Swanborn 2000: 62-64), in this case African Pentecostal churches in studies of 'reversed mission'.

⁴⁴ I chose churches that were located in the urban contexts of either the Amsterdam region or the Rotterdam region. Both regions house a great number and variety of immigrant churches. In addition, Amsterdam was a practical choice because I lived there. Rotterdam was also chosen to add variety, as well as because of the unique case of the multi-ethnic 'International Christian Fellowship' (see 2.2) that was located in this city and included in this study.

⁴⁵ Throughout the thesis I will occasionally make reference to additional immigrant churches that I contacted during the fieldwork period through phone calls, brief interviews, or site visits.

Name of church	Ethnicity ⁴⁶	Theology	Attendees ⁴⁷	Location	Founded
Holy Thomas the Apostle Parish for Chaldeans in the Netherlands	Iraqi	Chaldean Catholic	250	Amsterdam	2001
Japanese Christian Fellowship Church of the Netherlands	Japanese	Protestant	30	Amstelveen	1995
St. Nicholas of Myra Russian Orthodox Church	Russian-speaking	Orthodox	200	Amsterdam	1974
Pentecost Revival Church	Ghanaian	Pentecostal	400	Amsterdam Southeast	2000
Maranatha Community Transformation Centre	multi-ethnic	Evangelical	80	Amsterdam Southeast	1995
Gereja Kristen Perjanjian Baru in the Netherlands ⁴⁸	Indonesian	Evangelical	300/40	Amsterdam/Rotterdam	1994/1999
Serbian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity	Serbian	Orthodox	150	Rotterdam	1974
Mahber Kristian Netherlands: Tesfa Berhan	Ethiopian	Evangelical	100	Amsterdam	1982
Church of the Nazarene Rotterdam-Emmaüs	Cape Verdean	Nazarene	45	Rotterdam	1985
Urdu Church Holland ⁴⁹	Pakistani	Inter-denominational	40/40	Rotterdam/Amsterdam	1985/1987
Korean Reformed Church	Korean	Reformed	200	Rotterdam	1994
Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses	Iranian	Jehovah's Witness	25	Amsterdam	2005
Sagrada Familia	Spanish-speaking	Roman Catholic	125	Rotterdam	1995
International Christian Fellowship	multi-ethnic	Christian Reformed	200	Rotterdam	2000

The large amount of data that was gathered from the 15 cases was managed in the following way. Most interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and transcribed. Data from participation, observation, written/online documents, and unrecorded interviews were documented in digital diaries. Both transcribed interviews and digital diaries were organised and analysed by means of MAXQDA, a software tool for qualitative data analysis. Working with MAXQDA helped me to get a better overview of the diversity of data and to uncover themes and patterns. Finally, there was respondent validation ('member checking'): I sent finalised texts for review to all key informants.

The methodological approach I took has both strengths and weaknesses. As said, the reason why I employed the strategy of studying 15 immigrant churches qualitatively, one of which in-depth, was its strength in enabling both exploration and comparison, depth and breadth. A weakness of this approach was that it was very time consuming. Because of limited time resources as a single researcher in a single research project, my in-depth case study of the Ghanaian SDA church became more focused than a typical monograph⁵⁰, as fieldwork time had to be divided between this case and the 14 'in-breadth' cases. Notwithstanding this weakness, it is my contention that this strategy has

⁴⁶ This refers to the primary ethnic or linguistic group in the church.

⁴⁷ This refers to the number of attendees at the church's main worship service.

⁴⁸ The data on this church refers respectively to the Amsterdam and the Rotterdam branch.

⁴⁹ The data on this church refers respectively to the Amsterdam and the Rotterdam branch.

⁵⁰ The study was done with a focus on evangelism. Other features of the churches were primarily studied in light of their relationship to and contextualisation of this primary topic.

delivered deeper understandings of immigrant mission *and* conclusions that expand beyond ethnographic particularities.

1.5.2 Reflexive notes

As a white Dutch highly educated female, whose return to Christianity happened to coincide with the beginning of fieldwork and who became a Seventh-day Adventist after the official fieldwork period, there are a number of reflexive issues to discuss. I will cover some of these here, subsequently discussing my relationship with the Ghanaian Adventists and the other 14 churches, and will return to reflexive issues in later parts of the thesis.

With Narayan (1993), in her article entitled “How native is a native anthropologist?”, my ‘native-ness’ as an Adventist in the context of the Ghanaian SDA church was multi-layered. There was a variety of (non-)identifications in the field. This was in part historical in nature: in the course of fieldwork, I moved from being a very recently re-converted Christian, with a background in and an affinity with but no formal affiliation to Adventism, to a more ‘established’ Christian and baptised Adventist⁵¹. The complexity was also dimensional in nature. Arenas of mutual identification were my upbringing in the SDA church, which in some ways made me blend in easily with Ghanaian SDA church life, and the generally known and highly respected status of my father, who was a pastor and previous president of the national SDA church body. However, mingling layers of ‘Ghanaian culture’, the immigration context, and boundaries of gender, language, race, and socio-economic and baptismal status all fed into a complex state of being where I was simultaneously insider *and* outsider. Examples of this simultaneity abound. Although I knew that it was better not to wear jewellery in a traditional Adventist church, I had no clue as to how to properly tie around my head the colourful scarves that matched the Ghanaian dresses I received from some ladies in church. Although I knew how to sing most of the English songs from the SDA hymnal that were sung in church, I could with time at best hum along with the Twi songs that were spontaneously sung and the songs added to the Ghanaian version of the hymnal.

Gender was a specific factor of significance. My contact with men was much more straightforward than that with women. My closer friendships were almost exclusively with men. In part, this originated from my research focus on leadership (since the congregation was the primary level of analysis), which, at least in the highest ranks in this church, was the exclusive domain of men⁵². I also attribute the gender difference to an

⁵¹ The re-conversion to Christianity and the baptism into the SDA church were primarily due to private studies. However, the exposure to immigrant churches in this research project had a clear impact on my personal spiritual journey. This will be further reflected in the epilogue.

⁵² Pastors and elders were men-only on the basis of theological principle. This is in line with Adventist practice in most of the developing world, while Adventists in Western regions tend to take more liberal positions on this issue (Lawson 1999a). Department leaders were also primarily men. However, women took up a large variety of other roles in the church, for example as deaconesses, children’s leaders, Sabbath school class leaders, and choir leaders. On the occasional ‘women’s day’, women were in charge of the entire church service, including preaching. Women featured in the weekly ‘pulpit tasks’ including hosting, praying, reading the Bible verses related to the sermon, and making the appeal to give tithes and offerings. In addition, in the second half of fieldwork, the high-ranking office of church secretary was transferred to a woman.

aspect of my identity: being a single woman. My singleness frequently invoked romantic advances, subtle and overt, climaxing in serious proposals for marriage⁵³.

In regard to language, some members shied away from me because they felt their English was of an insufficient level. Inversely, one man felt hesitant to spend too much time with me during church hours, as he feared that others would gossip about him 'flaunting' his English skills. Further, while church services were translated in English and sometimes Dutch, informal meetings were filled with the Twi language, which made it difficult for me to fully participate. However, sometimes the language difference provided a way to bond. This was the case when members came to ask me to read letters from immigration services, insurance companies, and banks, or the instruction leaflets of medicines, which they had difficulty in reading because of their limited Dutch skills. Finally, the interviews were mostly held in English. This did not seem to pose explicit difficulties, since English was spoken fluently by most members, though conversations in Twi would probably have improved the quality⁵⁴.

The significance of race was brought up by church members who I was closer to and pointed out that I was not like other 'whites' in my allegedly kind interaction with them. The race issue emerged in a variety of ways, which will be demonstrated throughout the thesis. Further, during the research I discovered that I could not project my strong persuasion of the equality of people with differing socio-economic status onto the field. Socio-economic differences did matter to my respondents, and my higher status was clearly brought out by my ability to fly to Ghana and meet the family of church members, whom the members themselves had not seen for years because of their undocumented status and/or lack of financial means. At a point in the fieldwork period, I felt released to be able to share a personal problem and secret with one of my closer friends in church, since it finally brought a more reciprocal flavour to our relationship. When hanging out, I often listened to his various (and many times undisclosed) struggles with regard to legal status, marriage, children, work, health, and finances, which made me less eager to share even the simple day to day affairs of my life since they seemed so painfully 'successful' (being able to see my parents, having money to go out to eat, being busy finishing up my Ph.D. work, and so on). But due to this particular problem I wrestled with and shared with him, he became the one to counsel me and the one to keep my secrets, which raised both of our spirits and made me aware how a subtle yet strong inequality had hitherto permeated our friendship.

My baptismal status was also a complex field of insider-outsider simultaneity. Being Adventist in background, yet not baptised, I brought about much amazement and many arguments seeking to persuade me into baptism (an issue that I will discuss further in chapter 5). Finally, having a father who is a pastor and previous president of the church in

⁵³ I can only speculate as to why advances were made to me to a much higher extent than I experience in other contexts. I attribute it at least in part to my legal status as a Dutch woman, by which I had the ability to 'legalise' my spouse. This was a significant capacity in a context where many males were undocumented and experienced a variety of difficulties because of this. It may also, to a lesser extent, have been related to my skin colour. White women were generally attributed with attractive qualities, such as beauty. Ghanaian women with a lighter shade of skin were viewed as particularly pretty, which was a reason for the common use of skin whitening products. Also, white women allegedly had higher morals. According to some of the Ghanaian men, they would for example be more faithful, monogamous and less 'after your money'.

⁵⁴ The reason that I did not study Twi was that the methodological design of the project came to include an in-depth case study in the early course of the fieldwork, whilst before this period I had planned to do a comparative study of more briefly examined cases only.

the Netherlands did have an impact on my goings in a church context highly sensitive to hierarchy. Although quite a few members (especially the newly converted, yet also the established) never knew about my father's status, the fact that all leaders knew greatly facilitated my access. Positively, my presence became so self-evident that I rarely felt that leaders or members held back their critical comments towards the Dutch SDA church in my presence, aside from an occasional blinking of the eyes or uneasy laughter (see chapter 3).

As a Dutch Adventist in a Ghanaian immigrant Adventist context, I was introduced for the first time in my life to dancing at baby dedications, 'All Night' prayers (gatherings from approximately 10pm to 5am in the church for prayer), offerings for the funerals of deceased parents in Ghana, prayers for legal documents, and summer-like temperatures in church during winter months. Agreeing with Narayan (1993), in some ways I was native to this field, yet in many more ways I was not. I therefore concur with her argument that views of 'insiders' should not be credited with special authenticity, since the insider-outsider dichotomy does not fit the reality that both anthropologists and informants live out *multiple* identities. At the same time, doing research in an at least partly familiar context required me to "absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known" (Narayan 1993: 678), an inversion of the process in studying 'wholly alien' contexts that require a move from concepts to contexts. For example, I sought to widen my understanding of evangelism and conversion, as this was mostly informed by the Western SDA context, by studying literature on different mission paradigms. My stay with the Ghanaian Adventists thus became a continual cycle of thought and practice moving back and forth between the familiar and the unfamiliar, closeness and distance, context and concept.

Moving away from the in-depth case of the Ghanaian Adventists, I will now reflexively discuss the 14 other immigrant churches that were studied. In general, researching these churches was challenging, due to the limited time available to build trust and collect sufficient data in each very different site. In many of the churches however, I found a great openness of leaders and members and access to additional off-site sources such as websites.

Although I did not have a partial native status in any of these churches like I did in the Ghanaian SDA case, the encounters likewise formed a field of negotiated identifications and non-identifications. My Christian identity became clear through my familiarity with church rituals, respondents explicitly asking me about it (sometimes in great detail: a vague affiliation was not always sufficient!), or me intentionally or unintentionally revealing it to create rapport. This shared identity facilitated many conversations and even led to common expressions of faith such as offered prayers after interviews and spiritual counsel for my Ph.D. work. However, at times my Christian identity was *not* a source of mutual identification, due to theological differences. The Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, discussed Adventist theological specifics that they considered unbiblical with me, such as the belief in a Triune God and the neglect of using the name 'Jehovah' for God – much like the Arabic-speaking Christians with whom this chapter began. In such encounters, I could hardly keep a supposed professional distance, being considered capable of intra-Christian dialogue and invited to partake. In many churches, I was initially approached as a potential convert, but upon finding out my Christian identity, it was only the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses who continued to view me as such. This was for example expressed in a

meeting where I anticipated an interview, but my respondents also envisioned an evangelistic opportunity⁵⁵.

My identity as a (single) woman again was a factor in the encounters. I felt that I came into contact more easily with men, which at times proved advantageous, considering the condensed time frame to gather data. This advantage was however not without its complexities. For example, when I met with a Muslim convert to Christianity who attended one of the churches, our conversation revealed both his complex spiritual journey as well as his burgeoning romantic feelings for me. The gender bias was again also found in the fact that most church leaders and thus interviewees were male, though some of the pastors and leaders were women and I interviewed several male pastors together with their wives.

Language was no boundary in the interviews, the majority of which was conducted in Dutch. Only a few interviews were held in English. Finally, my appearance as a tall, white, dark-eyed/haired woman created both identification and non-identification, depending on the context. For example, in the Russian parish I was greeted in Russian, and in the Serbian parish in Serbian, by men who mistook me, loosely wearing a headscarf like most other women, for being ‘one of them’. The incidents provided openings for conversations – my looks thus facilitated field access. In contrast, in other cases such as the African and Asian churches, my tallness and whiteness made me quite conspicuous. In some of these cases, the prominence of my appearance was conducive to approaching and being approached, being given the role of a welcomed visitor. In others, I felt it segregated me from church members and at times even moved me into the uneasy role of intruder.

To conclude, my identity, with all its different dimensions, had a very clear impact on this study. On another note, the research biases implied in the layers of (non-)identifications between me and the churches were in some ways balanced by the diverse sample of churches.

1.6 Outline of thesis

As anticipated, in the next chapter I will introduce the immigrant churches that were studied. The remainder of the empirical part of this thesis will then be structured on the basis of the three sub-questions that were outlined in 1.3.1. In a sandwich formula, every sub-question will be answered by two chapters: one devoted to the Ghanaian SDA case, followed by one that focuses on the 14 additional studies. Thus, chapters 3, 5, and 7 respectively deal with mission discourses, practices, and responses of and to the Ghanaian SDA church. Chapters 4, 6, and 8 respectively deal with these same themes, but then in regard to the 14 other immigrant churches. I chose this format in order to best facilitate the comparison between both the different levels and cases of mission. In chapter 9, the final chapter, I will answer the main question of this thesis.

⁵⁵ When I interviewed a leading couple of this group, the husband answered my questions about their history with Bible verses and invited me to watch a video on the worldwide organisation of Jehovah’s Witnesses. After the interview, the wife dialogued with me about our doctrinal differences and handed me a variety of theological pamphlets. Clearly this was a case of conflicting agendas between researcher and respondents.

2 Variety and similarity: introduction of case studies

This chapter introduces the case studies that will be analysed in terms of their missionary dynamics. The main case of the Ghanaian SDA church will be introduced first and in some detail. This will be followed by the 14 other cases, which will be more briefly depicted in terms of their history, leadership/membership profile⁵⁶, activities, and networks⁵⁷. These depictions are not comprehensive, but provide the contextual background for the analysis of the mission of these churches. The bulk of the data presented in this thesis was gathered during 2007-2008, when I undertook my fieldwork. For each church below, I will outline the specific research methods I used. In total, I did nearly 50 personal semi-structured interviews, 20 phone/Skype interviews, over 150 site visits, including extensive informal conversations, and hours of email correspondence and study of relevant online and written material.

2.1 Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist church⁵⁸

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged from the apocalyptic-millenarian Millerite movement that was one of the Christian revivalist movements in the United States in the 1840s. Officially founded as a church in 1863, it can be characterised as a conservative Protestant church that fully accepts the five *sola's* of the Reformers (*sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus, and soli Deo gloria*). It also upholds and emphasises various distinctive theological beliefs, such as the keeping of the Sabbath, a holistic anthropology, and the expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ (see Vyhmeister 2000). The church places a strong emphasis on mission work. As of the beginning of 2011, there are over 16 million baptised members worldwide⁵⁹, and SDA work is established in 206 of the 232 countries and areas of the world recognised by the United Nations⁶⁰. Although the church started in the United States, membership growth is fastest in Africa and Latin America. The SDA church attaches great importance to health, education, and the distribution of publications. It has established numerous hospitals and schools over the globe, and has its own international relief agency⁶¹.

Owusu-Mensa traces the beginning of the SDA church in Ghana to the conversion of one of its local pioneers in 1888 in the then Gold Coast (1993: 60, 61)⁶². After rather

⁵⁶ In depicting the ethnic backgrounds of members, I describe both first and second generation immigrants as coming from the country of birth of the first generation immigrants. Thus, a second generation immigrant born in the Netherlands and with one or both parents born in Ghana is depicted as 'Ghanaian'. This is an etic choice to simplify categorisation - self-identifications of second generation immigrants, which I did not explicitly research, are usually more hyphenated and diverse.

⁵⁷ In depicting the churches, I will primarily use the past tense. I do this because these churches operate in such a dynamic field that basic features are apt to change quickly.

⁵⁸ See also the church website (in English): <http://www.amsterdamghanasda.com>.

⁵⁹ To properly interpret this number, it must be noted that Seventh-day Adventists do not practice infant baptism, but require baptismal candidates to be able to consciously decide for and grasp the meaning of baptism and thus to have some level of maturity (see Kiesler 2000: 587).

⁶⁰ For both figures, see <http://www.adventist.org/world-church/facts-and-figures/index.html>.

⁶¹ See <http://www.adra.org>.

⁶² Interestingly, this was only one year after the first SDA conversions occurred in the Netherlands (Bruinsma 1994: 20).

slow beginnings (with only 75 converts in the first 20 years of Adventism in the country, *ibid.* p. 72) in regions covered by long-established denominations such as the Methodists and Anglicans, the SDA church in Ghana has grown and is well-established today. Out of a population of nearly 24 million residents, it has more than 1100 local congregations and almost 350.000 members⁶³. The church runs a number of institutions, including numerous hospitals, clinics, bookstores, schools, a publishing house, and a university. The church is particularly popular in the Central-Southern Ashanti region. It is argued that the growth in this particular area of Ghana is related to the close connection between a central feature of Adventist theology, the celebration of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the spiritual and cultural importance of Saturday in Akan traditions (Owusu-Mensa 1993)⁶⁴. Further, some Ghanaians today play an important role in the worldwide SDA church, as can be witnessed by persons as Matthew Bediako, secretary of the world church (until 2010)⁶⁵, and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, an influential conservative theologian and author of a large number of books⁶⁶. The SDA church in Ghana is embedded in the vast variety of religiosity in the country, where an enormous diversity of Christian churches is located in the South, Muslims dominate the North, and 'Traditional Religion' is found throughout the country. In the South of Ghana as in wider Africa, Pentecostal/charismatic churches are highly prolific and influential in the public sphere (see for example Meyer 2002 and 2008).

Although West Africans have a long history of migration, Ghanaian emigration particularly boomed from the 1970s due to economic problems, political instability, and an increased gap between the educated population and the employment opportunities open to them (Akyeampong 2000; Nimako 2000; Peil 1995). In line with these factors, Nimako (2000: 118) differentiates between a variety of Ghanaian migrants: economic migrants (those looking for work), social migrants (those reuniting with family members that migrated before them), political migrants (those fleeing from political unrest), and cultural migrants (those coming for education). As to the destinations of Ghanaian migrants, many live in other West African countries, specifically Togo, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria, and across the entire African continent. In the West, large numbers live in the UK and the USA. Ghanaians constitute the largest sub-African population in Europe, and today have migrated all over the globe, from Saudi Arabia to Papua New Guinea. With their remittances, they make a significant contribution to the welfare of their families and communities at 'home' (Peil 1995; Arhinful 2002).

In the Netherlands, the number of Ghanaians residing in the country in 2010 was 20.829 (including first and second generations)⁶⁷. This excludes the likely thousands of undocumented Ghanaians in the Netherlands. Most Ghanaians live in Amsterdam Southeast (see below), but are also resident in other cities, in particular The Hague (e.g.

⁶³ These are 2009 numbers taken from <http://www.adventiststatistics.org>.

⁶⁴ The historical importance of the Saturday for the Akan is still demonstrated by the name used for white people. Since the Europeans introduced Sunday as a day of worship, whites are called *Akwasi Bronii*, *Akwasi* being the name given to boys born on Sundays. On the other hand, the Akan name for God as the supreme being includes a reference to *Kwaame*, the name given to boys that are born on Saturdays (Owusu-Mensa 1993).

⁶⁵ See for a brief depiction of his profile: <http://gcsecretariat.org/Bediako.htm>.

⁶⁶ See his website: <http://www.drpipim.org>.

⁶⁷ Statistics from <http://statline.cbs.nl>.

Van Dijk 2000). Most Ghanaians in the Netherlands are economic and social immigrants (Nimako 2000: 121), who have come to this country for work and/or to reunite with their families. They have often lived elsewhere in Europe before coming to the Netherlands and/or migrate on to other parts of the world after their stay. Ghanaians in the Netherlands have set up a variety of organisations (in addition to churches, see below): ethnic (based on region, district, or city in Ghana), political, welfare, and business (Nimako 2000; Berger, Van Heelsum, Fennema, and Tillie 1998). The relationship that exists between Ghanaians and the Dutch state is one of a paradoxical tension. On the one hand, in 2000 Ghanaians were formally recognised as a minority, which implied the entitlement to appeal to the Dutch government for policies that meet group-specific needs. On the other hand, the Dutch government has gone to great lengths to seek to prevent (illegal) immigration of Ghanaians to the Netherlands, lengths which according to Van Dijk have been “a blow to Ghanaian dignity” (Van Dijk 2002; Van Dijk 2004: 86).

With their fellow citizens from other faith traditions, many Seventh-day Adventists from Ghana have come to live abroad and bring their religious practices with them. Amidst a dominance of Pentecostal/charismatic Ghanaian churches in diaspora, as well as a few mainliners such as Methodists and Roman Catholics (see Asamoah-Gyadu 2008: 204), Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventists have established churches all over the world. Ackah and Newman (2003: 214) even report Ghanaian SDA churches in unexpected locations such as Israel and Japan. In Europe, the organised Ghanaian Adventist presence is strongest in the UK and Italy, but churches are also found in France, Germany, and, central to this thesis, the Netherlands. The various Ghanaian SDA churches in Europe are closely connected through a regular exchange of preachers, visits to each other’s festivities such as anniversaries and inaugurations, and most importantly, an annual camp meeting held in different European locations⁶⁸.

The Ghanaian SDA church in the Netherlands is located in Amsterdam Southeast⁶⁹, one of Amsterdam’s 15 boroughs and geographically an exclave of the city. Southeast is a highly multicultural neighbourhood. Excluding the presumed thousands of undocumented people living there, it officially houses over 80.000 residents of over 130 nationalities, with 45% being first generation immigrant, 27% second generation immigrant, and 28% ‘native’ (O+S Amsterdam 2009). Non-Western immigrants make up 64% of the borough. A large proportion of the residents has roots in Suriname, a former Dutch colony, and many hail from Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular Ghana and Nigeria. It is not surprising, therefore, that the district is sometimes nicknamed ‘little Suriname’ or ‘little Africa’. Amsterdam Southeast is also the most religious neighbourhood in Amsterdam, with most inhabitants describing themselves as connected to a religious group. It includes a big mosque, mandir, and about 100-120 churches. The borough is further associated with a variety of socio-economic problems, such as poverty and high levels of unemployment and crime⁷⁰.

Amsterdam Southeast is the focal point for Ghanaian community life in the Netherlands. The flavour of Ghana and Africa trickles through its public life. Stores and

⁶⁸ These camp meetings were meant to worship, study, pray, sing, and socialise together. In 2007, the meeting was held in the Netherlands.

⁶⁹ Amsterdam Southeast is often conflated with ‘Amsterdam Bijlmer’ or ‘Bijlmermeer’, which is the most publicly known neighbourhood within the borough.

⁷⁰ See for example “Armoede Fact Sheet: Zuidoost” (2004) and “Fact Sheet Jeugdcriminaliteit en Risicofactoren” (2011) at www.os.amsterdam.nl.

stalls sell Ghanaian products like *fufu* mix⁷¹ and *Kente* fabric⁷². Metro stations are decorated with posters announcing revivals led by Nigerian prophets and concerts held by Ghanaian music celebrities. On Sundays, the streets are walked by an ongoing flow of men, women, and children in exuberant Ghanaian clothing. According to our research group's survey⁷³, which covered approximately 60% of all churches in Amsterdam Southeast, about half of these churches has a predominantly Ghanaian membership. This leads to an estimate of 50 Ghanaian churches in the borough. Of these Ghanaian churches, the vast majority describe themselves as 'Pentecostal'. There are only a handful of non-Pentecostal Ghanaian churches in Southeast, including a Methodist⁷⁴ and a Presbyterian church⁷⁵. There are also a couple of multicultural Roman Catholic parishes in other parts of Amsterdam that attract a large number of Ghanaians⁷⁶. In short, amidst a predominantly Pentecostal Ghanaian community, the Ghanaian SDA church is a denominational minority within the Ghanaian community in Amsterdam Southeast⁷⁷.

The Ghanaian SDA church is organisationally located in the Dutch field of the SDA church. The worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church is organised in various world divisions, which are again organised into Unions, Conferences, and Missions. The central unit of organisation in the Netherlands is the Netherlands Union Conference, and all Adventist churches in the Netherlands are part of this Union. Begun with the first conversions in 1887 and until 1938 a sub-chapter of the Adventist church in Germany (Bruinsma 1994: 20-23), as of 2011 the SDA church in the Netherlands had 51 churches, 15 church plants⁷⁸, and approximately 5.000 members. Following some recent trends in the Adventist church in the West⁷⁹, the church in the Netherlands has come to have a great number of immigrants in its midst - roughly half of the membership is of non-Western immigrant origin. There are several predominantly Antillean/Aruban and Surinamese churches, a Malay-speaking church, a Portuguese-speaking unofficial church plant, and the Ghanaian church. Several churches consist of a mix of cultures. The predominant ethnic groups in the overall membership are the Dutch and the

⁷¹ *Fufu* is a favourite, cassava/plantain/yam-based dish in Ghana and wider West/Central Africa.

⁷² *Kente* is a popular, expensive cloth worn by various tribes in Ghana and wider West Africa.

⁷³ The survey results are as yet unpublished and still subject to ongoing analysis.

⁷⁴ See their website (in English): <http://www.methodistchurch.nl/index.php/Amsterdam-Society>. See also Klomp (2009) for a liturgical study of this church.

⁷⁵ See an interview with the previous white Dutch pastor of this church in Volzin (2008).

⁷⁶ See their websites (both in English): <http://www.afrikahuis.com> and <http://www.blessedtrinity.nl>. See also a brief depiction of both parishes in Guerra, Wijssen and Steggerda 2006: 36-41.

⁷⁷ To a much lesser extent, there are also Ghanaian Muslims in the Netherlands. In Ghana, Muslims primarily live in the North, and Northerners emigrate much less than Southerners due to their generally lower educational levels and financial means (Peil 1995: 350, 365, 366). The Ghanaian Muslims in Amsterdam visit existing mosques and pray together with other Muslims, mostly Pakistani (Nimako 2000: 127, 128).

⁷⁸ These church plants often start as Christian house groups, which may grow into bigger groups and eventually into official congregations.

⁷⁹ Lawson, who did extensive sociological studies of Adventism worldwide, for example wrote in 1999 that 75% of the then recently added new members of the SDA North American Division (including the US and Canada) were immigrants from developing countries (Lawson 1999a). In the same year, he noted that in metropolitan New York even 90% of Adventist membership were new immigrants, that of the 3.578 Adventists in metropolitan Paris, fewer than 400 were French Caucasians, and that the SDA churches in the UK and Canada were so West Indian dominated that both countries had elected West Indians as presidents of their church (Lawson 1999b: 21-22).

Antilleans/Arubans (the largest non-Western immigrant group). The Ghanaian SDA church in the Netherlands is therefore not only a denominational minority in its local ethnic community⁸⁰, but also an ethnic minority in its national denominational community.

The Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam was established in 1999. It grew out of a multi-ethnic, Dutch-English speaking SDA church also located in Amsterdam Southeast. The latter congregation had been established in 1989 by a Trinidadian pastor, mostly through contacts with immigrants who occasionally attended the Dutch SDA church in Amsterdam. Among those immigrants were Ghanaians, Antilleans, Surinamese and, to a lesser extent, other Africans. In 1995 a group of about 15 Ghanaians from this church started their own meetings in order to be able to worship in Twi⁸¹, practice their own forms of worship (including a full-day church service and having various choirs), and be more fit to reach out to the wider Ghanaian community. They began by renting an ordinary house, which soon became a multi-functional centre: discussion groups, Sabbath School groups⁸², and church services were held, and undocumented persons were sheltered. On Sabbaths, the house was packed with about 80 people worshipping, occupying even the stairways and garden. In 1999, the Ghanaian gathering became a formally recognised and organised church within the Dutch SDA Union, having fulfilled the three SDA requirements for instituting a congregation (a minimum of 50 members, sufficient financial resources, and potential for capable leadership). The initial growth continued: starting with their 80 members in 1999, the group expanded to 200 members in about two years⁸³. Subsequently, Dutch immigration policies became increasingly strict,

⁸⁰ In this thesis, I will use the term 'ethnic' to refer to the identity expressed on the congregational level. In most cases, this means that with the term 'ethnic', I point to identities associated with nation-states such as 'Ethiopian' or 'Japanese', but I also use it for the Kurds, who do not have a shared nation-state but do profile their ministry as 'Kurdish'. In the case of the Ghanaian SDA church, the congregation explicitly identified itself as 'Ghanaian'. I therefore use the term 'ethnic' to refer to Ghanaians in general and not to ethnic sub-groups living in Ghana such as the Fante or Ga, unless explicitly stated otherwise. This choice is related to the congregational level of analysis adopted in this thesis: though sub-Ghanaian ethnic identifications were still of importance to individual first generation Ghanaian immigrants, the SDA congregation defined itself as 'Ghanaian'.

⁸¹ The umbrella name for this language is Akan, which consists of various dialects, of which Ashanti Twi was most commonly spoken by church members. Since members never referred to their language as Akan but always as Twi, I will stick to that usage in the text. A few members were non-Akan Ghanaians and spoke additional languages such as Ewe, Ga, and Frafra, but these were not used for church purposes. In the SDA church in Ghana, English and Twi are the dominant languages for church use, with sometimes a third local language added depending on the region.

⁸² Worldwide, the main SDA worship service consists of two parts: 'Sabbath School', i.e. group discussion based on a quarterly study manual, and a 'divine service', i.e. central worship including the sermon and, if applicable, the administration of sacraments.

⁸³ Three Ghanaians still attended and were members of the multi-ethnic mother church. Usually, they attended the mother church on Sabbath mornings, and visited the Ghanaian church in the afternoon if there were no afternoon programmes in the mother church (as was the case in the summer and every other week in the rest of the year). Their absence from the Ghanaian church was due to specific historical circumstances. Of the three, two were men who were elders in the mother church at the time of fieldwork. The third one was the wife of one of the elders. When the Ghanaian church was formed, the two men had been among the leaders of the Ghanaian group in the mother church. One of them explained to me that the Dutch minister pastoring the mother church at that time had requested for a portion of the Ghanaian leadership to remain in the church to ensure continuity. This initially led the two men to stay in the mother church. Although over ten years later this agreement was now outdated, the elders stayed as they experienced little enthusiasm from other members to lead the church (there were two

which decreased the influx of Ghanaian immigrants in general and led 40-50 SDA members to flee to the more lenient UK.

The same political climate frustrated the attempt, started in 2003, of the Dutch SDA Union to employ a Ghanaian pastor for this church. The process to let the aimed-for pastor emigrate took three years and ended in failure. Eventually another candidate, pastor Ansah⁸⁴, came from Ghana to the Netherlands, facilitated by his possession of an American passport. Pastor Ansah and his wife arrived in September 2006. He was the first Ghanaian pastor of the Ghanaian SDA congregation (and in the Dutch Adventist system), and its leader during the time I did my fieldwork. Ansah, born in Accra in 1949, is a popular preacher, and well-known in Ghana both inside and outside the SDA church because of his ongoing TV programmes broadcast on a national channel. He has worked in a variety of administrative positions in the SDA church in Ghana and wider West Africa, and was a pastor in Canada. He is highly educated, holds a Doctor of Ministry from the main SDA theological seminary in the US, and has written several books. In 2010, Ansah additionally pastored an Antillean/Aruban-majority and multi-ethnic SDA church in the Amsterdam region due to a sudden vacancy in the leadership of these congregations⁸⁵.

The Ghanaian SDA church had a predominantly Ghanaian, mostly Ashanti (Akan) membership, but also a small band of regular visitors from the Dutch Antilles, Suriname, and Nigeria. On average, the church drew 200 attendees to its main worship service on Sabbath. Women comprised about 60% and men 40% of church membership. Most first generation immigrant members did not receive education beyond the secondary level, though a few had been enrolled in higher education and professions in Ghana or were students in the Netherlands. Like other first generation Ghanaians in the Netherlands (Nimako 2000: 122-123), they were most often employed in unskilled or semi-skilled labour, especially cleaning and other manual work. The second generation, born and raised in the Netherlands, was coming of age, with church attended by about 45 young children and 25 teenagers, some of whom just enrolled in higher education. Many church members lived in Amsterdam Southeast or the wider Amsterdam region. A few travelled to the church from more distant parts of the country such as Leiden or The Hague, with some alternating their attendance between the Ghanaian church and SDA churches in closer proximity to their homes.

This compact survey of the context and history of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam reveals a complex layering of influences that made up the church. The church was Ghanaian, Adventist Christian, and 'immigrant'. It was part of the transnational networks of the worldwide Ghanaian diaspora and worldwide SDA church, and the SDA Ghanaian diaspora and SDA church in Ghana in particular. It was embedded in the local networks of Amsterdam Southeast with its vibrant Ghanaian community and in the Netherlands Union Conference. It unfolded within a Pentecostal Ghanaian neighbourhood, a Dutch-Antillean-Aruban national church, and the challenges and flux

elders, from Rwanda and Suriname, next to them). Another reason was that their commitment to the mother church had led to some tensions and misinterpretations on the part of other Ghanaians in the early stages of the Ghanaian church formation.

⁸⁴ All names of individual persons in this thesis are fictive for the sake of the privacy of the signified.

⁸⁵ In the beginning of 2011, the multi-ethnic church was adopted by another SDA pastor, but pastor Ansah still led the Antillean/Aruban-majority church.

of immigrant life within a suspicious state. All these layers made their imprint on the character of this church.

For example, SDA church life from Ghana was reproduced by running the same church departments for men, women, youth, children, music, prayer, health, welfare, communication and personal ministries. Some of the reproductions became objects of negotiation, such as Sabbath hours, which Adventists keep from sundown on Fridays to sundown on Saturdays. In Ghana, being close to the equator, the Sabbath begins and ends around 6pm year-round and its ending thus always coincides with the end of church programmes on Sabbath afternoon. In contrast, the time of sundown varies widely throughout the year in the Netherlands. By habit, most Ghanaian SDA immigrants in the summer time switched off their TV's and said a prayer to open the Sabbath on Fridays 6pm. They also did not feel it was a problem to go shopping after church on Saturdays around 5pm, whilst the local sun in this season doesn't set until 10 or 11pm. Others even stuck to the literal Sabbath hours as kept in Ghana by taking into account the time difference with the Netherlands. Some members however questioned whether these things were right and argued for a locally adapted sundown to sundown approach.

Some of the reproductions consisted of practices that are found in wider African Christianity, such as printing Bible texts on clothing (cf. Kraamer 2009), having All Night prayer sessions, and the significance of choir ministries. In turn, these wider African Christian practices were appropriated by linking them to Adventist specifics. For example, the women's ministry had dresses that were imprinted with the reference to and images of Revelation 14:6-12, a crucial Bible passage for Adventist ecclesiology and missiology. Similarly, the robes of the church choir, made in Ghana, had the imprint of the Adventist logo (an open Bible with a cross and a flame depicting the Holy Spirit).

In relation to the worldwide SDA church, the church had 'Ghanaian' features such as its addition of Twi songs in the back of the SDA hymnal. Some of these features were born out specifically in the diaspora context, such as the *Kente* cloth adorning the pulpit, which transformed the church hall rented from a multicultural Pentecostal church each Sabbath into an explicitly Ghanaian space. The emphasis on prayer in African Christianity and adopted in Ghanaian Adventism received specific input in the immigration context, where prayer sessions were devoted to specific immigrant issues such as receiving legal documents. A new language joined the cultural-religious-social matrix. The children's Sabbath school lessons were run in Dutch. Also, visiting Dutch pastors⁸⁶ sometimes told the plenary children story⁸⁷ in Dutch, whilst some of the Ghanaian adults, not understanding much Dutch, filled up this time by reading their Bible on their seats⁸⁸. In the inaugural ceremony for pastor Ansah, the three core layers of the church identity were manifested in the display of the Ghanaian, Dutch, and SDA pathfinder's flag. The church as an immigrant church served as an alternative moral order that restored dignity in a state that branded them as illegal and a society that relegated them to the lowliest jobs (cf. Van Dijk 2002). Social items such as wearing good-looking, ever changing church outfits, the

⁸⁶ In the empirical chapters, I will refer to 'the Dutch' in the way immigrant church leaders generally did: white people whose mother tongue is Dutch (see the introduction of 3.2).

⁸⁷ The children's story is a common part of SDA liturgy that usually takes place before the sermon.

⁸⁸ English also had a place. For non-Twi speakers, which in this church were all non-Ghanaian, a simultaneous translation in English (and sometimes Dutch) was always available through a headphone system for the Sabbath morning service. Also, there was one English-speaking Sabbath school class for adults, in addition to a variety of Twi-speaking classes.

high status given to church functions (even of lower rank), and the strong authority attributed to the church pastor in all domains of life may be understood in this light. The enumeration of these various ways in which the Ghanaian, Adventist Christian, and immigrant layers of this church blended to form the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam could be added to at length, but would exceed the purposes of this introduction. It is however crucial to note the existence and significance of these layers, which will reappear throughout the thesis when discussing the congregation's mission dynamics.

For the study of this congregation, I did semi-structured interviews with leaders of evangelistic and related programmes, semi-structured interviews with recent converts, extensive participation in and observations of evangelistic and other church practices, and had extensive informal contact with members and leaders through establishing friendships, personal conversations, phone calls, and emails. I also interviewed two Dutch SDA leaders: the pastor who was the president of the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC) from 2002-2007, and the previous pastor of the Ghanaian SDA church, who has been the president of the NUC since 2007. The official fieldwork period was in 2007 and 2008, but frequent visits to and contacts with the Ghanaian Adventists continued in 2009 and 2010. In 2008, I also went on a month-long trip throughout Ghana, interviewing SDA pastors and a SDA anthropologist, visiting SDA churches, and observing the SDA public presence in different parts of the country⁸⁹.

Having depicted the Ghanaian SDA case in some detail, we will now move into the more brief introductions of the other 14 churches that were studied.

2.2 Other immigrant churches

Holy Thomas the Apostle Parish for Chaldeans in the Netherlands⁹⁰

In 1996, the then Chaldean Catholic patriarch⁹¹ assigned one of his bishops to visit the Chaldeans in Europe, including the Netherlands. On the basis of a report of this visit, an Iraqi priest studying in Belgium at the time was asked to serve the Chaldean community in the Netherlands. In 2000, a priest from Iraq, born in 1973 and holding a BA degree, was appointed to come to a post in the Netherlands. The Holy Thomas the Apostle Parish for Chaldeans in the Netherlands (from now on abbreviated as 'Chaldean parish') was

⁸⁹ Since the starting point of this research was to do a comparative study of immigrant churches in a national context (see the previous chapter), my brief trip to Ghana was not intended to elaborately map transnational flows or to make an in-depth comparison between the country of immigration and the country of origin. The trip rather served to substantiate the contextualisation of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam.

⁹⁰ See the parish website (in Arabic, with a few parts in Dutch): <http://ichk.nl>. See also a video clip about the Rotterdam centre, on a website initiated by three Dutch Christian TV broadcasting companies and SKIN (see footnote 88), with the purpose to connect immigrant churches with other immigrant churches and more established Dutch churches (in Dutch): <http://www.eo.nl/algemeen/nederlandkleurrijk/page/-/galleries/video.esp?imagegallery=11156863>, go to 'Chaldeeuwse Kerk'.

⁹¹ The Chaldean Catholic Church is an Eastern particular church of the Roman Catholic Church. It has some levels of autonomy, but recognises the authority of the Pope in Rome (see Mönnich 1959: 260).

officially established as a quasi parish ('*missio cum cura animarum*') in 2001⁹². With Chaldeans living all over the Netherlands, it consisted of six centres throughout the country (in Amsterdam, Arnhem, Borne, Hoogeveen, Rotterdam and Woudenberg). The priest was the only Iraqi priest in the Netherlands, and has had the main responsibility for the parish since 2004. It is estimated that there were about 700 Chaldean Catholic families in the Netherlands, of which about two thirds were parishioners.

The centre in Amsterdam was studied for this thesis. This centre had about 250 people attending. Most of these parishioners were Iraqis, but there was also a small group of Chaldeans from Syria and Turkey and a few Armenians (non-Chaldean). Members on average had some level of higher education, but most of the first generation immigrants were employed in low-level jobs. The man/woman ratio was 50/50 and 30-40% of attendees was below 30 years of age. The liturgy, held in Amsterdam once a month, was in Arabic and neo-Aramaic, with parts projected in Dutch. In addition to the monthly liturgy, the priest held lectures about biblical topics and catechesis for children, and organised social activities such as choir contests, youth camps, and football matches.

The parish had contacts with the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands, occasionally celebrating a service together with Dutch-majority Roman Catholic parishes. Because of contacts made at the time of his studies, the priest was in touch with Iraqi Christians in Sweden and organised a camp for Iraqi Christians in the Netherlands and Sweden. He also preached to Chaldeans in Germany and Denmark, and there were connections with the Chaldean church in Iraq. The parish, for example, organised an offering for Christians in Mosul.

For the study of the Amsterdam centre of this parish, I conducted three personal interviews and one phone interview with the priest, observed a Qurbana Qadisha (the Chaldean reference to the Eucharist), talked informally with parishioners, and studied online materials on the church.

Japanese Christian Fellowship Church of the Netherlands⁹³

After 20 years of meeting in Japanese Christian house groups, the inter-denominational Protestant Japanese Christian Fellowship Church of the Netherlands (from now on abbreviated as 'Japanese Protestant church') was set up in 1995 by a Dutch-Belgian couple, who were former missionaries to Japan. They were subsequently followed up by a Japanese pastor, a Korean pastor who had been a long-term missionary in Japan, and, after a temporary pastoral absence, in 2004 eventually by the pastor who was in office at the time of fieldwork. This minister was a Dutch-Canadian man, born in 1939 and holding a MA degree. He and his wife returned to the Netherlands for the very purpose of leading the Japanese Protestant church, after missionary service in Japan for 33 years. The Japanese Protestant church was one congregation that consisted of three gatherings (which were direct outgrowths of the initial three house groups), namely in Amstelveen (a city adjoining Amsterdam), Leiden, and Eindhoven. In total, these small gatherings drew 60-80 attendees. The Amstelveen group had church services weekly, Leiden biweekly, and Eindhoven monthly. Some members attended Dutch churches in addition to the Japanese Protestant church.

⁹² For stylistic purposes, in this thesis I will refer to this Chaldean church community as a 'parish' and not as a 'quasi-parish'.

⁹³ See also the church website (in Japanese): <http://www.jcfn.nl>.

The Amstelveen gathering of the Japanese Protestant church was specifically studied for this thesis. Sunday services drew 25-35 attendees, most of whom were Japanese with the exception of a Korean lady (the wife of a Japanese churchgoer) and an occasional Dutch visitor. The man/woman ratio was 30/70 and 40% was below 30 years of age. Members were generally highly educated, with (music) students and business men filling the small number of pews. The nature of their presence in the Netherlands/Europe (e.g. for study and business) made church membership rather transient. There was a continuous flow of new attendees that had come to the Netherlands and those who returned to Japan or migrated elsewhere. The main language of church services was Japanese, but songs, prayers, and parts of the sermon were also projected in English and sometimes Dutch. The church undertook various social activities in addition to the Sunday services, such as meeting in cell groups, sharing meals together, and holding weekend retreats.

The Japanese Protestant church was a member of SKIN⁹⁴ and worshipped in the building of a Dutch Reformed church. Now and then the pastor preached in Dutch congregations. Also, the church had contact with a Korean congregation in Amstelveen: they visited the latter's annual bazaar and once organised a church service together. There were extensive transnational contacts. The church cooperated with the international Japanese Christian Fellowship Network⁹⁵ in the spiritual support of Japanese Christians who returned to Japan. It exchanged preachers with other Japanese churches in Europe, and annually convened in varying European localities with 300-500 representatives of Japanese churches and house groups in the UK, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Russia⁹⁶.

For the study of the Amstelveen gathering of this church, I conducted a personal interview with the pastor and his wife and a phone interview with the pastor, partook in a church service and a 'Bible and art class' (see chapter 6), talked informally with church members, corresponded with three church members over email, and studied written documents⁹⁷ on the church.

St. Nicholas of Myra Russian Orthodox Church⁹⁸

The St. Nicholas of Myra Russian Orthodox Church (from now on abbreviated as 'Russian Orthodox parish') was founded in Amsterdam in 1974. It started with a handful of people and was set up by a Dutch Orthodox man, who was a teacher of Russian at the University of Amsterdam and the husband of a Russian woman, together with a Serbian Orthodox priest. Originally they intended to establish a pan-Orthodox parish, but this proved difficult. Initially, the parish was Russian and Serbian combined, being under both the Moscow Patriarchate and the Serbian Patriarchate. The parish however split (with the Serbs under the Serbian Patriarchate now gathering in Zaandam, a city close to

⁹⁴ SKIN stands for 'Samen Kerk in Nederland' (Church Together in the Netherlands), an association of and for immigrant churches in the Netherlands. See (in Dutch): <http://www.skinkerken.nl>.

⁹⁵ The Japanese Christian Fellowship Network aimed to spiritually re-embed Christian Japanese who returned to Japan after having lived abroad. It also sought to evangelise and spiritually equip Japanese people who lived outside of Japan. See: <http://jcfn.org>.

⁹⁶ There was also a Japanese missionary working with Japanese in Romania.

⁹⁷ This included an article entitled "Zendeling onder de Japanners. Ds. Carl de Boer dominee voor Japanse kerken" in the Dutch Christian newspaper "Het goede leven".

⁹⁸ See also the parish website (in Russian, English, and Dutch): <http://www.orthodox.nl>.

Amsterdam) and today is under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate only. On the local level, the parish was part of the diocese of The Hague and the Netherlands, which for lack of its own bishop was administered by archbishop Simon of Brussels and Belgium⁹⁹. The Dutch Orthodox man that co-founded the parish became its first priest. His son-in-law, born in 1952 and having a Ph.D., was the archpriest at the time of fieldwork.

On regular Sundays, about 200 people attended the service (with about 50 staying from the beginning to the end). For special celebrations such as Easter, over 800 people attended. They lived all over the Netherlands and were born in about 20 different nations. The biggest group was Russian-speaking, with representatives from countries such as Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. There were also large numbers of Dutch (until 1989 the largest group in the parish), Serbs, Greeks, and Eritreans. The man/woman ratio was 40/60 and 30% of the attendees was below 30 years of age. There was a great variety in the socio-economic status and educational level of attendees. Divine Liturgies were alternately held in Church Slavonic and Dutch (with the most important parts always being bilingual), and for special festive services or the fifth Sunday of a month, both languages were used. Occasionally, English was heard, too. The parish organised various activities in addition to its Divine Liturgy, such as children's Sunday school, a catechismal reading group, and choir concerts. Also, a parish couple established the international Orthodox Peace Fellowship¹⁰⁰, and the parish supported various charitable projects in Russia and other nations that were represented in the church.

The parish took part in the Council of Churches in Amsterdam and the Society for Orthodox parishes in the Netherlands¹⁰¹, a pan-Orthodox network and associated member of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands. Parishioners participated in pan-Orthodox activities such as Orthodox youth summer camps and pilgrimages to Egypt and Romania. The parish had many transnational contacts: highly placed Russian Orthodox people, from Russia to America, came to the parish to give lectures and take part in festivities, and parishioners attended large international conferences of the Orthodox Fellowship in Western Europe¹⁰².

For the study of this parish, I conducted one personal interview with the archpriest, visited a Divine Liturgy, participated twice in the socialising after the service and talked informally with parishioners. I also frequented a series of Easter services including a procession, extensively corresponded over email with the parish office, and studied written¹⁰³ and online materials related to the church.

⁹⁹ See: <http://www.archiepiskopia.be>.

¹⁰⁰ See: <http://www.incommunion.org>.

¹⁰¹ For more on this society, see (in Dutch): <http://www.orthodoxen.nl>.

¹⁰² See: <http://fraternite.orthodoxe.free.fr>.

¹⁰³ This included documents produced by the parish and parishioners, as well as student reports: a B.A. thesis on this church by a student at the Theology Faculty of VU University Amsterdam in 2006 (Braakhuis, M. “ ‘Dit was waar ik altijd al had willen zijn: een huis van God.’ Over beweegredenen van Nederlanders om zich aan te sluiten bij de Russisch-orthodoxe kerk de Heilige Nikolaas van Myra”), and a report of a small empirical study on this church by students of the course ‘Religion in Amsterdam’ at the Theology Faculty of VU University Amsterdam in 2009.

Pentecost Revival Church¹⁰⁴

This Pentecostal church, located in Amsterdam Southeast, was established in 2000 by the pastor who led it at the time of fieldwork. This pastor, originally from Ghana and born in 1963, came to the Netherlands in the early 1980s to plant churches for the ‘Church of Pentecost’ (CoP) in Ghana¹⁰⁵. The CoP has an International Missions Office that is responsible for mission activities among the Ghanaian diaspora (Onyinah 2004). The pastor was a member of this church and had been trained there. He obtained a M.Div. from the CoP and a MA in theology in Europe. First on other resources and from 1993 paid fulltime by the CoP, the pastor planted 13 branches of the CoP in Belgium and 15 in the Netherlands. When the CoP leadership wanted to move him to minister in Austria, tensions emerged: the pastor wanted to protect his children from the setbacks of moving to another country (in particular the educative hold-up due to having to learn German) and declined the call. He broke away from the CoP and started his own church: the one studied here, Pentecost Revival Church (from now on also referred to as ‘African-majority Pentecost Revival Church’). Interestingly, in the last decade, the pastor planted six branches of this Dutch-grown church in his country of origin, Ghana, in addition to three in Belgium – an illustrating case of ‘re-reversed mission’¹⁰⁶.

The Pentecost Revival Church drew over 400 people on Sundays. Ghanaians formed the largest group, followed by Nigerians, other Africans, and Surinamese. There were also about 10 Dutch people associated with the church. The man/woman ratio was 40/60 and most attendees were more than 30 years of age. The majority of church members had at least a high school degree and lived on lower to middle class incomes. Church services were held in English and Dutch. The church had an active choir and band, which could be hired by external parties for weddings and church services¹⁰⁷. The church held weekly youth services, prayer meetings, and classes in leadership.

The Pentecost Revival Church was a member of SKIN and the ‘Verenigde Pinksteren Evangeliegemeenten’¹⁰⁸ (‘United Pentecostal and Evangelical Congregations’) in the Netherlands. The pastor was chairman of the Pentecostal Council of Churches¹⁰⁹, an alliance of (mostly African and Amsterdam-based) Pentecostal churches in the Netherlands, and took part in a local inter-religious immigrant organisation. The pastor also had contacts with a variety of churches all over the world and was a member of the International Convention of Faith Ministries¹¹⁰.

For the study of this church, I conducted one personal interview and one phone interview with the pastor, and took part in an evangelistic training session of the church

¹⁰⁴ See also the church website (in English): <http://www.pentecostrevival.nl>.

¹⁰⁵ See Onyinah (2004) for more on the background of this church in Ghana as well as in the diaspora. See also the website of the CoP: <http://thecophq.org>.

¹⁰⁶ A term used by Währisch-Oblau to point to mission activities of immigrant churches in the countries of origin. In Germany, she observed this phenomenon in particular among African and Tamil churches, which went about church planting back ‘home’ (Währisch-Oblau 2006: 36).

¹⁰⁷ See the separate website of the Pentecost Revival Choir Band (in English): <http://www.pentecostrevivalchoir.com>.

¹⁰⁸ See (in Dutch): <http://www.vpe.nl>.

¹⁰⁹ See <http://www.pcoc.nl>.

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.icfm.org>.

(see 6.2.1). I also studied written materials on the church¹¹¹ and the church/church choir websites.

Maranatha Community Transformation Centre¹¹²

The Maranatha Community Transformation Centre, then still called ‘Maranatha English Fellowship’, was established in Amsterdam in 1995. It originated with an English-speaking group that attended the multicultural yet Dutch-speaking evangelical ‘Maranatha Ministries’ in the same city, and felt their needs unmet because of the language boundary. The group started with weekly prayer gatherings, grew into a congregation, and eventually became fully independent of its mother church in 1999. The Maranatha Community Transformation Centre (from now on abbreviated as the ‘multicultural evangelical MCTC’ or ‘MCTC’) was headed by a Nigerian-born pastor, who was born in 1958, educated in theology in the Netherlands, and held a Doctor of Ministry from an American university.

Like its mother, the MCTC was a multicultural evangelical church. It drew about 80 attendees on Sundays, with the most sizable ethnic groups being Ghanaian, Nigerian, Surinamese, and Antillean. There were a handful of members that came from other African countries like Uganda and South Africa, and a few Dutch people. The man/woman ratio was 60/40 and 65% was below 30 years of age. The majority of members lived on low incomes. Church services were conducted in English and Dutch. The latter language had been added when increasing numbers of Surinamese and Antilleans started joining. The church was active in an array of social projects, ranging from a fitness club to informative seminars on HIV/AIDS to training in child raising.

Like the Pentecost Revival Church (see above), the MCTC was a member of SKIN and the Pentecostal Council of Churches. Although independent, the MCTC still had close ties with the mother church. The MCTC pastor was on the latter’s elder’s board, and the two congregations ran programmes together in addition to exchanging preachers and ideas. Transnational contacts were maintained with pastors and churches all over the world. Pastors from a variety of African countries preached in the MCTC. The MCTC pastor participated in an organisation for Afro-European Christian leaders named ‘GATE’, Gift from Africa to Europe (see chapter 1). The MCTC pastor maintained a strong public profile and was involved in a wide variety of projects and networks. He was director of ‘Life International’¹¹³, a project aiming to raise ‘transformational leaders’ for Nigeria and wider West Africa. He was also the president of the Amsterdam Bible Academy¹¹⁴, which offered theological training to immigrant pastors and church leaders. The pastor (as an individual) was also member of the ‘Verenigde Pinkster- en Evangeliegemeenten’ (United Pentecostal and Evangelical Congregations) in the Netherlands and in contact with several Dutch pastors.

For the study of the MCTC, I conducted one personal interview and one phone interview with the church pastor. I also studied written materials on the church¹¹⁵ and the church website.

¹¹¹ This included a report of a small empirical study on this church by students of the course ‘Religion in Amsterdam’ at the Theology Faculty of VU University Amsterdam in 2008.

¹¹² See also the church website (in English, with a few parts in Dutch): <http://mctc.nl>.

¹¹³ See <http://www.lifeinternational.nl>.

¹¹⁴ See <http://www.abacademy.nl>.

¹¹⁵ This included a report of a small empirical study on this church by students of the course ‘Religion in Amsterdam’ at the Theology Faculty of VU University Amsterdam in 2008.

Gereja Kristen Perjanjian Baru in the Netherlands¹¹⁶

Gereja Kristen Perjanjian Baru in the Netherlands¹¹⁷ (from now on abbreviated as 'Indonesian evangelical GKPB' or 'GKPB') was an Indonesian congregation. It consisted of two churches that shared the same pastor: one in Amsterdam, which was one of the largest local Indonesian evangelical congregations, and one in Rotterdam. The pastor was a man of Chinese Indonesian descent and born in 1945. After studying in theological institutions in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the Philippines, and having worked as a missionary in Indonesia for 10 years, he felt called to start a church for Indonesians in the Netherlands. After establishing an Indonesian church in Zwolle in 1991 that was later given up, he founded the Amsterdam church in 1994 and the Rotterdam church in 1999.

The Amsterdam branch had about 300 attendees on Sundays, the Rotterdam branch about 40. Most members were Indonesian and, to a much lesser extent, Indo (people of mixed European and native Indonesian descent). There were also a few Dutch and Javanese Surinamese people, and occasionally representatives of other ethnic groups such as Creole Surinamese and Antilleans. The man/woman ratio was 50/50 and 40% was below 30 years of age. Members generally lived on lower to middle class incomes and on average had at least a high school diploma. Church services and other church activities were held in both Indonesian and Dutch. The church combined spiritual with social activities in activities such as cell group meetings, men's and women's groups, and weekend retreats.

The GKPB was part of the 'Verenigde Pinkster- en Evangeliegemeenten' ('United Pentecostal and Evangelical Congregations') in the Netherlands. The pastor at times preached in Gereja Kristen Indonesia Netherlands, an Indonesian Reformed Church with gatherings throughout the country¹¹⁸. On a transnational level, the GKPB participated in 'Persekutuan Pelayanan Gereja-gereja Indonesia di Eropa', a council of Indonesian evangelical churches in the Netherlands and Germany¹¹⁹, which for example jointly celebrated Christmas and Easter services. Further, the congregation had a partnership with the GKPB in Indonesia¹²⁰, and the church pastor partook in various other Indonesian inter-church meetings in the world.

For the study of this church, I conducted one personal interview and two phone interviews with the pastor, visited a church service in Amsterdam and in Rotterdam, talked informally and phoned with church members, and studied the church website.

Serbian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity¹²¹

The Serbian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity (from now on abbreviated as 'Serbian Orthodox parish') was established in 1974 in Rotterdam as the first Serbian Orthodox parish in the Netherlands. It was set up by a Serbian Orthodox deacon and priest who led

¹¹⁶ See also the church website (in Indonesian and Dutch): <http://www.gkpb.nl> and the website of the youth cell group of the church (partly in Dutch, partly in English): <http://jvc.gkpb.nl>.

¹¹⁷ 'Gereja Kristen Perjanjian Baru' is Indonesian for 'Christian church of the new covenant'.

¹¹⁸ See their website (in Dutch, with a few parts translated in Indonesian): <http://www.gkin.org/gkinweb>.

¹¹⁹ This council was European in intent, but in practice only had members in the Netherlands and Germany. This was the case because affiliated churches were required to have their own pastor, which appeared to be rare in other European countries. 'Persekutuan Pelayanan Gereja-gereja Indonesia di Eropa' is Indonesian for 'fellowship-ministry of Indonesian churches in Europe'.

¹²⁰ See (in Indonesian): <http://www.gkpb.net>.

¹²¹ See also the parish website (in Serbian): <http://www.svetatrojica.nl>.

out in monthly Divine Liturgies. With permission of the then bishop of the Serbian Orthodox diocese of France and Western Europe, the parish was established. Over the years, more Serbian Orthodox parishes emerged in the Netherlands (partly under the influence of one of the Rotterdam priests) and the country had a total of six of them at the time of fieldwork¹²². There were three main priests, who were all over 40 years old, highly educated and employed in high-level secular professions.

There were about 150 parishioners who regularly frequented the parish. Most of them were Serbian, but there were also a few Greek, Russian, and Dutch attendees. On average, members had some level of vocational training and lived on average income levels. The man/woman ratio was 40/60 and 40% of the attendees was below 30 years of age. Services were conducted in Church Slavonic (for songs) and Serbian (for prayers), and parts were done in Dutch. The church conducted several activities in addition to its Sunday services, such as charity projects, lectures, museum trips, and visiting Orthodox monasteries.

The parish was in contact with the other Serbian Orthodox parishes in the Netherlands. For example, one of her priests was sent to the smaller Utrecht parish that did not have its own priest. There were also ties with other Orthodox parishes in the Netherlands. The choir leader of the church was Russian, and all Orthodox parishes in Rotterdam celebrated together on the first Sunday of the Great Lent. Like the Russian Orthodox parish discussed above, the Serbian parish was a member of the society for Orthodox parishes in the Netherlands. Finally, there was contact with Serbian Orthodox parishes in wider Europe. These parishes celebrated the Divine Liturgy and discussed church matters together.

For the study of this parish, I conducted a personal interview and a phone interview with one of the priests in training, a condensed personal interview with one of the priests, visited two Divine Liturgies, and talked informally with parishioners.

Mahber Kristian Netherlands: Tesfa Berhan¹²³

This evangelical congregation started in Amsterdam in 1982, on the initiative of a small group of Ethiopians and Eritreans, which had hitherto held infrequent Bible studies. Searching for a more structured spiritual community, they began with biweekly gatherings in the house of one of the men, who was a church elder at the time of fieldwork. This grew steadily into a larger community, which began to gather in a church building in the early 1990s. The group had close contact with other Ethiopian/Eritrean Christian groups that were forming in other parts of the country. Together they used the name ‘Mahber Kristian Netherlands’¹²⁴. The specific name of the group in Amsterdam studied for this thesis was ‘Tesfa Berhan’¹²⁵. In the course of about 10 years, the Tigrinya-speaking group gradually and peacefully broke away and started its own meetings, which resulted in the

¹²² See (in Serbian) <http://www.pravoslavje.nl> for an overview of the other Serbian Orthodox parishes in the Netherlands.

¹²³ See also the website of the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Union in the Netherlands (EEUCUN) of which this church was a member church (in English, Amharic, and Dutch): <http://www.eecun.nl>. (The name ‘EECUN’ was used in addition to the older and officially registered name ‘Mahber Kristian Netherlands’, which stemmed from the time before the Ethiopian and Eritrean groups split into separate churches [see main text]).

¹²⁴ ‘Mahber Kristian’ is Amharic/Tigrinya for ‘Christian fellowship’.

¹²⁵ ‘Tesfa berhan’ is Amharic/Tigrinya for ‘light of hope’.

church becoming mostly ‘Ethiopian’¹²⁶. Tesfa Berhan (from now on referred to as ‘Ethiopian evangelical church’) was jointly led by five church elders. These elders were highly educated and their years of birth ranged from 1953 to 1974.

The Ethiopian evangelical church had about 100 attendees for the Sunday services, which were held in Amharic. Most attendees were Ethiopians, with a small minority of Amharic-speaking Eritreans and a sporadic Dutch person or representative of another ethnic group. Most church members lived on lower to middle income levels and there were more women than men in church. The church had an active choir and youth group, and was engaged in social projects such as fund raising activities (e.g. selling traditional Ethiopian meals) for orphanages in Ethiopia.

The congregation was closely related to four other Ethiopian evangelical churches in the Netherlands, which were located in Rotterdam, The Hague, Wageningen, and Eindhoven. These churches were united in an alliance called ‘Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Union in the Netherlands’. Having their own elders, choir, and administration, these individual churches combined their financial and organisational strengths. They invited speakers from Ethiopia and elsewhere, exchanged preachers, and organised youth days and annual conferences together. There were still contacts with the Tigrinya-speaking congregations in the Netherlands. The church was indirectly connected to SKIN through the membership of the Rotterdam sister church. On a transnational level, there were contacts with Ethiopian/Eritrean churches in the wider diaspora and in Ethiopia/Eritrea. For example, Ethiopian/Eritrean church leaders in Europe held meetings together, and churches exchanged guest speakers and singers.

For the study of this church, I did three personal interviews, one phone interview, and one interview over email with one of the Amsterdam church elders. I held a phone interview with a church leader of the sister church in Rotterdam, visited a wedding in the Amsterdam church, and participated in a church service of the sister church in Rotterdam. I also talked informally with church members in both the Amsterdam and Rotterdam churches, and studied the EECUN website.

Church of the Nazarene Rotterdam-Emmaüs¹²⁷

This church was founded in 1985. At the time, a group of Cape Verdeans attended the Dutch-speaking Church of the Nazarene in Rotterdam, although they did not speak Dutch. On the initiative of Dutch Nazarenes, a pastor was brought from Cape Verde to lead separate worship services in Portuguese for the Cape Verdeans. The latter began congregating on Sunday afternoons, after the Dutch-speaking Nazarene and African/English-speaking Pentecostal services held earlier in the day in the same building. Over the years, a few Cape Verdean and one Portuguese pastor ministered to the church, and there were periods when the church did not have a pastor. At the time of fieldwork, the congregation (from now on referred to as ‘Cape Verdean Nazarene church’) was without a pastor. The elder I interviewed was over 50 years of age and had a vocational degree.

For Sunday services, the congregation drew about 40-50 people. Most attendees were Cape Verdean, but there were a handful of representatives from other Portuguese-

¹²⁶ Tigrinya, the working language in Eritrea, is primarily spoken by Eritreans.

¹²⁷ See also this page on the church on the website of the Dutch district of the Church of the Nazarene (in Portuguese): <http://www.nazarene.nl/rotterdamemmaus>.

speaking nations, including Portugal, Angola, and Brazil. The man/woman ratio was 30/70 and 40% was below 30 years of age. Socio-economic status was diverse. Church services were conducted in Portuguese (*not* in Cape Verdean Creole). The church sometimes organised activities for the youth, such as camping and playing football.

This church was part of the Dutch district of the worldwide Church of the Nazarene. As noted above, its worship space was shared with Dutch Nazarenes and African Pentecostals in Rotterdam. Once a year, the three congregations held a service together. Also, Dutch Nazarene pastors preached in the Cape Verdean service when the church did not have its own, Portuguese-speaking pastor. The relationship with the large, Portuguese-speaking, and mostly Cape Verdean Roman Catholic parish in Rotterdam¹²⁸ and other evangelical Portuguese-speaking churches in the Netherlands only consisted of (invited) individuals attending each other's services. There were no formal contacts at the European level.

For the study of this church, I conducted one personal interview¹²⁹ and two phone interviews with one of the church elders, visited two church services, and talked informally with church members.

Urdu Church Holland¹³⁰

This Protestant congregation was established in 1985. Its pastor came from Pakistan to the Netherlands in 1982, and attended a local church together with his wife. He discovered that many Christian Pakistani's did not go to church, because of the language boundary they faced in Dutch churches. Without formal theological education at the time, he started up a house group in Rotterdam that gathered to discuss the Bible, sing, and pray in Urdu. With the growth of this group, the pastor increasingly felt the need for theological training and went back to Pakistan for this purpose, where he obtained the Master of Divinity. He returned as an ordained deacon, whilst a former Dutch missionary to Pakistan, who was fluent in Urdu, complemented him in administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. The pastor is now fully qualified within the Church of Pakistan, and the only official Pakistani minister in the Netherlands. The initial house group grew into two local gatherings that met in church buildings, one in Rotterdam (established in 1985), and one in Amsterdam (established in 1987). The two gatherings shared the pastor.

For Sunday services, the Amsterdam and Rotterdam gatherings attracted 35-50 attendees each. A number of Pakistani Christians lived in distant places all over the Netherlands and only attended on festive occasions such as Christmas and Easter. Attendees had their background in a variety of Christian denominations. They were mostly Pakistani, but there were also some Hindustani Surinamese and Indians. The man/woman ratio was 40/60 and 50% was below 30 years of age. On average, members lived on lower class incomes and had a low level of education. Church services were held in Urdu, which could mostly be understood by the Surinamese and Indians, who spoke the related languages of Hindi and Punjabi. If necessary, on-stage translation in Dutch

¹²⁸ The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination in Cape Verde. For more information on this particular parish, see its website (in Dutch): <http://igresia.demosworld.nl>.

¹²⁹ During one part of the personal interview, the elder's wife was present, and during another part, a church member was present. Both of them contributed to the interview.

¹³⁰ See also the church website (in English): <http://www.ucholland.org>.

was done by one of the Pakistani members. The church was engaged in some social projects, such as assisting asylum seekers.

Uniquely, since 1999 the church had a special partnership with a Dutch Reformed church in Rotterdam, using their building without charge and engaging together with them in various activities. The church was also a member of SKIN. Further, next to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the pastor ministered to Pakistani Christians and (emergent) churches in other cities in the Netherlands and wider Europe. Every month he visited and ministered to a young Urdu-speaking church in Paris. Further, Urdu Church Holland annually organised a Christian conference attended by Pakistani Christians from all over Europe (e.g. the UK, France, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Italy, and the Netherlands).

For the study of this church, I conducted a personal interview with the pastor and his wife and a phone interview with the pastor, visited a church service in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam, had informal talks with church members, and studied written¹³¹ and online¹³² materials on the church.

Korean Reformed Church of Rotterdam¹³³

This Reformed congregation was established in 1994. It was the daughter church of the first Korean church in the Netherlands, which was established in Amstelveen in the early 1980s. The initiative for this daughter church had come from a growing group of members that attended church in Amstelveen, but lived in the relatively distant city of Rotterdam. In the beginning, the Rotterdam church was pastored by a Korean man who happened to be studying theology at Utrecht University. Since 2004, the church has been served by the man who was the pastor at the time of fieldwork. This Korean pastor was born in 1960 and, like his predecessor, was partially trained in the Netherlands. He had a M.Div. from a Korean seminary and did some coursework at a theological school in the Netherlands. In 2008, another Korean Reformed church was born: the Rotterdam pastor and some members established a congregation in Eindhoven. Although historically connected, the churches in Amstelveen, Rotterdam, and Eindhoven were formally independent.

The Rotterdam congregation (from now on referred to as ‘Korean Reformed church’) drew around 200 attendees on Sundays, half of which were below 30 years of age. Most members were Korean, but there were also a few Dutch people. Many members were employees for Korean companies in the Netherlands, or music/exchange students from Korea. The average income level was high and the average educational level was a BA degree. The man/woman ratio was 50/50. Church services were conducted in Korean. A head phone system with simultaneous translation into English was available for non-Korean speakers. In addition to the Sunday church services, there

¹³¹ This included several articles in Dutch newspapers: a 1996 article in *Trouw* on this congregation’s partnership with the Dutch Reformed church, entitled “Groep van 160 Pakistaanse christenen wordt gereformeerd”, a 1998 introductory article in *Trouw* entitled “We willen niet alleen Pakistani, de hele wereld willen wij”, and a few articles in various newspapers related to the 2008 European Pakistani Christian Conference in Rotterdam, for example the 2008 article in *Nederlands Dagblad* entitled “Christenen Pakistan bijeen in Rotterdam”.

¹³² This included an interview with the church pastor on the SKIN website (in Dutch): http://www.skinkerken.nl/fileadmin/nieuwsbrieven/Nieuwsbrief_juni_2006.pdf.

¹³³ See also the church website (in Korean): <http://www.krccr.org>.

were early morning prayer groups, youth meetings, Bible study groups, picnics, and an annual bazaar for charity purposes.

The church worshipped in the church building of a Dutch Orthodox Reformed church. It had contact with its mother church in Amstelveen and its daughter church in Eindhoven. These Korean Reformed churches visited each other's churches for special activities and exchanged pulpits. There were also relations with the pastor of the Korean Methodist church in The Hague. In terms of transnational connections, the church exchanged pulpits with a Korean church in Brussels, and there were regular meetings of Korean pastors and elders serving in the Netherlands and Belgium. Also, the church youth participated in the European conferences of a worldwide Korean-based ministry for Korean students living abroad.

For the study of this church, I conducted two interviews over Skype with the church pastor, visited a church service and a youth meeting, and talked informally with church members.

Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses

This congregation had its beginnings in the early 1990s, when the Branch Committee of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands observed that it would be fruitful to establish a Persian-speaking congregation, to reach out to Persian-speaking people in the country. For this purpose, various Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses were trained in the Persian language and a monthly Persian Bible study group was set up. The first congregation was established in Gouda in 1995, consisting of both Iranian and Persian-learning/speaking Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses. The Gouda congregation later split into two gatherings, in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. At the time of fieldwork, Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses met in those two cities as well as in Groningen and Eindhoven. The congregation in Amsterdam, established in 2005, was specifically studied for this thesis¹³⁴. It was led by two elders - an Iranian and a Dutchman. The Iranian man was born in 1960 and had vocational degrees. His wife, who was closely involved in the work, was born in 1962 and also had vocational degrees. The Dutch elder was born in 1966 and had a high school diploma.

The Amsterdam congregation attracted about 25 attendees for their 'meetings' (the Jehovah's Witnesses' reference to the weekly services), which were held in Persian. The group was half Iranian and half Persian-learning/speaking Dutch, and had one Afghan. The man/woman ratio was 40/60 and 80% was above 30 years of age. Most members had at least a high school diploma and lived on average income levels. Aside from its formal meetings, the congregation organised various social events such as summer barbecues, sports for the youth, and parties for eating and dancing.

There were contacts with the other Persian-speaking as well as other congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands, for example through the exchange of preachers. On a European level, Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses from various countries gathered for yearly conferences in Germany. Members also participated in international congresses of the denomination.

¹³⁴ In 2008, this Amsterdam congregation was discontinued, because the smallness of the group placed too high of a burden on the shoulders of its leaders. However, two Persian-speaking Bible study groups continued, and a small group carried on with monthly meetings in Persian. In this thesis, the data on this congregation refers to the time before its reconfiguration in 2008, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

For the study of this church, I conducted two personal interviews with the Iranian elder and his wife, visited a ‘meeting’, talked informally with both Iranian and Dutch members of the congregation, and corresponded with the Dutch elder over email.

Sagrada Familia¹³⁵

The origins of the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish *Sagrada Familia*¹³⁶ can be traced to the early 1960s, when a bishop in Spain sent a Dutch priest, who had been living in Spain for years, to minister to Spanish immigrant workers in Rotterdam. In the 1970s and 1980s, the ministry was extended to Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants. In 1987, the group started celebrating a monthly Service of the Word and in 1995 it officially became a quasi parish (*missio cum cura animarum*)¹³⁷. Over the years, the parish was led and supported by priests and other workers from a variety of Latin American countries, the Netherlands (often former missionaries), and the Philippines. It was administered by a Dutch priest, a retired former missionary to Paraguay, and a female Spanish coordinator, who was born in 1945, had a theology degree, and was in charge of the parish’s daily affairs. In this thesis, I will refer to *Sagrada Familia* as the ‘Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish’.

The parish drew 100-150 people for the weekly Sunday services. Attendees came from all over the country, with a range of attendance patterns, including weekly, biweekly, monthly, and other. Attendees had their background in over 20 ethnic groups, the largest being Colombian and Dominican, followed by sizable groups from Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and Spain, and lesser numbers from other Latin American countries, the Dutch Antilles, and the Netherlands. The man/woman ratio was 30/70 and 65% was above 30 years of age. The great majority lived on lower class incomes. Church services were held in Spanish. The parish was strongly active in a variety of diaconal projects that leaned heavily on volunteers, amongst which an awarded multi-sited prison ministry, women’s support group, counselling, and juridical advice. They also supported social projects in Latin American countries.

The parish had contacts with the various bodies in the local Roman Catholic Church, particularly those with whom they shared the same building. There were also contacts with other immigrant parishes in the region and Spanish-speaking social organisations. There were no contacts with non-Catholic Spanish-speaking churches, though there was at least one (an evangelical congregation) in near proximity to the church.

For the study of this parish, I conducted a personal interview with the parish coordinator and a volunteer, a phone interview with the coordinator, and a condensed personal interview with one of the Dutch ‘former missionary’ priests affiliated with the parish. I also visited a church service, talked informally with church members, and studied the church website.

¹³⁵ See also the church website (in Spanish and Dutch): <http://www.sagradafamilia.nl>.

¹³⁶ ‘*Sagrada Familia*’ is Spanish for ‘holy family’. It was chosen as the name for the church to emphasise the importance of being a family, in the context of being a Catholic parish.

¹³⁷ For stylistic purposes, in this thesis I will refer to this Spanish-speaking church community as a ‘parish’ and not as a ‘quasi-parish’.

International Christian Fellowship¹³⁸

This multi-ethnic Christian Reformed church in Rotterdam was established in the late 1990s, when a Christian Reformed pastor and a few others from different churches felt it was important to set up English-speaking church services for the English-speaking inhabitants of Rotterdam. These informal gatherings grew into the official establishment of the 'International Christian Fellowship' (from now on abbreviated as ICF) in 2000, which in 2002 became part of the Christian Reformed church in the Netherlands. The church was set up with a vision to become multi-ethnic. In 2008, the leading Dutch pastor Willem-Jan handed over the leadership of the church to a multi-ethnic leadership team consisting of a Ghanaian, a Dutch, and a Pakistani man. This team led the church throughout the remainder of the fieldwork period.

The church attracted 180-220 people for its main Sunday service. Members came from a variety of denominational backgrounds. The church was remarkably multi-ethnic, with over 40 ethnicities represented. About half of the church members were Dutch, though church leaders tried to prevent the church from becoming majority-Dutch by having critical 'intakes' with those Dutch people who wanted to become members. They were asked about their motivation for joining this specific church rather than one of the many other (Dutch) churches in Rotterdam, and were also requested to have a serious engagement with foreigners and embrace the multi-ethnic ethos of the church. The language for church services was English, with both simultaneous and consecutive translation into Dutch, and regular translation through a headphone system into other languages, including Chinese, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, French, and/or Russian. ICF was financially supported by sister Christian Reformed churches, due to its relatively small size and relatively poor membership.

Evangelism was an important aspect of the ICF congregation. This was expressed in multiple ways, including: the main Sunday service, which was intended to be accessible to unbelievers or new believers¹³⁹, out-reach teams that visited potential members, work with teens and students, courses in basic Christianity, spiritual support of missionaries sent 'abroad', amongst others. As an outgrowth of the work in ICF, in 2005 pastor Willem-Jan, one of the Dutch founders of the ICF, set up a foundation dedicated to multicultural church planting entitled 'International Church Plants', with which a variety of church projects throughout the country were now affiliated¹⁴⁰. Another outgrowth of ICF was 'House of Hope', a local foundation that provided a variety of social support such as a food bank, psychological help, and sports activities¹⁴¹. Starting out as ICF's 'normal' diaconal project, House of Hope grew into an almost fully independent foundation that was heavily subsidised by the local government.

There were five ethnic ministries within the ICF, which to a significant extent had been established for the purpose of evangelising their respective ethnic groups¹⁴². These ministries were English-speaking African, French-speaking African, Kurdish, Chinese, and Turkish. Before I started my research, there had also been Arabic- and Persian-speaking ministries. During Sunday services, the ethnic ministries worshipped together

¹³⁸ See the church website (in Dutch): <http://www.icfrotterdam.nl>.

¹³⁹ A more 'in-depth' service for members was held earlier in the day.

¹⁴⁰ See (in Dutch): <http://www.icpnetwork.nl>.

¹⁴¹ See (in Dutch): <http://www.houseofhope.nl>.

¹⁴² Though the ethnic ministries highlighted the conviction of the ICF leadership that ethnic mission work is effective, the ICF was also engaged in mission projects with multi-ethnic teams.

with all the other ethnicities in the church (though not all attendees of the ethnic ministries attended). Sometimes the ethnic ministries had special roles or led out in congregation-wide ICF gatherings, for example in the form of Chinese dancing during a Christmas service, an ‘African Sunday’, or a Kurdish service. During the week, the ethnic ministries had their own meetings.

For the study of this church on the *congregational* level, I interviewed the Ghanaian, Dutch, and Pakistani leaders personally and separately¹⁴³. I also conducted a phone interview with one of the affiliated Dutch pastors, visited numerous church services, talked with church members, and studied the church website and other materials related to the church¹⁴⁴. In this thesis, I will focus my analysis on the ethnic ministries. The knowledge of the ICF as a whole will serve to contextualise the mission dynamics of these ministries. In the following, I will briefly introduce the five ethnic ministries, which had some but not much organised contact amongst themselves.

ICF English-speaking African ministry

This ministry in a way predated the foundation of ICF, since it grew out of the international, African-majority English-speaking Bible study group that was ICF’s precursor. The leader of this ministry, who was also one of the three church leaders, was a Ghanaian by the name of Nathaniel. He had lived in the Netherlands since 1995 and was married to a Dutch woman. A former student at Wageningen University where he obtained a MA degree, Nathaniel lived in Wageningen and ministered among Ghanaian students there. He knew pastor Willem-Jan, one of the Dutch founders of the ICF, who he invited to preach at the student ministry. Willem-Jan in turn asked Nathaniel whether he was willing to help out in the English-speaking African ministry, which had been wrestling with a transient membership. Nathaniel agreed and has led the ministry since 2006. The English-speaking African ministry consisted of about 30 people from a variety of (mostly Sub-Saharan) African countries¹⁴⁵ and a range of denominational backgrounds (e.g. Catholic, Pentecostal, and Jehovah’s Witness). On average the members had a BA level of education and an average income level. There were more women than men and 70% of the members was above 30 years of age. The group met on weekly basis for Bible study, prayer, and socialising. It was attentive to the material needs of attendees, for example by helping with the payment of rent or medical bills if required.

For the study of this ministry, I did a personal interview and a phone interview with the ministry leader, studied updates on the ministry in the ICF newsletter, and talked informally with and observed English-speaking African members during ICF services.

ICF French-speaking African ministry

This ministry was led by a couple in their late twenties that had met in the Netherlands. The wife was from Congo and had a vocational degree obtained in the Netherlands and did secretarial work. The husband was from Angola, did not obtain a degree in higher

¹⁴³ The Ghanaian leader was also the head of the ICF English-speaking African ministry. I interviewed him in regard to both of these functions.

¹⁴⁴ This included the ICF newsletters, brochures, and a documentary/broadcast church service of the ICF (see, in Dutch, with parts in English: <http://www.zvk.nl/kerkdienst.aspx?IntEntityId=828>)

¹⁴⁵ These included Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sudan.

education and had a low-level job in the Netherlands. Before they were linked to ICF, they were part of a prayer group that met in private homes. They started looking for a place where they could have their meetings to pray, eat, and socialise without disturbing the neighbours. Through contacts with House of Hope (see above), they came to know pastor Willem-Jan, who welcomed a French-speaking ministry within the ICF. The couple started the ministry in 2005. They had a small group of about 10 people, including French-speaking Africans (e.g. Congolese, Togolese, and Cameroonians) and Surinamese. The majority was female and employed in low-level jobs. Most attendees attended other churches. They met after the ICF Sunday service to worship in French and share meals. They also had prayer meetings on Wednesday nights and monthly agape meals. The ministry leaders sought to help the attendees in practical ways by organising social and informative activities. They also held conferences in cooperation with both Congolese and ICF pastors.

For the study of this ministry, I did a personal interview with the couple that led the ministry and a phone interview with the female leader. I also participated in a women's meeting organised by the ministry, studied updates on the ministry in the ICF newsletter, and observed French-speaking African members during ICF services.

*ICF Kurdish ministry*¹⁴⁶

This ministry traces its roots to a divine vision that its leader experienced in 2002 (see chapter 4). On the basis of this vision, he felt called to start sharing the gospel with Kurds. The leader, born in 1974, had finished high school and had done a year of technical studies in Iraq, his country of origin. This ICF Kurdish ministry was the only outreach project for Kurds in the Netherlands and was linked with both the ICF and Stichting Gave, an organisation for 'Church and Refugees' in the Netherlands¹⁴⁷. The ministry was led together with a team of Kurds living all over the Netherlands, and a few Dutch people (amongst which his own wife and an anthropologist with an interest in Kurds). In 2006, they set up the foundation 'Home for Kurds'. In 2007, the ministry obtained their own five-storey building in Rotterdam, which they called 'Dilnawai', meaning 'comfort'. Activities were organised such as practical help, prayer meetings, discipleship trainings, and church services. There were also weekend retreats, and Bible study groups in various parts of the country. Kurds that were part of this ministry were mostly male, below 30 years of age, and on average had a high school diploma.

For the study of this ministry, I personally interviewed the ministry leader, and mailed, called, and personally talked with the involved Dutch anthropologist. I visited a 'Kurdish night' and a 'Kurdish feast' (see chapter 6), talked informally with Kurds associated with the ministry, and studied updates on the ministry in the ICF newsletter.

ICF Chinese ministry

This ministry started early in the emergence of the ICF. It was led by a Chinese man who left during the time of fieldwork to do missionary work in China. He was followed up by a young Chinese man, born in 1983, who converted to Christianity in the Netherlands in 2004 (see chapter 8). This young man had a MA degree. He was assisted by an elderly Dutch lady, a former missionary to China. The Chinese ministry had weekly Bible studies

¹⁴⁶ See also the website of the foundation (in Dutch, Kurdish, and English): <http://www.homeforkurds.nl>.

¹⁴⁷ See (in various languages, including English) <http://www.gave.nl>.

in Mandarin with about 15-20 people, a mixture of students and workers. The man/woman ratio was 40/60. The majority of attendees was above 30 years of age, lived on middle class income levels and had a high school diploma.

For the study of this ministry, I did a personal interview and a phone interview with the young Chinese leader and communicated with him via Facebook, studied updates on the ministry in the ICF newsletter, and talked with and observed Chinese members during ICF services.

ICF Turkish ministry

This ministry began in 2005 with conversations between three men: a Turk who was strongly experienced in the ministry among Turks, a younger Turkish man who had worked among Turks in Amsterdam for a year, and the Dutch pastor Willem-Jan. It was planned that the younger Turkish man, who was born in 1975 and had a degree in financial administration and finished one year of Bible school, would become the eventual leader of the ministry. However, before it had really taken off, it was discontinued during the time of my fieldwork, due to church internal decisions.

For the study of this ministry, I did a personal interview with the young Turkish man, studied updates on the ministry in the ICF newsletter, and observed Turkish members/visitors during ICF services.

2.3 Concluding remarks

The survey of this chapter reveals how great the divergences are between the 15 immigrant churches that were studied. The backdrop to their individual emergence varied from breaking away from mother churches, transnational church planting, initiatives from the national denominational headquarters, divine calling, involvement of former Dutch missionaries, outgrown Bible study groups, and intervening bishops. Their member profiles varied from international business men and university students to refugees and low-income immigrants. Churches were mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic, small and large, just starting up or established for decades.

At the same time, there were striking similarities between the churches. Nearly all of them engaged in recreational and social activities such as sports and sharing meals, and many provided or contributed to practical support to people in need, both locally and on transnational levels. Also, almost all of the churches were located in extensive transnational networks, especially on the level of exchange with fellow ethnic churches in Europe and churches and organisations in the country of origin. Finally, in most churches, women were in the majority, there was a great percentage of young people, leaders were highly educated, and members lived on low to middle class incomes and education levels.

Starting with the next chapter, we will now move into a discussion of the mission dynamics of these churches.

3 The mission of a double minority: discourses in the Ghanaian SDA church

As outlined in chapter 1, I will look at three levels of mission: discourses, practices, and responses. In this chapter and the next, the analysis will focus on discourses. In 1.3.1, I observed that mission discourses are essentially made up of symbolic boundaries. They delineate in public and private, formal and informal, spoken and written language who is and who is not in need of ‘receiving’ mission, as well as who is and who is not to be ‘sent’ on a mission to specific groups. On the level of evangelistic discourse, both missionaries and recipients are defined by a paradoxical combination of excluding (defining who is ‘out’) and including (defining who ‘*could* or *should* be in’). In this chapter, I will explore these paradoxes in the case of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam¹⁴⁸, which, as we saw in 2.1, had a double minority status as a denominational minority in its local ethnic community and an ethnic minority in its national denominational community. The central question here is: *How does the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in its evangelistic discourses?*¹⁴⁹.

3.1 Not global but local: reaching the Ghanaians of Holland

In 1.4.1, I discussed some of the negotiations that take place between ethnic and religious identity in immigrant religion. On the one hand, immigrant religions nourish the reproduction of ethnicity. On the other hand, religious identity may be prioritised over ethnic identity due to societal, organisational, generational, and ideological factors. Ghanaian/African and especially Ghanaian/African Pentecostal (immigrant) churches are an excellent example of the latter. These churches oftentimes stress their international nature through features such as their names (adding the epithet ‘international’, e.g. ‘Glorious Chapel International’, ‘International End-Time Revival Ministries’), flags displayed, and a global mission agenda (e.g. Van Dijk 1997, 2001; Adogame 2000b). They define their mission in ‘spatial’ rather than ‘cultural’ terms (Währisch-Oblau 2009: 242, 243).

The Ghanaian SDA church was an interesting exception to this general profile of African/Ghanaian churches. Rather than presenting itself as an international church focused on reaching the whole world, it self-consciously displayed an explicitly Ghanaian

¹⁴⁸ This analysis does not take account of more esoteric including and excluding issues like ‘who will eventually make it to heaven’. Most church leaders took the stance that, in the end, only God knows who will go to heaven. This chapter focuses specifically on the construction of mission targets in the here and now, i.e. on constructing who is in need of mission and who is a missionary.

¹⁴⁹ Because of the centrality of discourses in this chapter, I will frequently use quotations. These quotations are taken from formal interviews unless stated otherwise. Used underscores signify a particularly strongly pronounced word or phrase. The combined use of the characters (...) indicates an omission of words or phrases. When this symbol is followed by a new paragraph of quoted text, it refers to the omission of a greater body of text. Within the quotes, words between the characters [] are meant to clarify a passage by giving additional background information, or an indication of the way of speaking. The initials ‘DK’ will refer to words spoken by myself. Citations of interviews that were conducted in Dutch have been translated into English. They can be recognised by the added comment: ‘original in Dutch’. For readability, I have sometimes corrected the grammatical errors of the spoken language, whether originally English or Dutch.

character. Not English, but Twi was the main language in church. No rows of international flags, but *Kente* fabric decorated the pulpit. The congregation referred to itself as ‘Amsterdam Ghana SDA church’ (on the church website) or ‘Amsterdam Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist church of the Netherlands’ Union’ (in church bulletins). The three localities implied in these names, Amsterdam, Ghana, and the Netherlands, were the central ingredients of the congregation’s mission agenda. The Amsterdam Ghana SDA church had the aim of reaching Ghanaians, in particular those living in the Netherlands, beginning from the Amsterdam region. Such a focus was expressed in statements such as:

The whole of Amsterdam is waiting for a spiritual adventure. There are 35.000 Ghanaians! (pastor Ansah, from the pulpit)

According to statistics, there are almost 30.000 Ghanaians here in Holland, legally so to speak. And the vision is that we could go on and then raise up those people. Hoping that by the time the pastor leaves here¹⁵⁰, we could even have two churches in Amsterdam. And one in Rotterdam, and another in The Hague. (church secretary Owusu)

The aim was not the world - the aim was Ghanaians in Amsterdam and Holland. Mission was to fish in the pool of the thousands of Ghanaians in the Netherlands and plant more SDA churches filled with them.

The church did not deny entrance to non-Ghanaians, and if one were to enquire who could visit the services, leaders would be quick to note that everybody was welcome. As was said in the last chapter, the church even had a few permanent non-Ghanaian attendees, who were warmly welcomed, with services being translated into their languages to enable them to feel accepted. Although the church was notionally open to everyone, its public identity and mission aspirations were unmistakably directed to Ghanaians.

How can we understand this uniquely narrow focus on an ethnic group within the boundaries of a nation-state compared with the cosmopolitan discourse found in most other Ghanaian/African immigrant churches, especially the Pentecostal/charismatic ones? The Ghanaian Adventists did not feel their agenda needed much explanation. A focus on Ghanaians just seemed obvious to them. It is my contention that this was the result of a paradoxical simultaneity of sameness and difference. On the one hand, Adventist and non-Adventist Ghanaian immigrants shared a variety of social identities: they spoke the same language(s), valued similar cultural practices, had overlapping networks, and faced similar social, economic, legal, and physical challenges. The Ghanaian Adventists thus had the social, linguistic and cultural resources to reach out to Ghanaian non-Adventists. On the other hand, Ghanaian Adventists perceived themselves as theologically distinct from Ghanaian non-Adventists, which I will elaborate below. The mission focus on Ghanaians was thus produced in the context of a complex relationship with the local Ghanaian community. The Adventists saw themselves as part of this community on the level of ethnicity, yet separate from it due to the uniqueness of their denominational identity. Both factors were conducive to mission: the theological distance

¹⁵⁰ It was known from the beginning of his stay that pastor Ansah would be in the Netherlands only temporarily. In fact, in 2010 he started planning to permanently return to Ghana at the end of 2011.

defined Ghanaian non-Adventists as being in need of mission, and the ethnic closeness delineated Adventist Ghanaians as appropriate and capable missionaries to them.

The Ghanaian-oriented mission discourse also needs to be understood from within the theological and organisational framework of the worldwide SDA church and its Dutch chapter in particular. In line with Adventism worldwide, the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC) worked with a ‘unity in diversity’ ecclesiology and missiology¹⁵¹. On the one hand, this implied the importance of building bridges across the different ethnic groups in the SDA church in the country, a theme which featured widely in national SDA events and in the NUC 2008-2012 policy plan¹⁵², and was expressed in the sermons of Dutch pastors who preached in the Ghanaian church. On the other hand, the ‘unity in diversity’ framework implied the facilitation of ethnic congregations and accompanying ethnic mission. In the previous chapter, we saw how the Ghanaian SDA church emerged and developed with the sole purpose of being principally a church run by Ghanaians for Ghanaians, in the context of being part of a global denomination on Dutch soil whose national leaders were Dutch. We also saw how the NUC had put a great deal of effort into getting a Ghanaian pastor for this church, with the purpose being that he would revitalise the Ghanaian SDA church and wider community. The NUC had also been strongly involved in the ongoing search to get the Ghanaians their own church building. The cultural diversity in the Dutch SDA church, partly organised in ethnic congregations, provided a language of an ethnic division of mission labour: Ghanaians reach Ghanaians, Antilleans reach Antilleans, the Dutch reach the Dutch, and so on¹⁵³. The then president of the Netherlands Union Conference for example said during the Euro-Ghanaian SDA camp meeting held in the Netherlands in 2007:

You here need to reach the other Africans here, there are so many. We Dutchmen find it so difficult to reach the Africans. We need you to fulfil the mission of the church.

For the Dutch church leadership, Ghanaian Adventists were seen as the most suitable missionaries for reaching other Africans¹⁵⁴. Even at the highest levels of the denomination, the church tacitly encouraged the Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam to be an ethnic congregation with an ethnic mission. One of the so-called Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, a quarterly offering for specific mission projects engaged in by all

¹⁵¹ In the terms of Garces-Foley (2007: 95-101), this implies the ‘colour-conscious’ strategy of inclusion in multi-ethnic churches, in which ethnicity is acknowledged (and sometimes ‘enforced’, p. 85). The contrasting strategy is ‘colour-blind’, in which ethnicity is ignored/transcended.

¹⁵² See (in Dutch): ‘Beleidsplan 2008-2012’ at <http://www.adventist.nl/?q=node/78>. Also see the document ‘Eenheid van de Adventkerk in Nederland’ at the same link.

¹⁵³ Strikingly, the situation is inversed in the UK with its African Caribbean/immigrant-majority SDA church. Here a discussion has emerged as to whether ethnic churches should de-emphasise ethnicity and diversify their outlook, for example by changing their language of worship to English and include the word ‘international’ rather than ethnic signifiers in their name. Some of the local ethnic SDA churches in fact added the epithet ‘international’ to their name even before this discussion emerged to show their openness to other ethnic groups (see *Messenger. Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland* 114 (26): 1, 14, 16; 115 (3): 5, 115 (8): 6-7, 115 (10): 5).

¹⁵⁴ This is not to say that Dutch SDA pastors believed Ghanaians could or should never reach other groups. For example, the Dutch pastor Postma, former pastor of the Ghanaian church and president of the Netherlands Union Conference at the time of fieldwork, in response to my inquiries expressed that he genuinely believed that the Ghanaians could also share the gospel with the Dutch, by means of some of their alleged qualities such as music, good food, and the ability to share without being ‘pushy’.

SDA churches in the world, was in part intended for the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam to be able to buy or build their own church building.

There was a second aspect to the ethnicising impact of being part of a denomination. In contrast to the often more loosely embedded Pentecostal immigrant churches, the roots of the Ghanaian SDA church in a centrally organised, worldwide denomination ensured their access to and participation in linkages to the wider world. These linkages were not hampered by the mission focus on a local group. The solid, global organisational structure of the worldwide SDA church allowed the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam to have a local, ethnic identity and mission, without losing the role of mediator of a global identity and connections¹⁵⁵. In fact, the congregation's ethnic focus made it a meaningful participant in a worldwide church, because it was reaching out to population groups that others in the church had difficulty in reaching. In this way, the congregation became 'global' by being 'ethnic'. Thus, the positioning in the SDA denomination contributed to the ethnic mission focus of the Ghanaian SDA congregation in Amsterdam. In comparison to other pan-church networks that other local Ghanaian churches were situated in, the SDA denomination's global and established structure, plus the fact that its immigrant churches were directly connected to native churches, contributed to the ethnically confined mission agenda of the Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam¹⁵⁶.

3.1.1 Familiar strangers: Pentecostals and other 'Sunday Christians'

As we saw, there was a complex dualism that characterised the relationship of the Ghanaian Adventists towards the wider Ghanaian community. This manifested itself in terms of shared ethnicity and theological difference. However, there was also ambivalence in terms of theological difference. Here we come to the question: how important was the SDA identity for the church and for its mission, or, in other words, how was the boundary with non-Adventists negotiated?

On the one hand, the church defined its mission goals in generic Christian terms, with emphases on sharing God's love, teaching obedience to the Word, and providing hope and a 'quality life' - emphases not unlike those of other Ghanaian churches in Amsterdam Southeast:

The most important is to tell people about the love of God. That no matter what, God still loves them. So they have to come too. We preach about the love of God. We Adventists, we don't preach to judge people, but we just invite people to come to the Lord. Because God accepts them no matter how they are. Whether

¹⁵⁵ Whilst the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam thus mediated both ethnic and global identities, for Ghanaian Methodists in London, the Methodist church additionally mediated national, i.e. British identity because of Ghanaians' "recognition of the Methodist church as an essentially British institution" (Fumanti 2010: 16). This dimension was not found in this way among the Amsterdam Adventists, since Adventism was in no way associated with Dutchness.

¹⁵⁶ In her study of African Catholics in the Netherlands, Van der Meer (2010) shows that the level of ethnic identification was related to the ethnic composition of parishes. African Catholics that attended an African parish stressed their African identity more freely in the context of the parish than African Catholics that attended a Dutch and an international parish. The effect of denominational embedding on the identity of a church or parish may thus depend on the ethnic composition of that church or parish.

they are drug addicts, thieves, no matter how they... when they come to God it is only God that can change them. So we just invite them to come, no matter how they are. (personal ministry director Edwin)

We want to give hope to the hopeless, to encourage the discouraged, to strengthen the weak ones, to help put a smile on the faces of those who are weeping and mourning. You know there is so much pain in this world, Danielle, there is so much pain. (...) I like it when people smile. Smile, and laughter and joy. You know, being happy. Not because you are so rich. But you are content. For what the Lord has given you. So, I believe in sharing this with others. (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

Such mission goals were directed to Ghanaians in an undifferentiated sense: to ‘unserious’ Christians (those who are Christians in name but not practicing their religion¹⁵⁷), non-Adventist Christians, and non-Christians.

Next to generic Christian mission goals, leaders and members expressed an awareness of distinctive SDA theological doctrines and stressed the importance of sharing them with Ghanaian non-Adventist Christians. The extent and significance of being theologically distinctive was however perceived differently by different people. Notwithstanding exceptions, leaders were generally more conscious of theological differences than the laity, with the pastor (the only one with a completed theological education in SDA institutions) being the lead exponent of this view. The main theological differentiation between Ghanaian Adventists and other Ghanaians, recognised by all for its obvious effects on daily life (which for some included great sacrifices such as losing their job), was the keeping of the Sabbath. Being exceptional as Sabbath-keepers, the Adventists commonly lumped together other Ghanaian churches as ‘Sunday churches’ and its attendees as ‘Sunday Christians’. To many, the Sabbath was the central marker of the theological boundary between Adventists and non-Adventists, and a core incentive for mission:

DK: *Are the Ghanaian Christians still unreached?*

Elder Felix: *Yes, I can still say they are unreached. Because I believe that the Sabbath is the basic foundation of Christianity.*

To some, the Sabbath was the only real difference between Adventist and non-Adventist churches. This can be attributed to the fact that some of the other differentiating factors, pointed out by other church members and leaders, were in practice often differentiating to a degree rather than in absolute terms¹⁵⁸, as we will see below. This sustained a sense of continuity between Adventist and non-Adventist churches. Pentecostals and other Sunday Christians were thus theologically different and similar at the same time. They were ‘familiar strangers’.

Some mentioned a variety of distinctive characteristics. A number of these were markers of Adventist identity that would be recognised in the wider Adventist world, such as an emphasis on healthy living and modesty of dress. Others were emphasised or gained additional meaning in the context of being a minority in a Pentecostal/charismatic-majority Ghanaian community. In this way, the Ghanaian Adventists added the

¹⁵⁷ Some church leaders observed that Ghanaians in Europe became less interested in religion, because of the influence of Western secular culture and the greater affluence they gained.

¹⁵⁸ As well as to a few other factors (see 7.1.5).

Pentecostal/charismatic branches as ‘ultimate other’ to the Roman Catholic Church that has traditionally been the denomination against which Adventists, who have sought a completion of the reformation, have defined themselves. In fact, it was only the church pastor who now and then referred to the Roman Catholic Church as a Satanic institution, whilst most members prioritised Pentecostals as the embodiment of a mistaken spirituality¹⁵⁹. Whereas other, mainline Ghanaian immigrant churches have felt that the differences between themselves and Pentecostal immigrant churches were eroding because of their own moves to charismatic worship (with some long-standing immigrants having nostalgic memories of mainline worship at home, Asamoah-Gyadu 2008: 204), I never heard such complaints among the Ghanaian Adventists nor observed signs of impending charismatic renewal on the congregational level – neither in Amsterdam nor in Ghana. Pneumatic phenomena like speaking in tongues, prophecy, visions, publicly staged miracles and deliverance, hand-lifting, spontaneous applause and “lay spirit-filled pastors” (ibid. p. 202) were kept out of the door, thus reinforcing the idea of the Pentecostal/charismatic believer as a ‘stranger’¹⁶⁰. The ability to strongly control this boundary is in large part due to the fact that the SDA church requires pastors to be educated in official SDA theological institutions, where an emphasis on charismatic phenomena is discouraged.

To illustrate the importance of the Pentecostal audience to the Ghanaian Adventists, it is worth quoting the church pastor at length. His words are in response to my question asking how he viewed the idea, held by some Christians, that evangelising fellow Christians is a form of ‘sheep stealing’. In his argument, he mixes a classical Adventist narrative about the identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the prophetic Babylon, with locating Pentecostalism in the same realm ruled by the Devil:

When Jesus came he found many different groups, all Jews. (...) Their practices weren't godly. (...) When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, 3.000 people were baptised, and they were Jews. They were not Gentiles, many were Jews. Because where they were, wasn't the right place. So if somebody is Catholic, he's not in the right place. If it is true that Sunday worship has something to do with paganism, and the Bible calls it the mark of the beast, no Sunday keeper has the truth. So they have to come to know the truth. If it is true that Pentecostalism has its roots from spiritualism and Satanism, then no Pentecostal is safe. They have to know the truth. So they are outside the fold. And they have to come inside the fold. (...) The Devil has become a Christian and is deceiving people. If we believe that he has established churches, and uses it as a basis of deception, then we need to tell them, to come. If we believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of God¹⁶¹, then we have to tell people to come and join. (...) When it comes to doctrine, and the Bible is saying Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, then

¹⁵⁹ In her study of African Catholics in the Netherlands, Van der Meer (2010) found that African Pentecostals were an important ‘other’ for her respondents as well. However, the African Catholic views on Pentecostals were generally less critical and in some cases even particularly positive.

¹⁶⁰ There were however some ‘charismatic-like’ features in the church, which were uncommon in Dutch SDA churches, but still more ‘hushed’ than in charismatic churches. For example, there were *private* healing and deliverance sessions and members in *private* conversation referred to God’s guidance through dreams.

¹⁶¹ The SDA church understands itself as the chosen remnant of the End-time, on the basis of its interpretation of the prophecies in the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation (see LaRondelle 2000). It believes that salvation is for all those who believe in Jesus Christ, but considers itself to have a special message to the world in the End-time.

the Catholic Church does not teach salvation. Because (...) they have Mary, and Mary doesn't save. If we believe that the Devil told a lie, when he said that you shall not surely die, and it has become the focus of spiritualism, out of which came Pentecostalism, then I have to tell my brothers and sisters there to come out. That's what the Bible says in Revelation 14, come out of Babylon. Babylon is confused Christian churches. (...) Confused Christian churches are worshipping spirits, demons, and dead bodies like Mary. That's not Christianity. It's similar to practices of zealots, Pharisees, and so on. They practice another being, unknown to them. (...) So if I bring someone from another church to the SDA church, I haven't stolen a sheep, I've saved a life. He wasn't a Christian in the first place. He was worshipping the Devil, in the context of Christianity. (pastor Ansah)

The boundaries portrayed by Ansah here are quite absolutist in tone, but we will see below that differences were rather ambivalent.

The differences between Adventists and non-Adventists were all set within the wider framework of expecting, preparing for and proclaiming the imminent return of Jesus Christ. This operated on three dimensions that I will discuss consecutively: the spiritual (in this context used in terms of the supernatural world), doctrinal, and moral. In regard to the spiritual dimension, Pastor Ansah and others frequently noted that becoming an Adventist was totally different from becoming part of any other denomination. Ansah noted that Adventist converts were called and chosen by God rather than doing the choosing themselves, and that they could expect demonic attack:

Difficult days are coming. When you become a member of this church, the Devil will attack you. You can make any decision, but once you attach yourself to the remnant, the Devil doesn't like it. He will attack. (pastor Ansah, in a sermon)

Pentecostal/charismatic churches were especially 'othered' in a spiritual sense. As we saw, Pastor Ansah went as far as to say that Pentecostal churches were demonic, advocating Christianised forms of paganism and spiritualism. Glossolalia was an important topic in this regard. Its total absence in the SDA church, whilst a crucial element in Pentecostal/charismatic churches, caused many in the Ghanaian Pentecostal community to think that Adventists did not believe in the Holy Spirit or did not like to pray. Leaders felt they needed to educate members on this issue and equip them to talk to outsiders about it. In a Sabbath afternoon lecture devoted to the topic, pastor Ansah pointed out that the Bible talked about tongues in terms of unknown languages used for mission purposes. He stressed that it was not true that 'having the Holy Spirit' implied that one speaks in tongues, and that glossolalia had its roots in spiritualism. One of the church members showed me that on the first, blank pages of his Bible, he had written down notes from an evangelistic training in church, which included a list of Bible verses refuting the significance of glossolalia. Another topic that featured with some regularity as an object of criticism in sermons was the idea of the 'secret rapture'. This was explained as the idea that, at an unknown moment in the future, some Christians would be secretly taken to heaven, whilst others would stay on earth and have a second chance to go to heaven. Further, Pentecostals were depicted as overly oriented on miracles. When giving a lecture on the biblical book of Daniel in a special revival week, pastor Ansah noted: 'People tell me: all those people are doing miracles, don't you think that the Holy Spirit is using them?' - at which I observed his wife and another church sister laughing heartily. Miracles of Pentecostal preachers were clearly not considered to be Holy Spirit inspired.

The emphasis on miracles in Pentecostal churches, in addition to its emphasis on prosperity, was contrasted with the Adventist focus on ‘real’ salvation:

When you go to the Pentecostal churches, what they are doing is different. They just do miracles, miracles. They don't preach about salvation. They preach about miracles, and... how do you call it... prosperity. How to prosper. If you are a Christian, you have to be rich. That kind of message people have been listening to all along. But our pastor is giving the message of salvation. How you can be saved. (elder Kwasi)

However, I would say that the perceived difference in terms of the prosperity gospel is one of the issues that reveals a degree of differentiation rather than absolute distinction between the Ghanaian Adventist and Pentecostal churches. Although the emphasis in the lived theology of the Ghanaian SDA church was not so much on ‘getting rich’ but more on the moral preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ, elements of the prosperity gospel were observable. In contrast to Dutch SDA churches, for example, there was a greater stress on the connection between obedience and rewards, a greater habit of asking God to help in concrete economic, legal, and medical realms, and a greater claim to God's positive answer to prayers (once illustrated by pastor Ansah's assertion from the pulpit to a young church member who permanently depended on her wheelchair: ‘Juliet, you will walk!’).

Finally, a less noted but interesting ‘spiritual’ difference between Adventists and non-Adventists was the understanding of the ontological status of the dead. A rather unique doctrine of Adventists is the belief in the mortality of the total human being, rather than the immortality of the soul¹⁶². The director of the personal ministry department phrased it in the following way:

Some of the other denominations, most of them believe that when somebody dies, he goes to live elsewhere. But we Seventh-day Adventists, we don't believe that. We believe that when you die, you stay... you're dead forever until Christ comes. You will never be seen anywhere, in any part of the world. But most people believe that when I die, my spirit is still going around in other parts of the world. (...) Though there is a ghost, but that ghost isn't that person who has died, but the fallen angel¹⁶³, who has some power, they can transform themselves into anything. So sometimes, these fallen angels transform themselves as the dead people. To let the people know that, if somebody dies, he is not really dead. Because in the Garden of Eden, the Satan told Eve that when they eat from the forbidden tree, they will not surely die. They like to eat. So every time the Devil is trying to prove what he says. So when somebody dies, he commands those fallen angels to transform themselves to that person who is dead. So that when you meet that person you may know you have seen a ghost. But they are not the dead person, they are fallen angels who have transformed themselves. (personal ministry director Edwin)

¹⁶² Seventh-day Adventists disregard the terminology used to separate body and soul. The idea of the soul as an entity in itself is considered unbiblical. The distinction between soul and body as relating differently to the state of human existence is discarded as well. Adventists hold a holistic anthropology, in which the whole human being, including physical, psychic, and intellectual aspects, finds an end at death. Because death is considered fatal, i.e. existence comes to a total end with death, it is considered impossible to come into contact with any non-physical aspect of human beings after death. It is only at the second coming of Jesus that human beings, in their unified state, will be resurrected (see Andreasen 2000).

¹⁶³ On the basis of scriptural interpretations, Seventh-day Adventists believe that after Satan (Lucifer) rebelled in heaven against God, he was cast down on the earth with the angels that had followed him - ‘fallen angels’, who comprised a third of the total (see Holbrook 2000).

As this citation shows, next to spiritual differences, *doctrinal* differences were part of negotiating the boundary with non-Adventists. There was a sense of pride among church leaders and members that they had a high standing knowledge of the Bible. Other churches would, in the words of one of the leaders, ‘misinterpret Bible verses’. Also, other churches would have little knowledge of the prophetic biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, which have been central in the development of SDA identity. Over the course of years, pastor Ansah held two evangelistic campaigns dealing with each book respectively, in addition to more brief teachings on a regular basis.

The book of Revelation contains many secrets. Many End-time issues are found in that book. They are important to know! Other pastors don't teach Revelation, because they think it scares people or they don't know about it. (radio worker Victor)

Finally, *moral* issues were identified as differentiating markers between Adventists and non-Adventists. Non-Adventist Christians were considered to be more ‘loose’ in terms of obeying divine laws. Church leaders especially emphasised moral standards in regard to sexual purity (which, in their view, for Adventists implied the proscription of pre-marital and extra-marital sex, masturbation, and immodest dress) and healthy living (which, in their view, for Adventists implied the proscription of the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, caffeine, and unclean meat).

I'm not saying that the SDA church is a perfect church, with no immoral person. But in the other churches, it's kind of, the immorality rate is very high. Exchange of wives, sleeping with any kind of girl, and so forth. (...) All the Pentecostals and all the other churches, everything goes. You can drink, you can smoke, you can do everything you want to do, just go to church. Ours is more of a disciplined life, so to speak. (pastor Ansah)

The difference is also that Seventh-day Adventist members, we think about our health, what we eat. If you go to the other churches, somebody will tell you that we can eat anything, as long as we pray for it. But that's not in the Bible, no. (elder Kwasi)

Here again the distinction with Pentecostals is expressed rather absolutely, whilst for many Pentecostals and African Christians in general the consumption of tobacco/alcohol/drugs and promiscuity are typically considered un-Christian.

Also, Pentecostal pastors were depicted as money-driven business men in contrast to the centrally organised SDA financial system, where pastors are paid through the national church body rather than the local congregation:

What I see happening is that those Pentecostal churches are more like a business. Your members are clients, the offerings and tithes are for you. Unlike the SDA church. In the SDA church, pastors are paid by the worldwide church instead of individuals. So the Pentecostals won't allow you to take their members, because then their business will collapse. (pastor Ansah)

Furthermore, Pentecostal churches were seen as hierarchical in contrast to the allegedly egalitarian nature of the SDA church:

Sometimes, especially those who are coming from the Pentecostal and other charismatic churches, they uplift some individual personalities in their churches. And they come to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and they see it's like we are all the same. When you come we don't say: this is our elder or our pastor, if you don't know them, you might not know. This is not in the other churches. And so when they come they realise that yes, this is the place. Because they don't see anybody bossing anyone. You don't see any imposition reign. (church secretary Owusu)

In practice, however, the stated hierarchal/egalitarian dichotomy was not this rigid. In the Ghanaian SDA church, there was a clear hierarchy in terms of church ranks (see also 5.2.2). Elders and other leaders were attributed a high moral status. The pastor in particular had an elevated position, expressed in practices such as introducing him by noting his CV, and seating him in a separate table with other high placed individuals for eating. Again, differences with Pentecostals were expressed more absolutely in discourse than in practice.

A final differentiation that I wish to highlight was that of dancing and music. From my Dutch SDA perspective, the Ghanaian worship was lively and energetic, but compared to many of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, their worship was quiet and introverted. The Ghanaian SDA church did not have drums and most songs were sung a cappella or accompanied by a keyboard only. During worship services there was no elaborate dancing or moving around as what was evident in Pentecostal environments. The visibility of this variation in worship style made it into a conscious marker of difference:

Nowadays in Ghana, gospel music, if you go to the Pentecostals, they like praying in a discotheque, instruments are very hard, noisy so that they can dance. (...) Adventist is more moderate. Because we listen to the words, we don't have to dance [laughs]. (elder Kwasi)

There did however appear to be a distinction between the 'moderate' worship style used during church services, and the high-spirited, amusing type of dancing during funerals, weddings, and other celebrative occasions at the SDA church. Dancing was clearly a negotiated subject for the Ghanaian Adventists¹⁶⁴. This is another instance where Pentecostal church practices were different to a degree rather than absolutely.

The spiritual, doctrinal, and moral boundary markers that were used to delineate Adventists from Pentecostals may be understood not only from a theological point of view, but also from a power perspective. The Ghanaian Adventists faced the abundant and well-organised presence of Pentecostals, whilst they had become a rather insignificant minority in Amsterdam Southeast, especially as compared to the Ashanti region in Ghana. The Ghanaian Adventists had lost powerful mission resources they had had in Ghana such as SDA schools and hospitals (see chapter 5). Pentecostals were perceived as

¹⁶⁴ For example, in a Sabbath afternoon workshop about music, members discussed the appropriateness of specific intentions and meanings of dance. Pastor Ansah proposed that 'if you really want to dance, go to the Pentecostal churches. Here we do not dance, but rejoice. Like when our sister Comfort (who had been childless for many years) had her baby dedication, we were dancing, but this was a way to rejoice'. The guest speaker, a Ghanaian SDA pastor from Germany, suggested that there is a difference between dancing that seeks other people's esteem, versus dancing that seeks God's honour. Thus, boundaries were drawn between appropriate and inappropriate forms of dancing.

competitors. There was little formal contact with the local Pentecostal churches, but a deep sense prevailed among church leaders that these had become the home of many former Adventists (see the next section) and that the Pentecostal pastors were intentionally boycotting Adventist evangelistic activities¹⁶⁵. Ghanaian Adventist church leaders believed that Pentecostal leaders knew that the Adventist church ‘had the truth’ and a gift for beautiful music. They also supposed that the Pentecostals were intimidated by pastor Ansah, who they knew to be active and popular (largely due to his nation-wide TV ministry in Ghana). In addition, the Adventists regarded the Pentecostal pastors as business manager types, who viewed their members as ‘customers’ that gave them money through tithes and offerings. Since Pentecostal pastors were supposedly money-driven, they did not want their members to understand the Bible well and, as a result, perhaps lose them to the Adventist church. To maintain their businesses, they would have to preach doctrines they knew to be false, and keep their members from attending SDA programmes. In order to accomplish the latter, they were said to organise their own church activities whenever the Adventists hosted an evangelistic series:

Since most of the churches know that what we are telling the community is nothing but the truth, they are shaking. They know that if they allow their members to come and listen, in some few years we will win all of them. So they have also begun to do some programmes that will attract the people so that they can't go, can't try to come to listen to our teachings. (personal ministry director Edwin)

Assistant-pastor Baidoo told me that various other local Ghanaian churches had organised a sports programme during one of the key Ghanaian SDA out-reach events - the last Sabbath of the Amsterdam ‘crusade’¹⁶⁶, a day planned for baptisms. Pastor Ansah told me that some Pentecostal pastors had instructed their members not to attend the Amsterdam crusade at all. It was also alleged that these Pentecostal pastors used a variety of techniques to stop their members from getting baptised into the Adventist church:

About 24, 25 people were to be baptised, the Sabbath we had a baptism. Their pastors went to their homes, and stopped them, from coming to church, literally. And they planned sports for them on that day. And they used threats, and hypnotism. So they hypnotise you, and they threaten you, and if you leave, they will pray and curse you. (...) We're talking about illiterates. They are scared, so... they came to tell me. The same thing happened in [the marriage seminar pastor Ansah conducted in] The Hague. That's why the attendance was low like that. One Pentecostal came to tell me, that their pastor went from house to house and told them: pastor Ansah is here, don't go there. (pastor Ansah)

Another competitive strategy some perceived was that the timing of pastor Ansah’s local TV programme was switched from Saturday to Sunday afternoon. Since many Ghanaians were in church on Sunday afternoons, this was seen as a tactic to keep non-Adventists from watching. In view of all this, the Ghanaian SDA othering of Pentecostals was not

¹⁶⁵ The competition of churches in Amsterdam Southeast was affirmed to me when I helped distributing flyers for the Ghanaian SDA marriage seminar at a local market (see chapter 5). In response to my flyers, an Angolan man gave me the website of his church, the Nigerian-initiated Christ Embassy, and a Surinamese woman handed me a leaflet of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

¹⁶⁶ The Ghanaian Adventists intended the term ‘crusade’ (used also by non-Adventist Ghanaian and other West African churches) particularly for evangelistic campaigns with an emphasis on theological themes. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.

only theologically driven, but also motivated by competition about gaining and keeping adherents¹⁶⁷.

The relationship with Ghanaian Pentecostals and other ‘Sunday Christians’ will serve as the context to understand the Ghanaian SDA mission discourse about so-called ‘backsliders’ or ex-Adventists, discussed in the next section.

3.1.2 Lost by migration: ‘backsliders’ or ex-Adventists

(Fieldwork Report, 16/08/2008)

Having just walked out of a metro in Amsterdam Southeast, I’m a bit lost on my way to the Antillean SDA church. I ask a female passerby, who I recognise to be Ghanaian, whether she knows where the nearest church building is. She tells me how to get there, and after I thank her and quickly walk further, she calls me from behind, asking: ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses?’. I turn around, a bit surprised, and say: ‘No, SDA’. A bit shocked, she calls out: ‘Oooh!’. She shares that she used to be a SDA in Ghana, and that her children in Ghana also go to the SDA church. Here in the Netherlands, she however switched to a multicultural Mormon congregation. She notes how Adventism and Mormonism are almost the same. She illustrates that the Mormon ladies never wear trousers but only skirts, and don’t show their décolleté. Like the Adventists, they are properly dressed. And like the Adventists, the Mormons give testimonies. I ask why she doesn’t come to the SDA church anymore. She replies that that’s a long story – something obviously too deep to share in this incidental encounter. She notes that she does think that the SDA church is better, that it is the true church, and that if she will not go to heaven, it will be her own fault. After our brief talk, we say goodbye and go our separate ways.

As discussed in 1.4.1, migration sparks conversion. Adogame has observed this specifically for African Christians in Europe:

Many African Christians who come to Europe often try to find and identify with mainstream churches or denominations similar or related to their churches back home. As soon as they discover these churches, then the feeling of spiritual tepidity or the experience of being undesired confronts them. Many African Christians abandon the historic churches due to the disaffection they experience, establish their own churches, or turn to a number of new churches that are the products of African initiatives and under African leadership. (Adogame 2003: 30)

In 1.4.2, I mentioned that the lack of fulfilment immigrant Christians often experience in indigenous churches, as well as the excluding practices of the latter in regard to the former play an important role in the establishment of immigrant churches. In the above

¹⁶⁷ The case of competition between Adventists and Pentecostals is not incidental. Währisch-Oblau for example points out the pervasiveness of competition among the Pentecostal/charismatic diaspora in Germany. She observes: “Pentecostal/charismatic migrant churches exist in a true market situation: they compete for members within a limited constituency of migrant individuals and families who, orienting themselves within a new and foreign context, freely select the church that they like best” (2009: 116). This competitive situation leads to all kinds of suspicions and accusations in regard to pastors and puts enormous pressure on them to establish their authority (ibid. pp. 116-131).

quote, these same factors are connected to the dynamic of immigrants moving to *already existing* immigrant churches. This movement may entail denominational switching. McLean for example shows that Anglican and Methodist West Indian immigrants in the UK joined Pentecostal Black-led churches, due to experiences of discrimination and rejection in mainline churches (McLean 2008: 85, 86).

In the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, the experience with existing (Dutch/Antillean/Aruban/Surinamese) SDA churches in the Netherlands led to the formation of their own separate church, as discussed in 2.1. However, years before the Ghanaian SDA church was founded, many Ghanaian Adventists had already been migrating to the Netherlands. As the above mentioned former SDA lady, who had switched to a Mormon church, many Ghanaian Adventists did not remain Adventist churchgoers. Leaders of the Ghanaian SDA church were very much aware of this fact and turned this group, whom they referred to as ‘backsliders’¹⁶⁸, into one of their most important mission targets. They noted that some of these backsliders had ceased churchgoing altogether, whilst others had come to attend non-Adventist Ghanaian churches, particularly Pentecostal ones (where, according to some, they were now stuck because of the financially profitable positions they had taken up). In line with Adogame’s observation of African Christians in the diaspora, leaders explained this movement by noting that these ‘early’ Ghanaian Adventist immigrants were put off by the established Adventist churches that they felt to be unwelcoming¹⁶⁹ and where they could not worship in their own language¹⁷⁰. On the other hand, and more particularly a factor for *Adventists* in the diaspora, church leaders attributed ‘backsliding’ to the economic difficulties associated with keeping the Sabbath as immigrants in Europe. Working in low-level jobs and often undocumented, the immigrants had little power to control their working hours and so to keep Saturdays free for churchgoing¹⁷¹. Sabbath observance is a practice that is at the heart of Adventism, but it was at odds with the economic motives and necessities of many immigrants, which led some who were Adventist in Ghana to switch churches in the diaspora.

¹⁶⁸ This is however not a typically diasporic term, though it does receive additional meaning in the migration context. In Ghana, Adventists use the term in general for those members who have stopped churchgoing or who have otherwise been weakened in their Christian walk. In Amsterdam, the term sometimes referred to any former church attendees who stopped going (including those who had converted to Adventism in the diaspora), but was mostly heard in the context of people who were Adventist in Ghana, but stopped attending in the diaspora.

¹⁶⁹ One of the Ghanaian Adventists for example told me that she attended a Dutch SDA church in the West of the Netherlands for five years, because it was close to where she lived. In her experience, the pastor of that church hardly knew her and rarely visited her. In the Ghanaian SDA church, which she now sought to visit regularly, she felt that the pastor really knew her. For the UK context, Ackah (2008) similarly notes that before a Ghanaian SDA community was formed, some Ghanaian Adventists stopped attending because they felt treated as perpetual visitors by both white and African Caribbean established Adventists, which amongst other things implied that they were not voted into local leadership positions.

¹⁷⁰ Differences in worship style likely played a role, too. For example, Dutch Adventists gather in church for two to three hours on Sabbath, while Ghanaian Adventists spend the entire Sabbath (morning and afternoon) in church with elaborate services, studies, and food sharing.

¹⁷¹ Ackah and Newman (2003) similarly observe that Ghanaian Adventists in the UK experience “adjustment problems particularly in trying to adhere to the tenets of their faith, while seeking employment and accommodation” (p. 204), referring in part to Sabbath-keeping, and that some leave the church because of this. Elsewhere Ackah (2008) also notes that a London Ghanaian SDA church aimed to “look for missing members and bring them back to the fold” (p. 8).

Although relatively little is known about the church choices of immigrants, McLean's findings, this study as well as others (Ter Haar 1998: 152; Tichelman 1996: 309) do suggest a possible 'Pentecostalisation' of Christian immigrants in Europe. Adogame's remarks in discussing the disappointments of African Christians in European churches support this idea:

Many Africans, including ordained priests of mainline churches, changed religious affiliation, usually from a mainline church to an AIC or Pentecostal church. Practitioners of African indigenous religions often converted into one of these Christian churches. Churches such as the AICs, and more recently the African Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, have come to fill this spiritual vacuum and offer 'a home away from home' for many disenchanting Africans. (Adogame 2003: 31)

This 'Pentecostalisation' is partly due to the abundant availability of Pentecostal churches in the diasporic religious market, in contrast to other denominations that are present in the country of origin but (initially) absent or only available in the indigenous form in the diaspora. This suggests that on top of socio-cultural considerations (e.g. longing to speak one's own language and feeling unwelcome in established churches), shifts in religious markets play a role in the religious directions immigrants take.

It is evident from the previous section that the shift of former Adventists into Pentecostalism sparked a strong incentive to evangelise them. In addition, the fact that backsliders were both Ghanaian and formerly Adventist, and thus both ethnically and theologically 'close', made some church leaders most empathic towards them and prioritise them as a mission target. The close identification with backsliders was expressed in commonly denoting them as 'our own people' and defining the mission work towards them as 'bringing them back home'. A special church service designed with these groups in mind was called 'Home coming day'. In sum, migration created new boundaries that were to be bridged: that of those Adventists lost in the process.

Having discussed the two important mission targets in the Ghanaian community (Pentecostals/Sunday Christians and backsliders/ex-Adventists), we now move to a discussion of another mission discourse.

3.2 Spirit and society: locating the white Dutch and Europeans

Clearly the Ghanaian Adventists regarded other Ghanaians in the Netherlands as their most important mission target. However, there was also a secondary and more ambivalent discourse of wanting to reach out beyond the ethnic group. This sub-discourse was not so much a public one in the church, but expressed in personal conversations and interviews. Sometimes it was evoked by my questions, sometimes it was not. In response to my question concerning who was his target group for evangelism, assistant-pastor Baidoo answered that, next to Ghanaians, he wanted to reach everybody:

We want the Dutch people, and the Asians, whoever. That is why we received young Dutch people at the seminar and even some Surinamese, who are black but they are not Ghanaians. (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

Although the pastor here refers to Asians and Surinamese, the most common non-Ghanaian mission target comprised a diffuse category of ‘whites’, ‘the Dutch’, and ‘Europeans’. In the emic use of these terms, ‘whiteness’ was a centrally defining characteristic of both ‘the Dutch’ and ‘Europeans’ (this will be further reflected on in 3.2.2). Thus, in referring to ‘the Dutch’, the Ghanaians usually did *not* refer to people who hold the Dutch nationality but have a dark skin colour, such as Surinamese residents in the Netherlands. Further, ‘the Dutch’ were often characterised by a combination of being white and being native Dutch speakers. In other immigrant churches, ‘the Dutch’ were similarly conceptualised. In this thesis, I will draw on these *emic* classifications by referring to ‘the Dutch’ as white people whose mother tongue is Dutch, and to ‘Europeans’ as white people of European heritage.

In part, the mission discourse in the Ghanaian SDA church about the white Dutch and Europeans concerned the out-reach to secular Dutch and European people. At least as important, however, was the sense of mission to the brothers and sisters in Dutch SDA churches. In the following, I will discuss the symbolic boundaries and related mission aspirations that emerged in regard to both.

3.2.1 Culture and religion: Dutch Adventists

An accurate assessment of the Ghanaian Adventist discourse about Dutch Adventists is perhaps the most challenging of all the discourses, since it was characterised by a high level of ambiguity. On the one hand, there was an exceptionally warm and loyal sentiment towards Dutch Adventists, who were considered Christian family:

The Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists are from one blood, brothers and sisters. We respect the Union, and other churches. We will stay together until Jesus comes again. (elder Kwaame)

Only our language and style is different. We share the same faith and message. (choir leader Kobie)

As noted in 3.1, a loyalty to the Netherlands Union Conference was expressed in depicting the church name as ‘Amsterdam Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist church of the Netherlands’ Union’ on the weekly bulletins and other printed materials. The Ghanaian SDA church participated in major national SDA events such as national conventions (in Dutch: ‘Toogdagen’) and various events for youth and children. Further, some of the established Ghanaian SDA church leaders noted that they were very pleased with the way the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC) accepted their way of worship and how it had done its very best to get a Ghanaian pastor for the church. Also, Ghanaian SDA church leaders prayed for the NUC, in general and for specific events. When the news reached the church that the wife of pastor Postma, the Dutch former pastor of the church, had been diagnosed with cancer, fervent prayers for her healing filled the church, and members flocked to me sharing how terrible they felt about the situation. The relationship between pastor Postma and the church was an outstanding marker of mutual identification. Pastor Postma was considered to be very close to the members, having served the church for years and having participated in specific ‘Ghanaian’ activities such as All Night prayer meetings and trips to Ghana. One lady confessed to me that she liked him even more than the popular pastor Ansah. In one of the first services where pastor Postma preached in the church after pastor Ansah’s arrival in the Netherlands, he was given gifts while Ansah said warmly: ‘God has given you, a Dutchman, a heart to love Africans. And he has given it to our black hearts to love white skin.’

Thus, relationships were positive and there was a sense of mutual belonging and unity. However, in personal conversations among church members and with me, an additional picture emerged. Next to being brothers and sisters, Dutch Adventists were spoken of as a weakened kind of Adventist people, who no longer conformed to Adventist standards. In this part of the Ghanaian SDA view, Dutch Adventism had become a dry, dull, and dead faith with little spiritual vitality. The Ghanaians attributed the perceived differences to the influence of Dutch *culture* on Adventism in the Netherlands¹⁷². Due to the infusion of Dutch culture, Dutch Adventists had allegedly developed some un-Adventist and even un-Christian morals and practices¹⁷³. One of the church members noted that Dutch church leaders themselves legitimised their habits by referring to cultural difference. This however did not make much sense to him:

They say it is culture, wearing the jewellery [see below]! But I can also say: polygamy is my culture. My grandfather had three wives. So where does this take us? (church member Yaw, informal conversation)

Clearly, the Ghanaian Adventists did not buy into a notion of cultural relativism. They felt that the SDA church was a unified and centralised worldwide denomination where there was no logical place for theological variations. Identifying their own faith with official, biblical, and global Adventism, they viewed Dutch Adventism as anomalous, cultural, and local:

There are certain things that we as Ghanaian Adventists disagree about with the Dutch Adventists. Concerning our doctrines, and how Dutch people want to be themselves apart from the worldwide church, yet they claim to be a part of it. (...)

We [all Adventists] all try to achieve one thing. But maybe how they [Dutch Adventists] want to make their thing... they try to take it away from the worldwide church. (church secretary Owusu)

¹⁷² Elder Ababuo additionally noted that Dutch Adventists legitimised their religious style by prioritising ‘internal’ over ‘external’ spirituality, a division which he found implausible: ‘The European style of Adventism, it is like secularism you know. They say okay, my heart is open. Nothing more. No no no, that is not Adventism! Though God is inspecting everyone’s heart, Paul says you are like an epistle, people are reading you. They are not reading your heart. (...) Some of them say: oh, if I’m drinking coffee, it’s no problem to God, but what I’m believing inside that is important. Though the inside is important, the outside also is important. Because what you think, is the way you behave. So what’s within you, that is what comes outside.’ Interestingly, one of the leaders of an Antillean/Aruban SDA church similarly observed that some Antillean members felt that Dutch Adventists prioritised the inner over the outer world in being Adventists: ‘To some of the Antillean Adventists, faith consists of deeds. But they think that to the Dutch Adventists, faith is something of the heart, so that the Dutch feel free to eat pork [unclean meat as depicted in the dietary laws in the biblical book of Leviticus 11, which Adventists adhere to]’.

¹⁷³ It was not believed that ‘Dutch culture’ was negative in a general sense, but that certain aspects of it had negatively affected Adventism in the Netherlands. Some leaders noted positive aspects of Dutch culture. One of the younger youth leaders said the church youth had to be instructed by a combination of Ghanaian and Dutch culture. Pastor Ansah even suggested that the ‘real Dutch culture’ was represented by the Dutch queen, who would be free from associations with sexual impurity (e.g. public nudity and homosexuality), although he observed that this ‘real Dutch culture’ was ignored by the Dutch.

I don't know what types of doctrines they [the Netherlands Union Conference] are using. Because maybe they are using Dutch doctrine out there. Not the doctrine of the General Conference [the governing organisation of the SDA world church] [laughs nervously]¹⁷⁴. (elder Kwasi)

[In response to my question about his youth work in which I use the term 'Dutch Adventism':] We don't actually know what is Dutch Adventism. Because Adventism, we thought Adventism, is one. You see. That is where the problem lies. So if there are differences then we have to know. You see. We thought that it is one. So the headquarters is in US and it's got all these tentacles. So if there's a difference then we have to know. Otherwise our children will not understand the whole thing. (elder Charles)

I thought as Adventists we learn one thing. Martin Luther said: the Bible and the Bible only. And this is so for all Adventists. But it seems that what we learn in the Bible in Europe is different altogether. (...) We have 28 fundamental beliefs [the SDA creed]. That binds, that guides the church. This is what we've also accepted. [laughs] But it's different here. You know when it's our culture, then I can say oh, because that is our culture, that is why we are doing this and that is why the Europeans are doing that. But as Adventists we have only one guide. (elder Ababuo)

We take marriage [see below], jewellery, Ellen White¹⁷⁵, the Ten Commandments, and all of these seriously, but the Dutch Adventists select the ones that fit them! (church member Yaw, informal conversation)

Locating themselves within global Adventism, they negated the cultural influences in their own expression of the faith. One of the elders noted that 'we Ghanaians don't have our own manual, or [laughs] our own Bible', and that the church practices were Christian and Adventist, not 'Ghanaian':

We do All Day prayer or All Night prayer. And also we have Wednesday prayer meetings. If you want to grow in the Spirit, these are the key things to open up the spiritual things. Prayer. (...) And Christ

¹⁷⁴ This nervous laughter was likely related to the fact that the elder feared that I, a Dutch person and daughter of a pastor and former president of the Netherlands Union Conference, would be offended by this comment.

¹⁷⁵ The 19th century born woman Ellen White is not only one of the co-founders of Adventism, but in official Adventism also considered to have received a supernatural gift of prophecy. Hence her publications are accepted by many Adventists as an authoritative source of truth which provides them comfort and guidance (SDA Church Manual 2000: 14, 15). Among more liberal and especially Western Adventists her status is however a bone of contention and some associate her with a repressive kind of conservatism. For Ghanaian Adventists, the prophetic status of 'mami White' went undisputed. Aside from a general loyalty to formal SDA doctrine, this can possibly be attributed to the fact that contemporary prophets and visionaries are commonplace in Ghana. To claim a prophet therefore strikes Ghanaian Adventists as less foreign than it does Western Adventists living in a secularised context. For example, when I asked a convert from Pentecostalism about his introduction to Ellen White in the Sabbath school class for baptismal candidates/recently baptised members, he commented that he felt fine about it because female prophets, unlike female pastors, would be acceptable. Thus, his response revealed a preoccupation with the *gender* of Ellen White rather than a concern with her prophetic status. However, whereas Ellen White was generally accepted as a prophet in the church, she did not play a dominant role. Her writings only featured occasionally – for example, some church members had some of her books at home, the pastor now and then made reference to her writings in his teachings, and visitors of church seminars and newly baptised members sometimes received her books as a gift.

also was doing it. And Ellen White, if you read the Ellen White books, she was recommending it. It is not our Ghanaian culture [laughs]! (elder Ababuo)

Dutch Adventists usually spoke in terms of ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ in regard to theological differences, making the differences relative by acknowledging multiple versions of the same faith, and generally ranked immigrant Adventists among the conservatives¹⁷⁶. In contrast, the Ghanaian Adventists used different categories to map the variations by speaking of ‘Christian’ or ‘Adventist’ as opposed to ‘cultural’ - echoing a classical missionary concern with syncretism.

As already mentioned in church member Yaw’s comments above, one of the important (likely *the* most important) boundary markers between the Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists was the wearing of jewellery. For theological and moral reasons (see Kiš 2000: 707-708), and following the so-called ‘plain tradition’ that can be traced back to the Puritans (Staples in Höschele 2007: 308), Adventists traditionally do not wear jewellery¹⁷⁷. This practice is strictly observed by most Adventists around the world, in particular those in the developing world (see Lawson 1999a). In Ghana, the SDA church is known for its rejection of jewellery, since the Adventist women are noticeably plain in comparison to the often abundantly adorned women attending other churches. The proscription not to wear jewellery is a frequent motif in the conversion struggles of females (see 7.1.4). It is not easy for a woman to put off her jewellery, especially when we consider the importance of clothing, hairstyles, and jewellery to display social status in many Ghanaian churches (Van Dijk 2000: 209). In this context of identity marking and sacrifice, it is not surprising that the encounter with jewellery-wearing Dutch Adventists, including pastor’s wives, was a real shock to the Ghanaian Adventists¹⁷⁸. Among Dutch Adventists, wearing jewellery is widely considered acceptable even in the more conservative ranks, and some may not even know that Adventists are ‘not supposed to’ engage in the practice. If Adventists are known in the Netherlands at all, it is certainly not for their abstinence from rings and necklaces. In the following quote, one of the elders engages with this unexpected finding:

Adventism in Ghana is different from Europe here. Because we were taught that what’s in the Bible, for instance, when... I’m giving you a very simple example. That... we don’t wear earrings. We don’t put necklaces here. We are used to that. So, my wife for instance, and their family, they are about six girls. Nobody wears that. They don’t ask for, why mother, why is that, because they (...), they don’t. You know. Okay. But when we came here, we found out that... (...) Sometimes we have visitors from the Union, or from other groups... they come to us, they wear necklaces, they wear earrings. So they [his children] become confused. (...) Sometimes you sit down and they just give you questions. So, you become confused, because you have to give them an answer, if these groups are also Seventh-day Adventist people.

¹⁷⁶ This categorisation matches Jenkins’ view (2002) that ‘Southern’ Christians tend to be more conservative, and Lawson’s observation (1999a) that immigrant Adventists in the US tend to be more ‘sectarian’ (a phenomenon that he attributes to the generally higher rate of first generation converts in these groups).

¹⁷⁷ However, this issue was debated in all phases of the denomination’s existence (Höschele 2007: 308).

¹⁷⁸ Non-Ghanaian immigrant Adventists in the Netherlands often had comparable experiences and critiques. Lawson (1999a), in his survey of immigrant Adventists in the US, observes a similar pattern of immigrants experiencing differences with established Adventists on appearance-related issues.

(...) Because they say mommy, when we were in our church (...) all the SDA people say we don't wear it, fine. But here... the SDA people themselves also wear it. So where is our standard? (elder Charles)

As elder Charles' narration clearly indicates, the rejection of jewellery was considered so essentially defining of the SDA identity that wearing it led to a questioning as to one's status as an Adventist. It must be noted that there were also irregularities among the Ghanaians on this issue, as some of them secretly wore jewellery outside of church hours (sometimes opting for clip-on earrings that don't leave the trace of pierced ears)¹⁷⁹ or negotiated the boundaries of the tolerable by wearing heavily adorned watches or wedding rings. However, the proscription and the regime to uphold it were firm and evident in the church, as testified by the fact that not a single church member wore ornaments to church.

Besides jewellery, issues relating to sexuality were commonly cited in regard to Dutch Adventists. Most importantly, this included the permission that Dutch Adventists seemed to have to live together before marriage:

*The Dutch Adventism is different from what we have seen... because the culture plays such an important role in their Christianity. For instance, somebody, a pastor or a member of the church can for instance... they can contract, *samenwonen* [the Dutch word for cohabitation], or that type of... stay together with somebody. And the person is a Christian, they are not married and they are living together, all those things. It goes contrary to what the Bible says. But they do it here. (elder Kwasi)*

To the Ghanaians, it was little less than a contradiction to claim to be a Christian, yet to live together without being married. This way of conceptualising the Christian identity can be understood in the context of the great emphasis placed on sexual purity in the church. Sexual 'mistakes' resulted in (temporary) exclusion from certain offices, activities and even presence in the church. During marriage blessings (the church affirmation of traditional marriages that centralise the offering of the bride price), the pastor stressed the significance of monogamy and let the husband and wife vow in front of the whole church that they would 'never see anybody else's nakedness' until death. When a group of youth members was baptised, an elder, in asking them the baptismal questions, deviated from the official format used for this purpose¹⁸⁰ and included a vow on keeping the body pure. If asked, church leaders and members would admit that members were far from sinless in this area, but conservative sexual norms were resolutely embedded in church policy and education. Ghanaian Adventist policy on sexual sins was strict. Against this background, several church members faced incredible battles with sexual faithfulness to their spouses who lived in other countries. Again against a backdrop of identity and sacrifice, it was evident that the apparently easygoing style by which Dutch leaders permitted (and

¹⁷⁹ The house of a female church member was decorated with different pictures featuring her with jewellery in earlier years, at a time when she *was* an Adventist. Interestingly, she explained that she stopped wearing her earrings and necklaces after God had repeatedly called her in her dreams, asking: 'Why are you wearing jewellery?'. The widespread importance of dreams as a medium by which God reveals himself in African Christianity here was expressed in the Adventist context: God revealed through a dream that it is not good to wear jewellery.

¹⁸⁰ See the international church manual for the universal format (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2005: 32-33). In the Dutch translation of the church manual, a format of intermediate size is added that is commonly used in Dutch SDA churches (Kerkgenootschap der Zevende-dags Adventisten 2008: 52-53).

practiced) cohabitation, was a sign of religious problems if not of doubtfully being Christian.

Another boundary marker was the youth. Ghanaian Adventists were critical of the way Dutch Adventists educated their youth:

I participated in [nationally organised] youth leadership trainings, and I learned many things. But I didn't agree with everything. They said that the youth have to take their own decisions, about alcohol and those kinds of things. But there are many Bible texts that say something different. It should not be this do-it-yourself way of doing things. (youth leader David, informal conversation; original in Dutch)

In the last youth rally, there were panellists discussing with each other on stage, but they only showed the different opinions and did not give any guidance. (youth member Samuel, informal conversation; original in Dutch)

Our youth attended a youth camp, and the things they came to see, it's just like what people do in the red lights [red-light districts]. I haven't been to the camp, but that's what they told me¹⁸¹. They said pastor, we don't see any difference. We saw boys kissing. Boys kissing! Girls kissing. Adventist youth. [sound of frustration:] Pfff, how, so what is the use? No difference. So why go to church? (...)

The youth were disturbed when they came back from the youth congress and the youth pastor had told them: homosexuality and lesbianism is a part of Dutch culture. (pastor Ansah)

In these quotes, it becomes clear that there was disagreement with both the individualist ethics in Dutch Adventism and the allegedly immoral behaviours taught and displayed. The Ghanaian SDA youth were particularly confronted with Dutch Adventism as they participated in national events more frequently than their parents. Although many of them were raised in the Netherlands, they too expressed their surprise about the habits of the Dutch SDA youth they observed. They stressed the wearing of jewellery, but some had also spotted Dutch youth smoking and drinking alcohol:

The Dutch SDA youth is one thousand percent different. And when you go to a [nationally organised] youth congress, and then back to the Ghanaian church, you get a little confused. (youth member Kwofie, informal conversation; original in Dutch)¹⁸²

Music style was also a boundary marker for the youth. They rejected the music style at national youth meetings, such as hip-hop, rap, and rock:

¹⁸¹ This remark bears out the point that there was a gossip dimension in the construction of images of Dutch Adventists. Contacts were relatively scarce, and some members, due to their positions, had more contact than others, which led to rumours playing an important role in the development of views.

¹⁸² Lawson (1999a) similarly observes the challenge of SDA immigrant youth in the US, who experience greater freedom in established SDA churches: "The immigrant pastors interviewed often expressed frustration because their youth had found that the behaviors proscribed by the immigrant churches were often accepted in English-speaking congregations. For example, the immigrants continue to reject much of popular culture, proscribing movie-going, Christmas trees, and popular music, especially their own popular music, such as reggae. However, the pastors noted that many Americans attend movies and talk about what they have seen, have Christmas trees, and allow popular Christian music in some churches" (p. 90).

The music at the youth conference was very bad. Rock 'n roll, rap. I try to teach my children at home to switch off MTV, but then they do the same thing for the youth in church! (young church member Adjoa, informal conversation; original in Dutch)

Finally, Ghanaian Adventists were critical of the fact that Christmas was widely celebrated in Dutch SDA churches¹⁸³.

Discovering the variety of differences, some leaders were evoked to think in terms of the need for change. Because the discrepancies were perceived to be caused by Dutch culture, Adventism in the Netherlands had to be 'de-culturalised'. In the context of discussing a report of a national worship committee, which recommended the use of more charismatic styles of music, the church secretary said:

The whole thing is: how they think they could retain their members. And how they have to some extent allowed their social settings, or some way, their culture, into the church, which violates Adventist doctrine. And even go further to (...) some of what the Bible says, what God has said. Because it is the same thing the Israelites were doing, when Jesus came. That they admit they are traditional people, and they let their traditions go by the Scriptures. (...) You think you make it more liberal for the people... that couldn't... will not work. (...) They [the Dutch Adventist leaders] have to make sure and let them [Dutch Adventist members] know [solemn speech:] this is the doctrine. Either you come or you stay home... but... they can't say that. They are not saying that. (...) They should try to distinguish between social life, culture, and what the church should do. (church secretary Owusu)

Some of the leaders and members felt they had a special role to play in this de-culturalising or, in emic terms, 'reviving' of Dutch Adventism. Thus, they responded to the felt boundaries in missionary terms. Pastor Ansah envisaged a role for his church, hoping that, once matured, it could become a model church in the Adventist community in the Netherlands:

So I want this church to become a model church. (...) Sometimes you see some Dutch people coming here. So they will see a difference, and then they'll begin to question: why? Why the difference? Why don't you come to our church and tell us why there is this difference? Aha! Then I will have a basis. (pastor Ansah)

The pastor also saw a responsibility for himself as an individual:

Since I came to Holland, I've been to a few SDA churches. In Rotterdam, Dutch churches (...) They want to know God. They want to. They really want to know God. There is a thirst, some hunger, in them. They don't know who will fill it. Money is there, freedom is there, but there is still some emptiness. They want something to fill it. And only Christ can fill it, knowing God can fill that... emptiness. That is the role I want to play for the next few years that I am going to be here. My contract is three years, I want to do my best. Learn the language and expose people to what it means to live a quality life. That's my goal. (pastor Ansah)

¹⁸³ Although the rejection of Christmas has never been an official stance in Adventism, this position is adopted in some conservative ranks. Dutch SDA churches generally celebrate Christmas services each year, quite often on the Sabbath that is closest to Christmas.

Elder Ababuo even stressed that to reach out to Dutch society and Dutch SDA churches was the main objective of his church:

DK: *Do you feel that you as a Ghanaian church have a mission here in Europe for the Adventists?*

Elder Ababuo: *Oooh, that is, this is our object. This is our purpose. Because we Ghanaians we feel that it is not by chance we happen to be here. Maybe God wants us to help the European community, wherever we are. Because nowadays, everywhere you go, you can find a Ghanaian there. All over the place, all over the world. Everywhere you go, you can find a Ghanaian there. And everywhere in the world, wherever you go, you can find Ghanaian Adventist people there. So it is not only by chance. It has some purpose that... God has established the Ghanaian community all over the world. So to me, we know that there is a purpose for us. Every day in day out my prayer is that this Holland community and the Union are aware of maybe the positive things by which we can influence them.*

One of the ‘positive things’ Ababuo listed was the emphasis that the Ghanaians placed on prayer. Also, he felt that the Dutch could learn from their evangelistic strategies, which would be relationship-based and focused on fulfilling people’s needs, so that the Dutch too would start to experience church growth.

However, others did not engage with the constructed boundaries in missionary terms. Their focus was more on protecting their own flock from the confusing influence of divergent standards. Some feared that their youth might gradually transfer to the ‘lenient’ Dutch congregations, and felt it necessary to be careful about letting their children attend such occasions.

Thus, in the discourse about Dutch Adventists, we find two ambivalent forms of including and excluding. Dutch Adventists were beloved Christian family, yet culture had affected serious aspects of their religion. This complicated belonging: the Ghanaians felt they were one with the Dutch Adventists, and yet they were alienated by the divergences they found. The second ambivalence was that the divergences inspired a mission agenda in some, and a primary concern over the congregation’s children in others. The semi-mission discourse that resulted from these ambivalences was underpinned by a variety of issues, some of which will be discussed in the next section, and some of which will be discussed in chapter 5.

3.2.2 Inferior or superior? The Netherlands and Europe

The Ghanaian Adventists observed a general absence of Christianity in the Netherlands. This perspective hinged mostly on their perception of Dutch *morality*, and less on specific beliefs or the frequency of churchgoing. When pointing out the lack of godliness in the Netherlands, the Ghanaians predominantly referred to issues of sexuality, such as prostitution, public nudity, homosexual marriage and cohabitation. The red-light district in Amsterdam was put forward repeatedly as an ultimate marker of the degenerate spiritual state of the country. This is illustrated by the following quote, where in a fierce depiction of the immoral, Sodom-and-Gomorrhah-like state of Dutch society and the impending doom resulting from it, the concrete example given is the red-light district:

So culture has become a religion. That is not safe. That is what happened in Sodom and Gomorrhah. The culture became their gods. And they were doing all kinds of nasty things. God destroyed those two cities. So with this kind of culture, if God is not exposed to people, it is dangerous. It is dangerous. The next three generations, I’m afraid, they will go naked on the street. Yeah, they will go naked. (...) Because...

there will be no... there will be no value. Life will not be valued. And there wouldn't be anything they call... these are our values. Like if you go naked, what's wrong? I'm told there's a spot called red-light, red-light. See... no value. They don't have any value of life. Go naked, sleep with any man. That's not life. And if the young people of today are not exposed to God, they are not exposed to what the Bible says, and culture continues to go on like this, and the next generation teaches the culture, the way it is going now... Then, in the next three generations, this country will be in trouble. Serious trouble. (pastor Ansah)

In the Ghanaian SDA church, many male conversion stories centralised an escape from sexual promiscuity, homosexuality was considered antithetical to being Christian, and, as noted in 3.2.1, sexual purity was highly stressed. Against this backdrop, it can be understood that the observation of widely accepted and institutionalised sexual sins created a view of the Netherlands as un-Christian, or at least spiritually destitute.

Still taking morality as a central boundary marker, a contrary yet less heard interpretation was that the Dutch *were* Christians because of their engagement in charitable activities, even though they were not Christian in every way:

The whites they are still Christians. And the type of Christianity they have now, is that they believe in themselves. But they still have Christianity in them, but development and modern technologies have made them to believe in themselves. Yes. But I think they are still Christians, because... they are kind. Yes because when anything happens, any disaster happens in this world, they give money to help and all those things... So we Africans, it doesn't mean we are coming to give them Christianity or the gospel, they have it already. (...)

Because to be a kind person is not easy. (...) With Christianity in you, you can be a kind person. Because the Devil is not a kind person. (elder Kwasi)

Whilst the elder noted that the Dutch no longer believed in God but rather in themselves, he still considered them to be Christians because of their kindness to the world.

Although morality appeared to be central in defining the Dutch as Christian or un-Christian, there were a few other dimensions. Some, in characterising the low level of Christianity in the Netherlands and in Europe, pointed to behaviour such as neglect in churchgoing, and to convictions such as not believing in God:

90% of the whites don't believe. Today blacks worship God. I think more blacks will go to heaven than whites. If you say 'God' to them, they reject it. (church member Francis)

The Western worldview is evolutionary, materialistic, experimental reason. It has nothing to do with faith, purpose, absolutes, standards. It's here and now. (...) Someone said I go to church three times: when I'm born, marry, and die. He wasn't teasing, he meant it! (...) On TV there was a man who survived in a tree for seven days. They said he was 'lucky' rather than that God protected him. There is a lack of knowledge of God here. (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

They [the Dutch/Europeans] think they know everything. For example, when they get a job they don't thank God but say: I got an education, that's why. But we Africans know that it's God who is offering the job. In Africa when it rains we say: oh, God is blessing us. Here they say: it's bad weather. They don't depend on God. But God is in control. (elder Ababuo)

Some invoked the historical dimension to locate the Dutch/Europeans within Christianity. There was a strong awareness that Europeans had brought the gospel to Africa, and an accompanying expectation that they would still be Christians today. The tension between the knowledge of history and the expectation of its continuity on the one hand, and the observation of the dubious Christian practices and beliefs in the Netherlands on the other, was accounted for by phrases such as: ‘Christianity is internal in them, but it doesn’t come out’¹⁸⁴. Again others observed spatial diversity in religiosity in the Netherlands and in Europe. A church member who had been in the Netherlands for a long time had observed that there were more believers in the Dutch provinces of Limburg and Friesland, and an elder who had visited Ireland had been struck by seeing that ‘Irish people still believe and go to church’.

To account for the diluted impact of Christianity in the Netherlands, the Ghanaian Adventists referred to the powerful influence of Dutch culture – the same idea that was used to explain the divergent practices in Dutch Adventism. In the quote of pastor Ansah above, his diagnosis of Dutch society was that ‘culture has become a religion’ and ‘the culture became their gods’. Where the invoking of the culture factor in regard to Dutch Adventists had a spatial backdrop (a supposedly uniform global Adventism in which aberrations resulted from local culture), it was temporally located when concerning Dutch secularism: the historically Christian nation had been overthrown by the stage of ‘culture’.

Crucial in explaining the withering of Christianity in the Netherlands was the supposed secularising effect of increased welfare - more money would equal less godliness:

Some people used to tell me that after the Second World War, most Europeans used to go to church regularly. Because the economy wasn’t good. But when the economy started to grow, (...) they forgot, because they could get anything, so they are no more worshipping God. But we Africans have learned that no matter how much money you have, if you don’t have God you are nothing. (personal ministry director Edwin)

Finally, some attributed the decrease in Christian influence to World War II and other events in Dutch history:

Because of what happened in the past, what the Catholics did to the Dutch people, what Protestantism has done to them, they have disliked God. I was in Utrecht and they were taking us on a tour [organised by the Netherlands Union Conference for all its pastors]. They told us so many things. People here have been punished. Politically, and religiously. They have suffered too long. That is why they don’t want anybody to speak against culture. They think: where we are now, leave us. Don’t touch it. We are tired of... this imposition. Germans imposing this or that. Catholics imposing this or that. Protestants even imposing... religion, we’re tired, so leave us. If we want to go (...) just leave us. Leave us alone. (pastor Ansah)

The central identity under discussion in these quotes is being Christian, not being Adventist. Whereas the crucial issue in regard to Dutch Adventists was the nature of Adventism, in regard to the wider Dutch society it was the status of Christianity. In both

¹⁸⁴ Währisch-Oblau (2009: 265) depicts an African Pentecostal minister grappling with the same tension as saying that “...Europe is in the state of sleep, because it has done such hard work” (referring to their evangelisation of the world).

cases, there was a (sometimes soft-spoken, sometimes more rigid) sense of spiritual superiority: in contrast to them (whites/Dutch/European people), we (black/Ghanaian/African people) adhere to the official form of Adventism, and we promote true Christian values and beliefs.

One way of engaging with these boundary constructions, was the ambition to (re)evangelise the Dutch. The assistant-pastor suggested that the Ghanaians were in fact indebted to their 'host' to do so:

The people here [the Dutch], it is their land, money, harvest that you are enjoying. What can you give back to them? That's very important. (...) Oh, how I wish that all these casinos and these discos that they [the Dutch] usually go to on Saturday nights and others, that all these are turned into places where we can preach the Word. (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

Some stressed the importance of reaching the Dutch in a culturally sensitive way:

These people don't want to hear anything about God. So if you bring handouts to the Dutch society, and say oh we are doing Bible studies in our church, we want to invite you. I don't think any Dutch person will come. So I hope that if you give a handout, and you tell a Dutch person or a Dutch family, we have a doctor who is a good, formal counsellor, and he gives counselling to married people, and he's giving a lecture in this place, please come and hear it, I hope they will come! Because they are concerned about their families. Or parenting. Especially about parenting he's giving a lecture. You don't say anything about the Bible. (...) You just try to study the system, what people like. I know they like music. You can use music to invite them. When they come we give our Bible to them. We can organise a health programme. When they come we give our Bible to them. We can organise a marriage seminar, like what pastor is doing now [see chapter 5]. When they come we give our Bible to them. But when you just go with the Bible, they will say: no no, I have nothing to do with the Bible! So here comes the strategy. (elder Ababuo)

In translating dividing boundaries into a quest for connecting, it appeared that an inversely graded self-understanding reared its head. The Ghanaian Adventists coupled an identity of spiritual superiority with an identity of social inferiority. Whereas the former resulted from how they delineated Dutch/European people, the latter emerged from how they felt *they* were delineated by Dutch/European people. The structural boundaries related to skin colour noted in 1.4.2 stood out in this regard. The conflation of Dutch/European people with 'whites', and Ghanaian/African people with 'blacks', revealed how the Ghanaian Adventists imagined social life in racial terms¹⁸⁵. This symbolic organisation stemmed from their experience that being black was not considered a good thing¹⁸⁶. I will illustrate with a few examples how life was experienced in racial terms. Frequently when we waited for buses in proximity to the church building, one of the members would tell me that bus drivers in Amsterdam Southeast do not care to show up on time or at all because its inhabitants are mostly black. He was also convinced that in case of emergency, doctors in the district would first ask 'is (s)he white or is (s)he black?' before deciding on the significance of the case. Further, he was sure

¹⁸⁵ This finding is in line with postcolonial studies that highlight the continuing racialised nature of power on the globe (e.g. Tascón 2004, López 2005).

¹⁸⁶ For me personally, this strong racial consciousness was one of the most revealing findings in the fieldwork. I was disturbed by experiencing how church members I was close to were treated and approached by whites in the public arena, and how they narrated or implied the negativity of black skin.

that the construction workers in his house had left such a mess because he and his housemates were ‘just blacks’. One of the elders told me that Dutch teachers underestimate the church’s children because of racism. When I talked with one of the teenage girls in the church about my university and how multicultural it was, she asked me with surprised eyes: ‘Really? Do black children also go there?’. In another case, one of the elders confided in me that a man in the church had shown romantic interest in me. The elder admitted that it had taken him one month to ‘have the courage’ to tell me. He had pleaded with the man whether it was really right for him to marry a white lady, explaining: ‘It is a black and white thing. You have to make sure that the white doesn’t feel superior’ (see more on this story in 5.2.1).

The awareness that being black had unfavourable consequences in the Netherlands had an immediate impact on the way the Ghanaians constructed themselves as missionaries to the Dutch. Being black, they felt they were in fact unsuited for effective mission work among whites. The strongly mission-minded and authoritative Pastor Ansah straightforwardly exclaimed to me: ‘I can’t reach the white youth, because I’m black!’. Assistant-pastor Baidoo strongly doubted whether the mission of a black man would find any hearing with a white person, depicting the latter’s response as:

So how come a black man would have anything better? (...) Do you really have something to offer that we don’t have already? (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

When I drew the attention of a SDA pastor in the Kumasi region in Ghana to the topic, he expressed that he felt that the diaspora churches could not reach whites, asking rhetorically: ‘Will the whites think we blacks can help?’. In fact, colour was the core issue in regard to evangelising Dutch/European people - not nationality or national territory as can be found in Pentecostal immigrant discourse (Währisch-Oblau 2009: 263-264, 267-269).

In addition to the factor of race, some referred to language difference as an obstacle for mission. Church members generally exclaimed that their Dutch was not good¹⁸⁷, and I observed that they sometimes felt self-conscious about their English, too. Linguistic limitations were a practical disadvantage for mission, but also signalled low status, symptomatic of being an ethnic minority with limited resources to interact personally with mainstream society. Pastor Ansah took a Dutch language course, which was required¹⁸⁸ and paid for by the Netherlands Union Conference. He construed this as one of the most important ways by which he could start to reach the Dutch and did his best to learn, though with his age, preoccupation with a needy church, and little opportunity to practice, that process was rather slow moving.

Interestingly, in contrast to language, ‘culture’ was rarely invoked as an obstacle in the mission encounter, aside from a few references in regard to the need to meet Dutch people in their own contexts. Class however was an issue. As noted in 2.1, most members

¹⁸⁷ This was true for some, often due to not having the time to take Dutch classes, but untrue for quite a few others, who, in my view, had a fair command of the language. I only discovered this ability at a late stage of the research, because many preferred to speak English. The language obstacle was thus more a matter of feeling uncomfortable about speaking a language imperfectly, than a basic lack of language skills.

¹⁸⁸ The vacancy for a pastor for the Ghanaian church printed in the Dutch national SDA magazine in 2006 listed as one of the job requirements “a fair command of the Dutch language (or being willing to learn the language shortly)” (my translation).

worked in jobs at the lowest end of the job market. Most also lived in lower class neighbourhoods. Some sensed the missionary obstacles brought about by their low socio-economic status:

It's not easy to penetrate... (...) Here we are the other side. Here we are like the beggars in somebody else's land. So to win their confidence and to invite them... I hope you understand. (...) We are strangers, foreigners, immigrants, we came here to work, to earn. So those who are indigenous people here... they are the so-called maybe masters, or the owners, whatever. (...) There is a gap. They look down. For instance, how could the Jews, or the Hebrews... talk about their God to Pharaoh? (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

That class seemed more of an obstacle than culture, is in line with Währisch-Oblau's observation (2009: 252, 253) that Pentecostal immigrant pastors in Germany analysed contextual differences between Africa/Asia and Germany not within a cultural but rather within an economic paradigm. Whereas European Christians tend to stress cultural issues in regard to immigrant Christians (which also applied to Dutch Adventists, see 7.2.3), immigrant Christians generally consider socio-economic differences to be much more salient.

The perception of social inferiority as expressed in these issues of race, language, and class, led to a widespread conviction among church leaders that although the Dutch were in need of mission, it would be more effective for the Dutch to do the job. Elder Felix phrased it in terms of an ethnic division of mission labour based on pragmatic considerations:

If you allow the Dutch people to reach the Dutch people it goes faster. And if you allow the Ghanaians to reach the Ghanaians it goes faster. (...) Supposing you [referring to me] talk to a Dutch man or Dutch lady. And I talk to the same person. Who is he going to listen to? (...) It's a human character, you can't change it. (elder Felix)

In addition to letting the Dutch do the job, one of the elders projected the mission into the future: the church youth, (born and) raised in the Netherlands, would be able to reach the Dutch, since obstacles of class and language would apply less to them (though obviously they would still be black):

And when they go to school, and they occupy good places in the society, they can bring our message to that place. (...) Of course, they are going to have those friends! Not Ghanaian friends. And you know they can talk easier to those people than we do. Because they speak the language well. And because they occupy a good place, they can influence them. (elder Ababuo)

It is striking that some other immigrant churches speak more self-confidently about their mission towards white Europeans though they grapple with the same or similar social obstacles. In her analysis of a variety of narratives of Pentecostal immigrant pastors in Germany, Währisch-Oblau (2009: 133-223) came across narrations of special divine interventions (e.g. the unproblematic granting of visa) that led the pastors to be missionaries in Germany. In contrast, whereas the Ghanaian Adventists believed in the power of God to heal the sick, provide legal documents, and bring life into a woman's womb against all human odds, they used social language to conclude that they (at least as first generation immigrants) were not suited to be missionaries to the Dutch. Although God's power was not denied in regard to evangelising the Dutch, it was rarely invoked.

Social matters outweighed theological convictions. Why was this the case? I suggest that the embedding in the Netherlands Union Conference gave the Ghanaians the language of mission tasks divided along ethnic lines. Being part of a larger, Dutch-majority church body helped to release some of this difficult burden of reaching a white country in spiritual need without becoming irresponsible¹⁸⁹.

On the other hand, the denominational embedding enabled the Ghanaians to still play a role in this crucial endeavour: the role of partner/assistant¹⁹⁰.

Then in the end if I'm going to a Dutch person's house, I'm going with you [referring to me], so I can hide behind you, until he does away with all the wrong conceptions, misconceptions so that together, we can reach out to the native. (...) We owe this nation. Much more so our Master, who says go ye to make disciples. So we feel that need, that urgency. But we cannot do it on our own. We will need the support, cooperation, physically, financially, emotionally, whatever, socially, of the native people. (assistant-pastor Baidoo)

If we have something to help, then we have to build the Dutch side, for the Dutch to reach the Dutch. Encourage them. Like if you [referring to me] are a member of this church, and we have to talk to a Dutch person, wherever you are we will try to get you. Because the moment the person sees you, he can't see that it's a Ghanaian church. He can feel that oh, I'm Dutch, I can fit in. It's a way of psychology, that you sometimes have to use. (elder Felix)

Clearly, considering Dutch Adventists as the best missionaries to unbelieving Dutch people was an ambivalent conclusion, since the former were not considered to be perfect Adventists¹⁹¹. Dutch Adventists were perceived as missionaries and mission targets

¹⁸⁹ The difference between my and Währisch-Oblau's respondents (stressing human limitations versus divine intervention) may also be attributed to methodological differences. The fact that my respondents used social terms may in part be accounted for by the fact that my questions were primarily centred on mission in the here and now, whilst Währisch-Oblau mapped biographies, tracing the background of the very presence of pastors in Europe. She notes that such biographies often came in the shape of missionary narratives that were set against the way others allegedly understood the immigrants' 'true' intentions of migration, i.e. to look for a better life for themselves. In these narratives, divine interventions legitimised their missionary call. For my respondents such legitimisation was less necessary, since I did not ask them to account for their very presence but to depict their current mission agenda.

¹⁹⁰ This partner/assistant role was thus based on *pragmatic* considerations – it would simply be easier for Dutch-speaking whites to reach the Dutch than it would be for non-Dutch-speaking blacks. In contrast, Währisch-Oblau (2009: 262-267) observes that some Pentecostal immigrant ministers in Germany defined their role in reviving Europe as being subservient/assistant-like to Europeans/Germans who would lead the endeavour, in part because of their *theology*. In this theology, Europe is and remains God's chosen one, as He has used them to serve Him before and sealed a covenant with their forefathers, whilst he would never use Africans for this task. This is because the African forefathers, in the words of a respondent, "made a mistake through ignorance, they turned to demons and to Devils; they did not serve God" (p. 266), which would also explain Africa's widespread suffering today. This emphasis on the impact of the forefathers and forces from the past is typical for West African Pentecostalism, but did not play a role in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam. To the Ghanaian Adventists, the division of mission tasks along ethnic lines was not considered divinely ordained or static, but socially strategic and changeable (with second generation Ghanaians already having a greater chance to reach the Dutch).

¹⁹¹ Währisch-Oblau comes across a similar phenomenon of immigrant pastors not trusting European churches with the task to reach natives. She notes: "Only one interviewee admitted openly to what many others only implied, namely that church planting was a necessary means of evangelizing Germans because German churches could not be trusted to disciple new converts properly" (2009: 235).

simultaneously. For pastor Ansah, this tension gave the more impetus to positively influence Dutch Adventists, to thereby indirectly enable the reaching of the wider Dutch society:

If you bring a Dutch person from outside, and he joins the church, and he sees a difference between what I said and what is prevailing in the church, you confuse the person. So the best thing is to change the base [the Dutch SDA church], before you bring the person to the base. So you see what's in the base as being equivalent to what you said. Otherwise it's hypocritical. Double standard. You say one thing, and the person sees another thing. (Pastor Ansah)

Thus, the paradoxes of superiority and inferiority came full circle: the Ghanaian Adventists wanted to reach Dutch/European people out of a sense of spiritual superiority, but were hesitant to define themselves as missionaries to the Dutch/European people because of a sense of social inferiority. Their emphasis on social matters was connected to their embedding in the Dutch SDA church, to which the responsibility could be given and a partnership taken up. In this partnership that arose from necessity because of feeling socially inferior, a spiritual superiority popped up again, with the Ghanaians perceiving themselves of having the task to spiritually re-educate Dutch Adventists, so that the latter could convert the Dutch that the Ghanaians could not reach.

3.3 Silences

Having discussed the four major groups that featured in drawing symbolic boundaries and expressing missionary aspirations, it is of interest to analyse which notable groups were absent in the mission discourse. In other words: who was *not* talked about?

The most remarkable silence was in regard to Islam. During my relatively short stay in Ghana, I observed various instances of Muslim evangelism by Adventists, both in the chiefly Christian South and the predominantly Muslim North. Muslims appeared to be an important mission target in sermons, interviews, and informal conversations. One preacher even seemed to turn Muslims into the ultimate target group of Christianisation. A church member in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region, wore Muslim dress to 'be a Roman with the Romans' (a biblical reference to culturally adapt for the purpose of mission). The churches in the North were also engaged in house to house visits, building friendships, church planting, and providing socio-economic help. In contrast, in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam that I visited countless times over a four year period, Muslims were hardly ever alluded to as a focus for mission. The references were very few in number and, as stated above, not embedded in a specific mission discourse focused on reaching Muslims¹⁹². The silence on Muslims was the more striking since pastor Ansah had been active in Muslim evangelism in West Africa. Moreover, the church was located directly next to a big mosque. Visitors to the church and the mosque, which

¹⁹² A couple of times, references were made to the idea that Muslims, by the nature of their appearance, straightforwardly radiate that they are Muslims, and that Christians should be equally clearly identified as Christians by their behaviour. On one occasion, boundaries were expressed when one of the elders reproached me for having my nails painted with henna since it would be 'Islamic'. In another case, pastor Ansah in Sabbath school class illustrated the importance of making other people's lives better, by narrating how Muslims in Ghana brought him water to drink because they saw he was a man from God.

both attracted blacks, regularly hung out simultaneously yet separately in the shared open air space between and around their buildings. In contrast to the multicultural Pentecostal church that owned the church building that the Ghanaian Adventists worshipped in, the Ghanaian Adventists did not have any formal or informal contacts with the mosque. Why was there this silence on Muslims? Throughout this chapter and as I will elaborate in the conclusion, we have seen that important mission targets for the Ghanaian Adventists were, in some ways, a threat to their beliefs and power. Ghanaian Muslims, however, were not very threatening. Unlike in Ghana, in the Netherlands they were relatively few in number and not organised in a way that was visible or intimidating to the Ghanaian Adventists¹⁹³.

A second important silence in mission discourses regarded non-Dutch Adventists in the Netherlands, such as the many Antillean/Arubans, Surinamese, and Indonesians. As will be discussed in chapters 5 and 7, the Ghanaians were in contact mostly with the Antillean/Aruban and Surinamese Adventists. The lack of mission discourses in regard to these groups can be explained by their relatively close theological alignment (e.g. they generally held similar views on core issues such as cohabitation and dress), particularly when compared to the noticeable liberal wings existing among Dutch Adventists.

3.4 In conclusion

In this chapter I examined the mission discourses of the Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam to answer the central question: *How does the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in its evangelistic discourses?*

The mission discourses of the Ghanaian Adventists emerged on the basis of several negotiations of sameness and difference, which influenced the 'hierarchy' of mission targets. In general, the Ghanaian Adventists wanted to evangelise groups that resembled them socially and theologically. More specifically, shared ethnicity was a key consideration. Thus, Ghanaian backsliders were prioritised over Dutch Adventists and Ghanaian non-Adventists over Dutch society. Also, theological resemblance mattered: those with whom theology was ambivalently shared were prioritised over those with whom theology was not shared. Thus, Ghanaian backsliders were prioritised over Ghanaian non-Adventists and Dutch Adventists over secular Dutch/European people.

That the Ghanaian Adventists found it particularly important to reach fellow Ghanaians was related to the fact that they were part of a denomination. The prioritising of fellow ethnics may seem simply pragmatic, yet was in marked contrast to many Ghanaian/African immigrant churches that trumpet an international, cross-cultural mission discourse of reaching the whole world. The Ghanaian Adventists were however part of a denomination that encouraged and facilitated ethnic congregations and mission. Also, partaking in a worldwide, established church body enabled the Ghanaian Adventists to *combine* an ethnically bounded church identity and locally demarcated mission target with a global identity and network. Furthermore, the task to evangelise fellow Ghanaian immigrants provided them with a meaningful role in the worldwide SDA church.

¹⁹³ There were no specifically Ghanaian mosques, though there were organisations such as 'Wadata', a foundation addressing the needs of West African Muslims in Amsterdam. See (in Dutch): <http://www.wadata.nl>.

Group dynamics theory sheds light on the finding that evangelising Ghanaian *Christians*, especially Pentecostals and former Adventists, was a priority over reaching secular Dutch people. Snoek (1995) points out the relationship between similarity and demarcation. He observes that “the more the groups from which one wishes to distinguish oneself (the out-groups), are similar to one’s own group (the in-group), the more rigidly will the distinguishing characteristics be formulated, and the more attention will be paid to these characteristics” (p. 53). He links the relationship between similarity and demarcation to competition over limited resources, since “the chance of losing a member to another group is greater when the difference from that other group is smaller” (p. 54). Indeed, we saw that Ghanaian Adventists felt threatened by and competed with the Ghanaian Pentecostal majority, which a number of former Adventists had already joined.

The dynamic of threat thus informed the construction of boundaries in mission discourses. This also applied to dissimilar out-groups such as the Dutch. In fact, for the double minority Ghanaian Adventists, all mission targets were threatening in one way or another. Members had their homes in a Pentecostal-majority Ghanaian community, were part of a Dutch-majority denomination, and lived in Dutch society. All these constituted powerful arenas with the potential to lure away members of the numerically weaker Ghanaian Adventists into wrong spirits, ‘cultural’ Adventism, and immoral practices. This threat was counteracted by a mission discourse that constructed the Ghanaian Adventists as powerful in truth, delineated the various mission targets as ‘other’ (thus implying, for example, that going to a Pentecostal pastor for prayer is *not* safe, wearing jewellery is *not* the Adventist standard¹⁹⁴, and prostitution is *not* Christian), and sought to inspire evangelistic behaviour to redress the disadvantageous numerical balances.

However, there was a second side to power: not only did power relationships inform who became targets for mission, but also who was constructed as missionary. In regard to the Dutch/Europeans, the Ghanaian Adventists constructed themselves as missionaries only half-heartedly, since their own power was ambivalent: they were spiritually powerful having a crucial, life saving message, but lacking in social power as foreign, lower class blacks.

Silences in the mission discourse may also be understood from the negotiation of power. The silence about evangelising Muslim Ghanaians, whilst this was a clear theme for Adventists in Ghana, may be primarily understood from the fact that they, few in number, were not as direct a threat to the church as the other groups. Likewise, the silence about reaching non-Dutch Adventists in the Netherlands can be explained by the general lack of ‘threatening’ life style differences between the Ghanaian Adventists and other immigrant Adventists.

¹⁹⁴ That the jewellery-issue was threat-related can also be seen in the fact that it was emphasised much less in regard to non-Adventist Ghanaians, who were often abundantly decorated with rings, necklaces, and earrings, than in regard to Dutch Adventists wearing the same ornaments. Leaders knew the rule of ‘not wearing jewellery’ to be clearly associated with the Adventist identity by church members, and therefore did not see it being threatened as much by the jewellery-wearing non-Adventist Ghanaians as by the jewellery-wearing Dutch Adventists - even though the former visited the church much more often than the latter.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the mission discourses of the 14 other, quite different immigrant churches to further examine and diversify these ways of boundary constructing in evangelistic discourse.

4 Meaning and power: mission discourses of immigrant churches

In this chapter, I will examine the mission discourses of the 14 immigrant churches in the Netherlands that were studied in comparison to the Ghanaian SDA case. This chapter will thus centre on a wider range of immigrant churches than the previous. The main question of this chapter is: *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic discourses?*

4.1 Production and reproduction: ethnic and linguistic boundaries

In the previous chapter, we saw that the Ghanaian Adventists, with their mission focus on fellow Ghanaians, were exceptional among African immigrant churches, most of which define their mission as global rather than ethnic or local. I attributed the uniqueness of the Ghanaian SDA case especially to their specific theology and organisational embedding within a denomination. Given the fact that studies on immigrant mission often point out the element of evangelising ‘natives’, we may expect that the Ghanaian Adventists continue to be an exceptional case as we explore the other immigrant churches, especially those who are not part of a denomination. The findings, however, show something different. Most of the church leaders defined their mission and identity within ethnic and linguistic boundaries¹⁹⁵. Interestingly, the educational status of leaders and members did not seem to affect this mission agenda. Both higher and lower educated leaders concentrated on ethnic mission, as did churches with both a higher and a lower educated membership.

In 1.4.1, I discussed the importance of the *reproduction* of ethnicity in immigrant religions. The ethnicised mission agenda of the churches discussed here was related to this in a variety of ways. First, ethnic mission was simply the most pragmatic match with the quest to maintain ethnic identity. Like the Ghanaian Adventists, some of the other church and ministry leaders felt that they were sent to their ethnic groups because shared features like language, culture, and networks made things easier:

Because we speak Papiamentu and we know it better than other languages, and because we have a cultural connection with Antilleans, and because our friends and family are Antillean too, we mostly, or primarily, focus on Antilleans. (coordinator of the Antillean/Aruban Seventh-day Adventist ministries¹⁹⁶; original in Dutch)

¹⁹⁵ Similar to the Ghanaian Adventists, to most leaders mission was primarily local, focused on fellow ethnics in the Netherlands, and only secondarily on those living in the wider diaspora and the country of origin. Of all churches and ministries, the ICF Kurdish ministry and Urdu Church Holland had the strongest transnational mission focus in reaching fellow ethnics (see chapter 6).

¹⁹⁶ This is one of the ministries that were studied in addition to the 15 cases that are centralised in this thesis. The Antillean/Aruban Seventh-day Adventist ministries is an umbrella organisation supporting the numerous Antillean/Aruban SDA church plants and churches in the Netherlands. See (in Papiamentu, Dutch, and English): <http://www.antilleanministry.org>.

Further, ethnic identity maintenance and the matching ethnic mission agenda were institutionalised through denominational leadership. Most of the immigrant churches that were part of worldwide denominations established in the Netherlands, had been initiated by the leadership - the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses were set up by the Branch Committee of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands, the Cape Verdean Nazarene church by the Dutch Nazarenes, the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholics by a Spanish bishop, and the Chaldean parish by the Chaldean patriarch and bishop (see 2.2). These four immigrant churches had been set up by national or international leadership for the purpose of being there for specific ethnic/linguistic communities. Their embedding in a globe-spanning denomination assigned them this particular place.

Finally, the identification with a specific ethnic group invoked a sense of responsibility for that group. The elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church for example stressed his congregation's special responsibility for the Amharic-speaking people in the Netherlands, which without their involvement would be neglected:

We focus on the Ethiopian and Eritrean community. On those who can speak Amharic. And not predominantly on other groups. And that's because the Ethiopian community does not have anybody else who has adopted it as a target group. (...)

Their [the Amharic-speaking immigrants'] Dutch is not sufficient to go to a Dutch church and get the message. And the same goes for an English church. So these people are just hanging there. So from the beginning we felt that it was our duty to reach them, to give them a place to come to. (...)

The question was: who will look for them [the Amharic-speaking immigrants], get involved with them, care for them? (...) Who will go to visit them, to tell them? (elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church; original in Dutch)

While the Ghanaian Adventists felt that if they neglected their Ghanaian mission audience, it would be 'lost' in one of the many other Ghanaian churches in the local community, the elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church felt that Amharic-speaking people would be lost in general without their involvement, since there were no other local Amharic-speaking evangelical churches. In the local Ghanaian religious market, evangelising the Ghanaians was a protection from wrong spirits and theologies, whilst in the local Ethiopian religious market, evangelising among Ethiopians was a protection from 'just hanging there' - being without church support whatsoever. Thus, the identification with an ethnic group combined with the composition of the local intra-ethnic religious market influenced the direction of the mission discourse.

The importance of reproducing ethnicity undergirded the ethnic/linguistic mission agenda's, but was not always straightforward. In some cases, it entailed *new productions*. For example, whilst for some churches the ethnic boundary was dominant or coincided with the linguistic boundary/ies¹⁹⁷, for others the linguistic boundary was primary and encompassed various ethnicities¹⁹⁸. In the latter cases the church catered to a linguistic and therefore wider audience, though certain ethnic groups were still dominant. For example, 'Urdu Church Holland' mostly consisted of Pakistani members, but the church

¹⁹⁷ This was the case for the Indonesian, Japanese, Serbian, Korean, and Chaldean churches and the ICF Chinese, Kurdish, and Turkish ministries.

¹⁹⁸ This was the case for the Persian-, Urdu-, Amharic-, Portuguese-, and Spanish-speaking churches and the ICF English-speaking and French-speaking African ministries.

name referred to a linguistic rather than an ethnic boundary. Thus, the church sought to include non-Pakistani speakers of Urdu or related languages, such as Indians and Surinamese. In this way, there was not only a reproduction of ethnicity in the migration context, but also a production of inter-ethnic bridges. The small representation of specific language groups was conducive to the construction of an intra-linguistic, inter-ethnic mission discourse.

In other cases, the ethnic focus was far from pragmatic and required leaders to study up on 'their own' ethnic identities. When I asked the Indonesian pastor what were his greatest challenges in his mission work, he answered:

The challenge is to... I see everything as a challenge of course... But the challenge that I always see is the cultural challenge. How to reach the Indonesian people who come to the Netherlands with their own Indonesian culture, which does not always connect with the Dutch culture (...). Also, you have the different cultures of particular islands, ethnic groups, and so on. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has its own way of doing things, Indonesia has so many different ethnic groups, each time you have to find another way as to how to deal with them. (...) I have been spiritually trained in the Netherlands, was converted here, have studied theology here, was educated in the churches here, hung out with Dutch people, and now God gives me a people group, which originally is my own, but of which I discover that there is more to learn, that I don't know it all... And that is the challenge, that whenever there is a problem, when something needs to be solved, then I say oh God help me, how should I deal with this person, who comes from this and this people group. (pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB; original in Dutch)

In this quote, the pastor reveals two reasons why his focus on Indonesians was not all that easy: 1) Indonesians are in themselves culturally varied and 2) the pastor himself was so much integrated in the Netherlands that he felt he lacked cultural knowledge of Indonesians, whilst in the beginning of his work he hardly had networks among Indonesians in the Netherlands either. The leader of the ICF Turkish ministry experienced another cultural obstacle to reach his 'own' group. Having come from Turkey as an adult, he experienced Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands to be quite different from Turks back home:

Through this work I have come to know myself better. And I have learned more about the society, and especially about the Turkish group. Because look, imagine you are Dutch, you go to Turkey, and there are many Dutch immigrants there. This is an example. And you are a Christian, or you have come to believe, and your church members or people around you will say: look you are a Dutch person, you have the cultural knowledge, you can work with the Dutch. And you say yes, that's true, because you are Turkish and I am Dutch. And yes there are many Dutch immigrants. And then you start. But later you find out that those immigrants who are there, the Dutch, they have become so different from those in Holland, where you just came from. They have actually become a different people. They are not Turkish, they are not Dutch... with their norms and their values they have actually become a completely different group. So then you say no, I am not ready. I have to do a study, to know these people more. (...) People always reason like: you come from Africa, so you can... Or you're from Curacao, so you can go to church with people from Curacao. Well, in our church, that's really not the case. You have to learn a lot. Learn learn. (leader of the ICF Turkish ministry; original in Dutch)

In this quote, the Turkish leader points out the tendency of other (likely Dutch) Christians to organise mission along ethnic lines, whilst they do not take into account that

a Turk in the Netherlands is not the same as a Turk in Turkey. The Indonesian and Turkish leaders thus clarify that the focus on fellow ethnics is less obvious than it may seem at first glance: internal diversity, personal identity, and transnational differences all can make evangelising ‘fellow ethnics’ in the diaspora a close to cross-cultural endeavour. This forms a clear contrast to the Ghanaian Adventists, who rarely referred to such complexities, aside from an occasional reference to the impression that Ghanaians in Europe have secularised. The divergence here can likely be accounted for by the differences in duration of immigration in the Netherlands, which influences the level of change and diversity in an immigrant group. There were substantial numbers of Indo’s and Indonesians in the Netherlands already in the 1950s and 1960s and Turks in the 1960s and 1970s, whilst most Ghanaians came decades later in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, duration of immigration influenced the way ethnic boundaries were experienced in mission.

To some pastors, the ethnic/linguistic mission focus was not the most commonsense way to go but actually conflicted with their theology. In the spirit of Christian universalism, they held that everybody is in need of and has the right to hear the gospel. The ethnic/linguistic limitation was thus a deliberate construction rather than self-evident. Some leaders negotiated this tension by adding universalistic elements to their ethnicised mission agenda. For example, the website of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB formulated part of the church vision as: “To be a blessing to all people and especially to those coming from Indonesia”. In a similar way, the elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church explained that the church name ‘Mahber Kristian’, meaning ‘Christian fellowship’, deliberately excluded a reference to ethnicity since being Christian was their primary identity. Yet, he stressed that the church aimed its out-reach primarily at Ethiopians.

Finally, in a few cases leaders attributed their mission focus to a divine call to work for specific ethnic/linguistic groups. In the case of the leader of the ICF Kurdish ministry, this call was at first not logical but contested:

God called me. I was cutting roses in a greenhouse, and I heard a voice in my heart, calling me saying: I love you and I choose you for the Kurdish people, you have to share the gospel with your people. (...) I said yes Lord, but I don't want to serve those people, they are a difficult people, (...) everybody is Muslim. (...) But I heard that voice: you have to do what I tell you. I will bless you. Go and prepare a big feast for the Kurdish people. (leader of the ICF Kurdish ministry; original in Dutch)

In his narration, this leader points out that a focus on Kurds was not simply a way to reproduce ethnicity, but a strenuous task because they were largely Muslim. In the next section, I will further discuss such minority-majority relationships within the ethnic group.

In sum, ethnic and linguistic boundaries were central in organising the mission discourses of the churches. This emphasis was directly linked up with the importance of reproducing ethnicity. They thereby challenge the suggestion that mainline Protestant churches with a diasporic self-understanding reject evangelism (Währisch-Oblau 2009: 228). Rather, the diasporic identity channeled the direction of evangelism. Further, the centrality of ethnic and linguistic boundaries also required or invoked new social productions: ethnic bridges (in the case of language-based churches), managing cultural diversity in the ethnic group in the Netherlands and on a transnational level, negotiated church visions and names accounting for Christian universalism, and by God’s call going after a ‘difficult people’. In the next section, we will look a bit more closely at the different groups that were targeted within ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

4.1.1 Minorities and majorities: religious composition of the ethnic group

There is a dual relationship between ethnic/linguistic mission and the religious composition of the ethnic/linguistic group. On the one hand, the ethnic/linguistic emphasis produces a mission discourse that is chiefly concerned with the dominant other religious groups within that ethnic/linguistic group. On the other hand, when the ethnic/linguistic group is dominated by a religious 'other', this reinforces and maintains the ethnic/linguistic focus - in ways both proactive (transforming one's ethnic/linguistic community) and reactive (protecting one's religious minority). In this section, I will discuss the symbolic boundaries that delineated the religious 'other' in specific ethnic/linguistic groups and that reinforced ethnic mission.

We already saw the importance of intra-ethnic religious relations in the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, who focused on out-reach to the Pentecostal majority in the local Ghanaian community. Among the other immigrant churches, the focus on another *Christian* group was stressed in those churches that, just like the Ghanaian Adventists, were theological minorities in their Christian-majority ethnic group. The Cape Verdean Nazarenes, for example, were a tiny minority in the largely Roman Catholic Cape Verdean community. The Cape Verdean Nazarene elder and his wife 'othered' Catholics. Similar to the moral critique of the Ghanaian Adventists towards Ghanaian Pentecostals, the elder's wife noted that Catholics are strongly permissive, allowing such things as drinking alcohol and going to the disco. Like other church members, the elder's wife implicitly equated 'Christian' with 'Protestant' or 'Nazarene'. She framed her own conversion from Catholicism as 'becoming a Christian'. The elder added the issues of images and Mary:

We think differently from the Catholics. Catholics have Jesus, we also have Jesus, but the Catholics think something completely different than we do. (...)

(As if confessing:) We, as Protestants, or as a Pentecostal church, we know that Catholic teachings are not according to the gospel. Because we are not allowed to adore an image, we are not allowed to believe in Mary. (...) We always try to change the behaviour of these people, to change their way of thinking, but if it's not possible, we stop. (elder of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church; original in Dutch)

Another example was the Ethiopian evangelical church, which was a minority in an ethnic community where most were Coptic Orthodox or Muslim¹⁹⁹. The majority of the Ethiopian evangelical church members themselves were converts with a Coptic Orthodox background and strongly 'othered' the Orthodox. Where some Ghanaian Adventists 'demonised' Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, some Ethiopian evangelicals 'demonised' the Coptic Orthodox Church, describing it as occult with its elaborate rituals and use of the Bible for curses. Others noted that in the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Bible is not read and personal faith in Jesus Christ is not present. The elder explained:

As evangelicals we believe that for the Coptic Christians, the gospel is covered up. Because it's like a tradition, rather than a living faith. That is to say, everyone who is born in a Coptic Orthodox family is automatically Coptic Orthodox. (...)

90% of our church members has a Coptic background. Why have we converted? From an evangelical perspective, the Coptic faith has wandered away from the core of the gospel. It is stuck in traditions and

¹⁹⁹ According to Ferrier (2002: 78), about half of the Ethiopians in the Netherlands are Orthodox in background.

superstition. At least that applies to most of the common people (...), not to the Coptic priest. Like you believe in Mary, who can forgive and sanctify you, because she has a covenant with the Lord. People choose some kind of saint, Mary, Gabriel, or others. In doing that, they deviate from the faith that has been handed down to us. That's why for Copts, works are very important to be saved. To them it's not faith that saves. (...) But truly, works do not save, they are an evidence of faith. This issue always comes up in the discussion with Copts. So the Copts are definitely an important target to us, the primary target you could say. (elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church; original in Dutch)

On the other hand, unlike the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventists, the Ethiopians were very inclusive in regard to other Protestant denominations. The church pews were filled with a variety of believers like Lutherans, Baptists, Mennonites, Pentecostals, and even Seventh-day Adventists²⁰⁰.

For those immigrant churches that were part of Christian-majority ethnic groups, but themselves represented theological *majorities*, there accordingly was a lack of mission discourse about other forms of Christianity. Examples were the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish and the Serbian Orthodox parish. Their ethnic focus was not sustained by the religious composition of their ethnic groups, but respectively by their emphasis on social service to and re-converting wandering brethren from their ethnic groups (see the next section).

In another type of minority-majority relationships, some churches' ethnic/linguistic mission programme implied a focus on *non-Christians*. Whereas the Ghanaian Adventists were silent about non-Christian religions, these immigrant churches were not, as they represented Christian minorities in a non-Christian-majority ethnic group. For example, the Japanese Protestant church and the ICF Chinese ministry were part of predominantly Buddhist/secular ethnic communities. In the interviews, the leaders drew clear boundaries between Buddhism and Christianity:

I asked them [Japanese people]: what do you believe about Buddhism? They said: 'Nothing. My family is Buddhist. I go to Buddhist parties, funerals, and so forth.' But they don't have a personal faith, or a relation with God. They have almost a million idols, everything is a god: clouds, mountains. But in general, Japanese have nothing. (pastor of the Japanese Protestant church; original in Dutch)

What is very interesting to me, I've never seen anyone read books or a Bible from Buddhism. But they are claiming themselves to be Buddhist. Unlike Christians, at least we have the Bible. They have nothing... (...) For me it's very unclearly defined, Buddhism. It's way too general. (leader of the ICF Chinese ministry)

In Christianity we have our Bible. But in Buddhism, I don't have any clue if there is a holy book highly respected and is available to ordinary believers. At least I have not seen such a holy book. I am not saying Buddhism is built on air, to the contrary, I firmly believe Buddhism has lots of books on which their belief system has been nurtured and flourished. However, such books are not possible for common believers to understand because the language is ancient and difficult. (leader of the ICF Chinese ministry, communication over Facebook)

²⁰⁰ Although I did not personally meet these Amharic-speaking Adventists, the elder confirmed that the reasons for their presence in this church were similar to those of the Ghanaian Adventist 'backsliders' discussed in the previous chapter: with no Amharic-speaking SDA congregations in the Netherlands, they preferred familiar ethnic/linguistic over familiar theological community.

In these quotes, the leaders used their Christian standards to mark the boundary between Christianity and Buddhism. From the perspective of the evangelical stress on 'having a personal relationship with Jesus', and informed by 33 years of observing Buddhism in Japan as a missionary, the Dutch-Canadian pastor of the Japanese Protestant church held that Buddhism is a cultural rather than a personal religion, and therefore leaves behind an emptiness. Likewise, from the viewpoint of the centrality of scriptures in Protestant Christianity, the leader of the ICF Chinese ministry felt that the apparent lack of accessible scriptures in Buddhism made it into an unclearly defined religion for the common believer.

Other churches were part of Muslim-majority ethnic communities, including the Chaldean parish, Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses, Urdu Church Holland, and the ICF Turkish and Kurdish ministries. In the interviews, leaders of these churches marked the boundary between Christianity and Islam in a variety of ways:

Jesus asks forgiveness, to love. Mohammed asks something else. This way [the way of Jesus] brings you to humanness. And this way [the way of Mohammed] brings you to, say, nowhere. (...)
You read this book [the Quran], and in this book you are taught to kill other people. And in the other book [the Bible] you are taught something different, to love people. Well, which one do you think is best? (priest of the Chaldean parish; original in Dutch)

God accepts you as you are, and really loves you. And what you [Muslims] are doing for God is not necessary, praying five times a day... Actually God doesn't desire these things. But God desires a personal relationship. (...)

Muslims miss the love of God, a personal relationship. God is not very far, but very close. When you read the story of the prodigal son, you see the son that was living with his father for years, but he had never experienced his father's heart. He said to his father: 'I've done so much for you, and you have never thrown me a party, and...' This son is actually very far from the father, he has never experienced his heart, his love. And that's kind of how I see Muslims. They have to experience the love of God. (leader of the ICF Turkish ministry; original in Dutch)

With polite intonations, these leaders contrasted Christianity and Islam: Christianity is about loving, Islam is about killing; the Christian God is personal and loving, the Muslims don't know this love and observe unnecessary practices.

The dominance of non-Christian religions in certain ethnic/linguistic groups also influenced mission discourses in another way. Immigrant churches that were part of such ethnic/linguistic groups were generally unconcerned with *intra-Christian* differences²⁰¹. The wife of the pastor of Urdu Church Holland for example said:

When someone in my hairdressers says: I am Catholic, then I say: no, you are not Catholic, you are Christian. (...) They separate everything. That's not good. (...) We are Christian, or Muslim, or Hindu. But not Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and so on... those are just congregations! (wife of the pastor of Urdu Church Holland; original in Dutch)

²⁰¹ Examples were the Japanese Protestant church, Urdu Church Holland, the Indonesian evangelical GKP, and the ICF Kurdish, Turkish, and Chinese ministries. These leaders refrained from constructing Christian branches other than their own as mission targets by either explicitly framing them as belonging to 'us', or by emphasising basic Christian building blocks such as 'Jesus' rather than theological specifics.

This theological inclusivism was testified by the composition of church membership. Urdu Church Holland and the Japanese Protestant church for example both included not only Protestant, but also Catholic attendees. Because immigrant churches that were Christian minorities in their ethnic/linguistic group were small in size and rather exclusive on the market, they negated the relevance of intra-Christian boundaries²⁰².

4.1.2 Switchers and sliders: claiming a community of faith

The literature on immigration and religion shows that transnational ties in all their diversity are very important to immigrants (see 1.4.1). Such ties create communities in spite of physical distance or national boundaries. Looking at evangelism among immigrants adds a different form of imagined community to this picture. As we saw in the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, adherents of one's faith community can easily be lost in the migration process. Yet in spite of the religious distance, such switchers and 'sliders' (those who moved to other churches or dropped Christianity altogether) were still considered to be part of the community of faith – a 'them' who were in fact still 'us'. Like transnational ties, mission discourses about and practices towards 'lost' fellow immigrants in the host society constituted an imagining of one's community beyond certain boundaries. In this section I will outline the different ways in which switchers and 'sliders', the claimed community, were depicted.

Pastors highlighted the economic motif of those who switched or 'slided'. The Chaldean priest was one of the church leaders who was particularly concerned about winning back former attendees. He observed that there were about 700 Iraqi families in the Netherlands that were Catholic. However, only about 500 families regularly attended mass in one of the six Chaldean centres in the Netherlands. Only on special celebrations like Christmas and Easter, more Iraqis attended. The priest attributed the gap between those Catholic Iraqis living in the Netherlands and those Catholic Iraqis regularly attending mass in the country, to the economic demands of immigrant life and in particular the need to work on the weekends. Likewise, the pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB stressed the economic motif. He had observed that Christian Indonesians in the Netherlands often ceased their churchgoing, and connected this to the busy work lives of Indonesians in the Netherlands:

When the Indonesians come to the Netherlands, many of them still have to develop so many things, they are so concentrated on their work, that they forget about churchgoing for a little while. And that 'little while' stretches and stretches, and before you know it you are completely away from it all. But deeply inside their souls, they do long to have fellowship with their fellow believers in a foreign land, the Netherlands. (pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB; original in Dutch)

Another important motif church leaders discerned was cultural-linguistic. The mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church in Amsterdam Southeast²⁰³ was concerned

²⁰² This is not to say that intra-Christian differences went unnoticed, but that they were relatively peripheral in meaning. For example, the priest of the Chaldean parish noted the significance of Mary as an important distinction between Catholics and Protestants, but to him the division between believing in/living like Jesus and not believing in/not living like Him was much more important.

²⁰³ This church was set up by a group of Antilleans and Arubans who frequented a multi-ethnic SDA church in Amsterdam Southeast (which was also the mother church of the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventists, see 2.1). As in the case of the Ghanaians, they desired to establish their own congregation to

about bringing back Antilleans and Arubans in the Netherlands who used to be Adventist. For the future, he was planning to set up a church specifically for Spanish-speaking Antillean/Aruban Adventists.

There are a lot of Spanish-speaking Adventists, and because they don't understand Dutch, and don't understand Papiamentu, they go to other churches, like Jehovah's Witnesses, or... the Protestants, where they have Spanish groups. And now we also want to set up a Spanish Adventist group, so that these people can come back. (...)

We miss these people. Because... in their land, or Curacao, they were part of the Adventist church. But now they came here, they are not Adventist anymore, they go to a different church. (...) God wants to have his children back. (mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church; original in Dutch)

The mission leader here points out the importance of the immigrant religious market. Since many immigrants are primarily looking for specific ethnic/linguistic communities, they seem to switch theological affiliation to wherever these communities are found. The pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB also linked the drop in churchgoing of Indonesians to the linguistic and cultural distance many experienced when they went to Dutch churches. In his view, compared to Dutch churches, the Indonesian liturgy would be more relaxed and loosely organised, Indonesian pastors would use a more simple language and more humour in their sermons, and Indonesian churchgoers would socialise more intensely.

There were more migration related factors that underpinned switching and 'sliding'. The Indonesian pastor referred to the influence of Western secularisation:

Secularisation is very strong in the West, and it influences the Indonesian, consciously or unconsciously. The Indonesian people are very spiritual. They are spiritually sensitive. You can come to them with anything spiritual and they are open for it, you can talk about it. In the Netherlands, on the contrary, they are against it, like: do you still believe in all those... outmoded, silly things. But in Indonesia everything has to do with God, or however they call it. The religious consciousness or awareness of the Indonesian people is much stronger, but because of all the attention they give to worldly and secular (...) things, they have gradually lost that spiritual sensitivity. And this, unconsciously, makes them spiritually inactive. (pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB; original in Dutch)

The leaders of the Ethiopian evangelical church and Urdu Church Holland likewise observed that some fellow ethnics secularised in the Netherlands because of their increased material wealth and the influence of the wider secular culture²⁰⁴. It is interesting to note, then, that the challenge for immigrant churches was not only to reach the secularised Dutch, but also to re-convert secularised Christian immigrants.

worship in their own language and to reach out to Antilleans and Arubans specifically. In this thesis, I will refer to this church as 'the Antillean/Aruban SDA church', but, since there are several Antillean/Aruban SDA churches in the Netherlands, it must be stressed that this will refer particularly to the congregation in Amsterdam Southeast.

²⁰⁴ In a similar vein, Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000: 34-36) note that leaders of immigrant non-Christian religious groups in the US, which have moved from a religious majority to a religious minority status, seek to make their flock more knowledgeable about their faith in order to maintain previously taken-for-granted religious elements and protect their faith.

The leaders of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church mentioned other aspects of the migration context to account for the decreased religiosity of Cape Verdean Nazarene immigrants. The elder observed that drop-outs usually were 'not truly converted': for them, the rupture of migration would have been sufficient to separate them from the church. The leaders also mentioned the issue of church buildings: most Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam lived in another part of the city, and would find it too tiring and time-consuming to come to the location of the Nazarene church. This situation was hard to change due to a lack of resources. Also, various church members had left because the church pastor had returned to Cape Verde because of adaptation problems, leaving the church temporarily without a pastor.

Some motifs were not directly related to the migration situation. Next to economic reasons, the Chaldean priest for example explained the loss of Chaldean attendees by an idiosyncratic factor: a preceding priest had made himself quite unpopular. Because of tensions between this earlier priest and his flock, various parishioners had moved to churches of Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestants. In addition, Dutch and Iraqi Jehovah's Witnesses actively evangelised Chaldean Catholics in a particular Dutch city. Although the Chaldean priest did not aim to evangelise other Christians, he found the move of Catholic flock into churches of Protestants and especially Jehovah's Witnesses wholly disagreeable. He was highly concerned about protecting his flock in what he called 'a shaking city where the Catholic community stands on one leg only'²⁰⁵. The Serbian Orthodox parish also illustrated dynamics of switching and sliding in which migration did not play the key role. One of the priests explained that it was not the case that Serbian Orthodox people in Serbia were actively involved in the faith and then suddenly or gradually dropped out in the Netherlands, but that Serbian Orthodox people in general were often registered as church members without being regular attendees. He noted that there were many Serbians in the Netherlands who were registered members of the Orthodox parish, but barely attended the Divine Liturgy aside from special events like Christmas and Easter. The Serbian Orthodox parish had 5.000 members on paper, about 1200 attendees for special events, and only about 150 during regular services. The priests held the view that believers who were only Orthodox in name, did not engage fully with the Orthodox tradition, and desired to stimulate them to fuller participation.

Clearly, the Ghanaian Adventists' stress on reaching 'backsliders' was not unique, but indicative of a pattern. In a variety of ways, migration and other factors were conducive to let Christian immigrants switch churches or drop out altogether. Church leaders contested this phenomenon by claiming these immigrants as part of their church community.

It is evident that ethnic and linguistic boundaries were primary in defining the mission agenda of these immigrant churches. We will now move to a discussion of discourses about mission targets across these boundaries.

²⁰⁵ The issue of competition was referred to more widely: the pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB mentioned practices of 'member stealing' among Indonesian churches in the Netherlands. The competitive nature of diasporic Christianity was thus also manifested in non-Pentecostal/charismatic churches (cf. Währisch-Oblau 2009: 116).

4.2 The white Dutch as mission target

Like the Ghanaian Adventists, most church leaders defined a *second* task for themselves in terms of reaching ‘the Dutch’, albeit sometimes ambivalently. As outlined in the introduction of 3.2, I use this term in the way it was generally used by church leaders (and thus in an emic sense): to refer to white people whose mother tongue is Dutch. The additional mission goal of reaching ‘the Dutch’ was concerned with reaching both Dutch Christians (4.2.1) and Dutch unbelievers (4.2.2).

4.2.1 Of morality and vitality: Dutch Christians

In 1.4.2, we saw that immigrant churches often appropriate their own moral authority, sometimes affecting an excluding approach to the host society. As we saw in the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, this seemed to apply not only to the secularised segments of society, but also to Dutch *Christians*. Though the view on Dutch Christians was not unequivocally critical and sometimes particularly positive, several immigrant church leaders voiced concerns. In this context, immigrant churches that were part of established denominations in the Netherlands were a special case, since they usually had a uniquely close exposure to Dutch Christians. In their encounters with Dutch brethren, they discerned differences that produced in them some sense of moral and spiritual authority²⁰⁶.

The Cape Verdean Nazarene church, which was part of the Church of the Nazarene in the Netherlands, was an illustrative case. The Cape Verdean elder observed that the Dutch Nazarenes were relatively liberal, noting their permission of drinking, smoking, cohabitation, and having children before marriage. These issues echo the way Ghanaian Adventists appraised Dutch Adventism (see 3.2.1), which suggests that they are more general loci of tension in the encounter between immigrant and indigenous Christians. Again, the relationship between culture and religion emerged as a theme. The Cape Verdean elder noted that the Dutch church leaders explained their position by referring to historical changes and cultural differences. In contrast to this perspective, the elder and his wife took the universalistic stance that God and the Bible transcend historical and cultural circumstances.

The Bible and God are the same today and the same tomorrow. They [the Dutch Nazarenes] should not follow our [the Cape Verdean Nazarene] ways, but the ways of God and the Bible. (elder of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church; original in Dutch)

The elder emphasised that this view was not particular, not ‘our ways’, but of universal import: ‘the ways of God and the Bible’. In 3.2.1 we likewise saw how one of the Ghanaian SDA elders highlighted that church practices did not originate in ‘Ghanaian culture’, but in the example of Christ and the recommendations of prophetess Ellen White. Währisch-Oblau (2009: 238) refers to a similar sentiment that was often expressed

²⁰⁶ This finding is possibly influenced by the fact that most of the denominational immigrant churches I studied had few Dutch members. Van der Meer’s study (2010) revealed varieties in the level of attention that African Catholics paid to differences between them and Dutch Catholics, depending on whether they attended a Dutch, international, or ‘African’ parish. The attendees of the African parish paid most attention to these differences.

to her by Pentecostal/charismatic migrant pastors: “We don’t dance in church because we are Africans, but because it is written in the Bible!”. The felt need for immigrants to stress the universality of their faith practice may be understood from the encounter with culturally relativist talk on the part of Dutch Christians in two ways: the Dutch accounted for their own Christian practice by referring to Dutch culture, and explained the immigrants’ differing Christian practice by referring to the immigrants’ culture (which is closely related to the tendency to prioritise immigrants’ ethnicity over their Christian identity).

The leaders of the two Catholic parishes also delineated Dutch Catholics as Christians in need of revival. However, they did not concentrate on specific moral issues of universal applicability, but on spiritual vitality. The Chaldean priest called the Dutch Catholic church ‘close to dead’:

When you look at a painting, with old people, really old, they cannot walk, what kind of feeling would you get? (...) That’s [sighs with a laugh] the Catholic Church here in the Netherlands. I don’t see young people in the church service. Okay, maybe one or two. (priest of the Chaldean parish; original in Dutch)

The coordinator and volunteer of the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish had a similar perspective on Dutch Catholics. They referred to lack of spiritual vitality as a boundary marker, stressing that the Dutch Catholic church, in spite of some really active people, had very few members, even less youth, and an ever decreasing membership. A Dutch priest involved with the parish, a former missionary in Latin America, noted that when he asked parishioners how they felt about the Dutch Catholic church, they said they found it ‘cold and chilly’²⁰⁷. The assessment of the Dutch Catholic church by the leaders of the Chaldean and Spanish-speaking Catholic parishes thus emerged from their observation of the relatively small and elderly church membership on the one hand, and the lack of spiritual vitality expressed in ‘deadness’ and ‘coldness’ on the other. The leaders of both immigrant parishes hoped that they could positively contribute to the Dutch Catholic church by their vitality.

The perception of the questionable morality and vitality of Dutch Christians was directly linked to the views on wider Dutch society, to which we will now turn.

4.2.2 The Dutch: are they Christians? Are we their missionaries?

More than half of the leaders of the churches and ministries considered Dutch unbelievers to be their second mission target²⁰⁸. In various ways, they depicted the Dutch as secularised people who had lost Christian beliefs, morals, and practices. They often stressed that the Dutch *used* to be Christian but had now given up their faith:

²⁰⁷ The parishioners also considered it strange that this Dutch priest, having dropped the practice, never participated in their monthly gathering to collectively pray the rosary.

²⁰⁸ These included the leaders of the Ethiopian evangelical church, the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, the Serbian Orthodox parish, the Japanese Protestant church, the Korean Reformed church, Urdu Church Holland, the Chaldean parish, and the ICF Turkish, English-speaking and French-speaking African ministries.

Dutch society is good, but it's different than in the past. From what I heard. I was not here in the past. But what I hear from Dutch people is that in the past the church had young people, it was full. But I don't see that anymore. That means that it has gone down. (...)

You know what they do less here [the Netherlands]? Going to church. They say: I left it behind. I was baptised, but that's it. My parents baptised me, I used to be Roman Catholic, I used to be Reformed, I used to be... Used to be. They do no longer say: I am this or that. (wife of the pastor of Urdu Church Holland; original in Dutch)

We realise that a lot of Dutch people just call themselves Christian, because their parents once sat in church before. And their parents once sent them to church before. Or they were baptised when they were children before. And that's all, but they don't have a personal relation with Jesus Christ. So we count all such people as unbelievers. (leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry)

These church leaders acknowledged the Christian past of the Dutch, noting that the Dutch used to go to church and once were baptised. Today, this Christian identity has been lost, since people do not go to church anymore and do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Others referred to the Dutch missionary past to denote the change. The leader of the Ethiopian evangelical church in Rotterdam shared that he expected the West to be Christian because of the missionaries it sent. The association between evangelical Christianity and 'the West' was so strong that in his observation, the Coptic Orthodox Church in Ethiopia branded evangelicals as 'Westerners'. Because of this linkage, his discovery that the Netherlands was not all that Christian was quite a shock.

Others perceived the Dutch as a semi-Christian people: still Christian, in a sense, but without their faith taking full effect:

White people are Christians, but they also have a private life. For them it's only on Sunday, but God is not only in the church, but has to be in your life too, in your family, God has to be there. Because I once was visiting a Dutch family, they were Christians, then we talked about the Bible. He said okay, I'm going to look for my Bible, and then that Bible came with so much dust on it! [laughs] (...) Everyone has a Bible, but where is the place of God in your life? There is only a small place for spirituality. Because yes, when I have a problem, I have a psychologist, I have a doctor, I have this and that... and also God. But for us it's like: I first have God, and those others sometimes come in. (...)

In the Netherlands, there is theology, but what is lacking is spirituality. When you look at Dutch churches, they know about Bible stories, but you don't feel... You don't feel it, yes theology is there, but I don't feel spirituality at all. In the sermon, you have [the biblical book of] Romans, [the biblical book of] Acts, but salvation is not Acts, salvation is not Romans. Salvation is Jesus. And the relationship with Jesus is very important. (leader of the ICF French-speaking African ministry; original in Dutch)

This leader expressed certain limitations in the white/Dutch way of being Christian. White/Dutch Christians narrowed God down to a small portion of their life (seen by their focus on Sunday church hours, a dusty Bible, and an array of 'problem-solving' characters next to God) and emphasised theological 'head knowledge' over a spiritual relationship with Jesus.

To church leaders who belonged to ethnic groups that experienced oppressive responses to Christianity, the secularism of the Dutch was the more astounding since being a Christian was a relatively easy option for them:

Dutch people today, look, Dutch people used to be strong believers. And what you see now is that without communism, without any force, they are giving up their faith. And that's a shame. At least we believers think so. (student priest of the Serbian Orthodox parish; original in Dutch)

I have talked a lot about God with Dutch people... It's such a pity when a person does not believe. I mean, a Muslim should believe in Jesus, but you [the Dutch] have this treasure from birth, but you leave it. (leader of the ICF Turkish ministry; original in Dutch)

Thus, the Serbian priest recalled the pressure on the Serbian Orthodox Church during the communist reign, and expressed surprise that the Dutch, politically free to be Christian, voluntarily gave up their faith. The Turkish leader implied that Muslims have to walk a difficult path towards Christianity, whilst it seems the natural way for the Dutch, who remarkably choose to leave it.

As in the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, most leaders explained or equated the Dutch loss of faith by or with the materialistic focus of Dutch society:

In Western countries there is only a minority that keeps believing, because there has been a change in what people find interesting. And they are so busy with owning things, that they... for many people, God is money. And you can't combine those things. When you choose for a career, money, having everything, a good position, then you don't have time (...) for anything but yourself. (coordinator of the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish; original in Dutch)

Some added other arguments, such as these given by the volunteer of the same parish in response to the words quoted above:

I think that here in the Netherlands, people have come to the point where they think: we don't need this hierarchy. We don't need this church that limits us. I can be good without a church. I have discovered that many people here in the Netherlands think that it is childish to believe. I had never seen that before. (...) Maybe they have a bad experience with church structure. But the problem when you think that it's 'childish', is that they are so mature that they are not open to listen to God anymore... You have to be a child, you know. (...)

But also after the [Second World] war, many people stopped with church. Maybe there was just a kind of disappointment... I don't know the history of the church here in the Netherlands very well, but what I heard a week ago is that before the war, the churches were full. After the war, churches were empty. Perhaps when somebody dies in your family, you ask questions... about your faith, and about what kind of god God is, that something like that could happen. (volunteer of the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish; original in Dutch)

Thus, the distance the Dutch had taken from Christianity was attributed not only to materialism, but also to a resistance against hierarchy, individualist ethics, the view that believing is childish, and the ravaging experience of the Second World War. The Serbian student priest further pointed to 'the painful history of the Roman Catholic and Protestant church here in Holland', referring to the abundance of religious restrictions and prohibitions that the Dutch allegedly became fed up with.

Many church and ministry leaders observed the need for evangelising the once-Christian or reviving the semi-Christian Dutch. However, this usually was a secondary discourse next to the main focus on fellow ethnics, and some felt hesitant about their call to do the

job. As in the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, church leaders particularly pointed out their lack of fluency in the Dutch language as an obstacle. For example, the Chaldean priest hoped he could help to revitalise the Dutch Catholic church in the future, but felt incapable of doing so at the time of fieldwork as he considered his Dutch language skills to still be insufficient. Others also mentioned the obstacles of cultural difference, lack of networks, and prejudice:

Because of their culture and language, the Dutch are in a better position to reach the Dutch than we are. We have difficulty understanding Dutch very well. We don't know the culture 100%, we know it, but we lag behind in that. And we don't have the circle of family and friends to reach the Dutch. We are open to bond with all, but people still have... prejudices and that kind of thing. (...) It is because a certain group of Antilleans is behaving in a certain way that you are quickly branded and seen as suspect. So we have all these things to catch up on before we can have a conversation with a Dutch person. (coordinator of the Antillean/Aruban SDA ministries; original in Dutch)

Some leaders mentioned the negative self-image of their people. The pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB noted that Indonesians, many of whom faced little language boundaries, had an inferiority complex over against whites due to the colonial past. One of the leaders of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church stressed that Antilleans/Arubans had a low self-esteem in Dutch society. Again others referred to their small size. The Cape Verdean Nazarene elder felt that the voice of his church would hardly be heard because of its weak numerical position:

The Dutch Nazarenes are like a big boss. There are 70 of us [Cape Verdeans] and there are 1.000 of them. Even if we would want to say something, we would not stand a chance. (elder of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church; original in Dutch)

As with the Ghanaian Adventists, social considerations (language and culture differences, lack of networks, prejudice, negative self-images, and small size) affected the imaginations of these church leaders. Although they saw the spiritual need of the Dutch, they hesitated whether they were the ones who could do something about it.

In this context, some relegated the task to the next generation: their children, who were less charged with sociological obstacles. The wife of the pastor of Urdu Church Holland, for example, imagined future generations of Pakistani and Dutch people to intermarry, which would open the way for faithful Pakistani's to (re-)Christianise their Dutch spouses and inter-ethnic children:

Pastor's wife Urdu Church Holland: Look, later our children will get married. A Dutch girl. I don't know. If you stay strong in the faith, then just like we are cooperating with the [Dutch] Reformed church, in the same way they can live together. Their children will grow up as Christians, believers. When a Pakistani boy and a Dutch girl get married... Isn't that how things will be in the future in this country? And if the faith is strong, then perhaps a Pakistani boy, with good faith, and a woman comes to him, they go to church together, and when they get children, then that same generation that was here in the past, will be here again. Just like your grandmother was in the past. And the grandmother of grandmother. This will return with our children. (...)

Pastor Urdu Church Holland: My Dutch is bad. Later they can speak Urdu and Dutch very well.

Pastor's wife Urdu Church Holland: *They have been born here and they speak Dutch, just imagine how that works... (...) It's a repetition. Like fashion. That which was in the sixties will return.* (original in Dutch)

This couple believed that, with the removal of the language boundary and the fruit of inter-ethnic marriage, their children would restore the Dutch Christian heritage. Other church leaders were equally optimistic. One of the Serbian priests noted that the next generation would be more suited to reach the Dutch because of their language skills, since they could translate relevant Orthodox literature in Dutch and visit Dutch people. He framed the Orthodox theology study of two young parishioners as an investment for the future. A Pentecostal Korean church in Amsterdam planned on the long term to recruit adopted Koreans who had grown up in the Netherlands. In the view of one of the church leaders, they would reach the Dutch more easily. Thus, as much as church leaders saw social obstacles for themselves, they saw smooth paths ahead for their Dutch-grown children's success in evangelising the Dutch²⁰⁹. In other words, both the difficulties of the present and the successes of the future were attributed to sociological factors. Church leaders did not account for potential problems their children might still encounter, nor did they acknowledge the struggles Dutch Christians encounter when recruiting new souls, despite of a lack of basic sociological hindrances.

In marked contrast to the above, there was one church leader who adopted the Dutch as his *primary* mission target and considered himself unequivocally called to be a missionary towards them: the pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church. He observed the Netherlands and especially its bigger cities as a place where Christianity had withered in terms of beliefs and morals, and where other religious groups had gained ground:

The community we are in is a dark continent, let me use that term. Atheist community. People don't believe at all. If you have ten people in the street, and you ask: do you believe in God, they say: no I believe in myself. You will at least find nine who say that. One will say well, I believe there is something, but I'm not a churchgoer. Or one will say, well, I was formerly a Catholic member [laughs], or Dutch Reformed or whatever. But I'm no more. Yeah my parents were going to church, and they put me in church. So you'll realise that... And you'll be surprised, some people don't know anything about the Word of God at all! They don't have any knowledge about Christ. Not even one percent. No knowledge at all. So you ask yourself: how? In such a civilised community! It's dangerous. (...)
You can't bring sanity to a community when you take Christianity out, because Christianity brings moral standard, character, good manners. And that is what we want the nation to get aware of, so that they won't take their Bibles out of their schools... Because this is the foundation and the constitution of this nation. Whilst our forefathers fought for it, we came in, and now it's like a New Age movement. You can do it on your own. That is what they are preaching. You can handle it. Why should I believe in a God I haven't seen? So atheism is all over. (pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church)

²⁰⁹ Not only the cultural-linguistic know-how of the second generation, but also the socio-economic support of the first generation can be constructed as a way to win the souls of European 'natives'. Ukah (2009: 121) observes that the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the UK considers its "asylum Christianity" as the path to reversed mission: "In the vision of the church, one way of re-converting Europe is to help struggling Africans secure proper permits to live and work there and remake them into missionaries carrying out the church's ideas and programmes of a reverse mission".

With the rapid insurgence of the Islamic religion, which seems to have caught the acclamation of the government; with the rapid growth of Hare Krishna and other religions from the East and acceptance of cultural revolution in this once unchallenged Christian nation, the vision should be clear, that, as Ghana has lost her fame in soccer, boxing etc., even so Christianity may be surprised to find itself relegated to an unprecedented position to the disadvantage of future generations. The darkness of coming night is seen all around us. Satan is fighting relentlessly like mad; he never takes a holiday, he is committed to the destruction of the souls of men. (pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church, in his manual 'Evangelism' written for his evangelistic trainings [see chapter 6])

In the first quote, the pastor strongly relates Christianity to social progress. A 'civilised community' should be Christian. And if it is not, this is dangerous, and society loses sanity, moral standards, character, good manners, and their foundation and constitution. In the meantime, religions like the New Age, atheism, Islam, Hare Krishna and 'other religions from the East' advance themselves, giving Satan the space to destroy souls. In this battle, the pastor outlined that the primary purpose of his church was to bring Dutch unbelievers back to the Christian faith, reciprocating what they had given Africa before:

Our main goal is the native. Because we want to bring revival into the nation back. We are grateful the Western countries came to Africa and gave us the gospel. But we are realising that the Western land, countries, are now being a dark continent, let me use that term, in terms of the gospel. (...) The goal is that the natives will take over this church. (pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church)

Why did this pastor, unlike the other church leaders, speak so unambivalently about his mission to the Dutch? Both personal and group factors can be discerned. This pastor had been trained in and previously sent out by the Church of Pentecost (see 2.2), which, like other Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, has a strongly international focus. Daswani (2008: 7) writes: "An important part of religious transformation in the CoP, on becoming Pentecostal Christian, is the obligation to spread the Word of God outside Africa". And Onyinah observes about the CoP that "it intends to use the Ghanaian communities overseas as a springboard to contribute to the Christianization of the world through evangelism" (2004: 218). On top of this internationalist foundation, some social obstacles mentioned by other church leaders in regard to the Dutch were less relevant to this church leader because of the social capital he had built up in the country. He had lived in the Netherlands/Europe since the early 1980s, had extensive contacts in the society and some acquaintance with the Dutch language. Although he recognised the reality of racial boundaries, he did not mention them when imagining himself and his largely black church as missionaries to the Dutch. In terms of group factors, this Ghanaian/Nigerian-majority Pentecostal church was not a religious minority within the local African communities. In that sense, the context was quite different from that of, say, the ICF Kurdish ministry or the Ethiopian evangelical church. We have seen that being a religious minority within the ethnic group reinforces an ethnic/linguistic mission discourse. This dynamic was clearly not at work in the Pentecost Revival Church. In chapters 6 and 8 we will see how this pastor's goal to reach the Dutch played out in practice.

4.3 Other cases: spatial and liturgical focus

There were a couple of church leaders that had unique missiological positions in the sample of cases. The pastor of the MCTC aimed for a multi-ethnic church:

For me, all nations should come together to praise. In heaven it's going to be colourful. So for me, the church should be as multicultural as possible. That's the church I'm dreaming of. (...)

We are not targeting a specific ethnic group, but the whole population. (pastor of the multicultural evangelical MCTC)

In line with this ethnic inclusivism, this pastor defined mission in spatial terms. Evangelism was to be geared to neighbourhood communities, a programme that was underscored by phrases on the church website such as 'every building in Bijlmer for Jesus'. The mission agenda of this church can be attributed to the 'holistic missiology' that strongly informed the church pastor:

Our most important mission is to bring the reign of God to rule in every aspect of society. To bring transformation. Our mission is to transform. If possible, every aspect of society: spiritual, social, political, economic, family. So that they can enjoy the abundance of life that we have in Jesus Christ. So that's our mission. (pastor of the multicultural evangelical MCTC)

The understanding of mission as the promotion of well-being in the widest sense delineated every human being as a primary mission target. The spatial focus was a pragmatic limitation of this theological conviction.

There was another case that was unique in the sample of churches. In contrast to the evangelism-minded Ghanaian Adventists and all the other churches that were interested in mission in one way or another, the Russian Orthodox parish appeared not to have an evangelistic agenda in the sense of recruitment and incorporation as defined in 1.3.3. The archpriest did not construct target groups for mission. He stressed that the mission of the church was primarily towards itself:

First of all, our mission is not to the outside world, to other people, but to ourselves. First of all, you have to find your own way to God. (...)

In the first place, we have to read the gospel for ourselves, and to live it. To live life according to the gospel, and not to take the gospel... to other people. (...) You have to start with yourself. That's central. (archpriest of the Russian Orthodox parish; original in Dutch)

The archpriest expressed that he felt alienated from the term 'mission'. He stressed that the central concern of the Orthodox faith was the liturgy. However, the archpriest did note that, without pursuing them, the parish was open to outsiders:

The door has to be open. But we wait inside. [laughs] (archpriest of the Russian Orthodox parish; original in Dutch)

He pointed out that the parish could offer something to the outside world in terms of 'beauty', albeit not for the purpose of recruitment and incorporation.

Man is created as an icon of God, a beautiful icon. But man abnegates that beauty. Our mission is to find that beauty again. First of all in ourselves. Dostoyevsky has said: beauty must save the world. To us this is like a confession of faith. To search for beauty, for the image in us. In this regard, we know something, just a little, but something, about beauty, humanity, God, and then we can share this with other people. (...)

We can do something in one way or the other, but not by means of a crusade. What we can give is our choir music, give a kind of concert. Or say something about really rich theology. Or talk about the beauty of icons. (archpriest of the Russian Orthodox parish; original in Dutch)

The stance of this priest can be attributed to the influence of mainstream Russian Orthodox theology. There are mission-minded Orthodox movements, also within the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the latter generally adopts the classical Orthodox mission paradigm that is centripetally liturgy-centred (see Spencer 2007: 68-89). In chapters 6 and 8 we will however see that, in practice, the Russian Orthodox parish in Amsterdam did not wholly refrain from recruiting.

4.4 In conclusion

In this chapter I discussed mission discourses of immigrant churches, guided by the question: *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic discourses?*

We saw that leaders of immigrant churches constructed boundaries in evangelistic discourses on the basis of meaning making. A first aspect of this was making identities. Their identification with their own ethnic/linguistic group translated into delineating that group as a mission target on the basis of pragmatics, sense of responsibility and/or being located as such by higher ranks in their denomination. Social identities were externalised as mission targets. Other boundary constructions were based on religious identities. Switchers and 'sliders' were claimed as part of one's religious community, and therefore paradoxically viewed as mission targets.

A second aspect of meaning making was the (re)production of religious culture. Specific moral and spiritual values were the background of the critical views on Dutch Christians and unbelievers. Theological persuasions informed spatial and liturgical emphases. Christian universalism added universalistic features to the ethnicised mission agenda.

Meaning as the driving force behind boundary constructions was related to power. The ethnic/linguistic focus was affirmed by the composition of religious minority-majority relationships within the respective ethnic/linguistic group. To view intra-Christian differences as relevant or not, was also related to the specific religious minority-majority relationships within the respective ethnic/linguistic group. Finally, most church leaders excluded themselves from being missionaries to Dutch Christians and the wider Dutch society because they felt socially inhibited by language and culture differences, lack of networks, prejudice, negative self-images, and small size.

In the following two chapters, we will move from the discussion of discourses to an analysis of the ways in which immigrant churches lived out their mission ideals in *practice*.

5 Embedded evangelism: practices of the Ghanaian SDA church

In this chapter and the next, I will examine mission *practices*. By being located in specific places and being manifested in specific forms, evangelistic activities are social practices that demarcate and are demarcated by who is, is not, could or should be, and could or should not be part of ‘us’ (see 1.3.1). In this chapter, I will examine how boundaries were constructed in the enactment of mission in the Ghanaian SDA church. The central question of this chapter is: *How does the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in its evangelistic practices?*

5.1 Evangelising other Ghanaians

5.1.1 Selecting Ghanaians: navigating in a multicultural society

In line with the intentions expressed in the mission discourses, most mission practices of the Ghanaian SDA church targeted Ghanaians. Bringing this intention into practice was however not altogether straightforward, but required conscious selection in a multicultural society. The *neighbourhood* was one of the arenas where this took place:

(Fieldwork Report, 28/04/2007)

At the end of the church service, the whole congregation is instructed to distribute flyers for the upcoming marriage seminar. Grouped according to Sabbath school classes, church members are allocated various neighbourhoods in Amsterdam Southeast. I join a team that sets out for a nearby market square. After a short walk we get to the place, which is crowded and multicultural. Surinamese, Antilleans, Dutch, and Africans from various countries shop around for fresh food and other items. Within this disordered diversity, I observe that my Ghanaian fellow distributors create their own order. Skilfully navigating through the assortment of ethnic groups represented here, they single out Ghanaians for their flyers. Some warmly hand them to Ghanaian friends who happen to walk by, old class mates from Ghana, or acquaintances they know from a local agency for financial transfers. Other distributors deposit the flyers in the post-boxes of the apartment buildings surrounding the market place - specifically selecting plates with Ghanaian names. Again others visit Ghanaian friends in their houses during this time to hand them a flyer personally.

In this case of public neighbourhood evangelism, Ghanaians were singled out as recipients of promotional materials for an evangelistic campaign, whereas non-Ghanaians were overlooked. This selection was due to the fact that Ghanaians were a primary mission target, but in the commentary on such practices, I found that it was also because Ghanaians were perceived as the most likely group to actually show up. When I distributed flyers for another church seminar (on the biblical book of Revelation) together with one of the elders, we deposited them mostly in post-boxes with nameplates that were either Ghanaian or blank (the latter of which were plentiful and, I was taught, usually belong to anonymity-preferring Ghanaians). As we walked the streets assigned to us, I pointed to other nameplates revealing names from Muslim and Indian backgrounds. In response, the elder ironically asked me: ‘Mohammed [the surname on the sign]. Do you think he will come? And this Indian one, who believes in Buddha. Do you think he will come?’. He noted that the flyers were expensive, and implied that it would be unwise to

give them to people who are unlikely to actually come to the seminar. Thus, rather than being interested in reaching those who likely were little affiliated with Christianity, the elder preferred to invite those who were most likely to respond positively. Even when we met his Antillean neighbour (coincidentally we were in the neighbourhood where the elder lived himself), the elder greeted him warmly, expressed that he continued to pray for him, but did not give him one of the many flyers he was holding. One of the church members who was distributing in the same neighbourhood at the same time, illustrated the response-maximising approach. He told us that the flyers could also be given to Surinamese people 'since they sometimes come too'. In a different case, one of the church members shared that he had distributed flyers for yet another seminar (on the biblical book of Daniel), to fellow Ghanaians in the bus. Asking him who the flyers were intended for, he said:

Well, it is for everybody, but actually it is for blacks, for Ghanaians first. We don't give them to whites because they don't like to go to church, they like to go to the coffee shop. We don't waste money like that and it will be embarrassing if nobody comes, especially also for our pastor. (church member Yaw, informal conversation)

Thus, not only was giving out flyers to non-Ghanaians (except for perhaps a few Surinamese) a waste of money spent on expensive materials for people unlikely to show up, but it would also lead to the shameful result of the pastor having to preach for an empty church.

The selection of Ghanaians in a multicultural society also happened indirectly *inside* the church. In the regular church programmes, the Ghanaian SDA pastor Ansah often told the translators to stop their work²¹⁰, since he would alternately speak Twi and English. For the same reason, there was no organised translation for evangelistic programmes where the pastor was the main speaker. However, during evangelistic programmes, the pastor appeared to speak more in Twi, and always when joking, even though in all of these programmes, a minority of non-Ghanaian attendees was present. The use and effect of language as a selecting tool became particularly apparent in an instance outside of the Ghanaian SDA church. Pastor Ansah was invited to present a marriage seminar in a multi-ethnic SDA church elsewhere in the Netherlands. The audience consisted of a mixture of Antilleans/Arubans, Ghanaians, a few Dutch people and a few representatives of other ethnic groups. Although the addressees were ethnically mixed and Ansah's English was translated into Dutch by a Dutch pastor, Ansah started his prayer by talking in Twi, and frequently used Twi in his lectures. This language was clearly not understood by the many non-Ghanaians present, and left the Dutch pastor unable to translate.

On a *transnational* level, mission practices were also directed to Ghanaians. Pastor Ansah returned to Ghana twice a year to record his weekly TV series that were shown on a national channel. He also conducted 'crusades' in Ghana, and held evangelistic campaigns for Ghanaian audiences in SDA churches all over Europe. Further, Amsterdam-based seminars reached a transnational Ghanaian audience through

²¹⁰ This consisted of a simultaneous translation of Twi into English and sometimes Dutch for non-Twi speakers by use of a headphone system.

Ghanaian-oriented websites such as <http://www.modernghana.com> and <http://www.soulhouronline.com>.

The Ghanaian SDA church furthermore sought to attract Ghanaians specifically by adapting the content of messages to them. This strategy did not necessarily exclude non-Ghanaians but was intended to include Ghanaians who otherwise would not be reached. In mission events, speakers linked up with what they considered to be dominant beliefs among non-Adventist Ghanaians, such as the secret rapture and the idea that Adventists don't believe in the Holy Spirit (see 3.1.1). Teachings were also adapted to what non-Adventist Ghanaians were presumed to have heard from Adventists before. An illustrative case was the flyer for the crusade, which listed the ten topics that would be discussed in the ten day series. The lecture on the Sabbath was entitled 'Adam's mother's birthday'. As one of the church leaders explained, the use of the word 'Sabbath' was intentionally avoided here because many non-Adventist Ghanaians had experienced SDA evangelistic programmes before and would find it 'boring' to see the same topics recur. Pastor Ansah likewise instructed his flock not to evangelise others by stressing SDA proscriptions such as not wearing jewellery, as it would reinforce the legalistic and conversion-oriented perception of Adventists that non-Adventist Ghanaians would have²¹¹. Mission strategies would need to undo such perceptions and start out with more basic issues like the love of Christ, the impact of God in one's life, and the blessings one has found in the church. This was also the reason that the marriage seminar preceded the crusade. As one of the church members explained:

It is a conscious effort in evangelistic campaigns. That's why we first did the marriage seminar, to win trust, make friends. They know that if we just have a crusade, they will be told that they should not wear jewellery or not eat unclean food. Everybody knows these things are part of SDA. So first make friends, pray with people, move from prayer to Bible verses after meeting three to four times. And then after some time they will ask: why do SDA people not do this or that? Then we can go ahead. (church member Ebenezer)

The evidence here points to the conclusion that mission practices were intentionally directed towards Ghanaians through selecting them as recipients of promotional materials and messages by spatial, linguistic and theological strategies. However, addressing Ghanaians happened in many other ways that were not necessarily intentional. We will now turn to a discussion of these dynamics.

5.1.2 Fusing in-reach and out-reach: using the church work twice

In the beginning of fieldwork, I was constantly confused about something. I was looking for evangelism, but it rarely seemed to emerge in a purely externally directed, recruitment-oriented form. Church leaders did not feel the need to specify whether church activities were meant for church members (in-reach) or for evangelistic purposes (out-reach), and

²¹¹ Expressing the conversion-oriented image of Adventists in the Ghanaian community, the church secretary told me: 'They know that whenever SDA's come close to you, their first priority, their first priority is the person trying to convert you to Adventism'. In Ghana, I stepped right into this perception when I found that a few non-Adventist ladies, who attended a graduation service in a SDA church, reacted in a somewhat allergic way to my research inspired question of what church they normally attended and how they liked the service. One of them proved the inappropriateness of my inquiries by noting: 'We all serve the same God!'.

when I asked about the intentions of a specific event I received apparently conflicting answers. What I had to learn is that evangelism could not be separated in a neat box, but was intrinsically related to the rest of church life. As we will see, much of the evangelism of the Ghanaian SDA church emerged as an extension or second function of practices that were primarily or additionally attuned to church members. I will call this ‘using the church work twice’. The unintentional consequence of the constant blurring of the in-reach and out-reach was that most mission practices were enacted within ethnic boundaries.

Life cycle rituals

Life cycle rituals were highly important to the Ghanaian Adventists. Their significance is found throughout African Christianity. As Adogame points out in an article on the Nigerian-initiated Pentecostal Redeemed Christian Church of God, “ritual enactments, particularly life-cycle rites, still form the core of spirituality among African religious communities” (2004a: 43). As we will see, in the SDA case, these ritual enactments also played a particular role in evangelism.

(Fieldwork Report, 29/07/2007)

It is Saturday night. The church has a memorial meeting for a church member’s mother, who died and is buried in Ghana. As instructed, church members are dressed in black and white. Both men and women wear beautiful gowns. There are about 25 non-Adventist visitors. We all sit together in one of the back rooms of the church. Various musical groups sing songs, some of which are in particular used for funerals. We pray, and a lady reads aloud a biography of the deceased mother, named Ekua. Then pastor Ansah proceeds by giving a short sermon. He emphasises the ‘lies of the Devil’, listing spiritualism (practices of communication with the dead), the idea of hell, and the belief in purgatory. Referring to mother Ekua, he stresses: ‘Dead is dead! Ekua is sleeping now and will only awaken at the second coming of Jesus Christ.’ After Ansah’s talk, the meeting proceeds with dancing.

In this case, we see how the highly significant church practice of memorial meetings for deceased loved ones of church members is simultaneously employed as an evangelistic opportunity. The presence of non-Adventists in a funeral context allowed pastor Ansah to appropriately convey specific SDA beliefs about death. As discussed in chapter 3, in SDA doctrine there is no disembodied soul that lives on after death, but the human being is considered a totality that dies in its totality. The Ghanaian SDA leaders therefore did not believe in communicating with dead people, hell, or purgatory, while they observed that non-Adventists did believe in such things. Within this context, pastor Ansah’s sermon can be understood as an evangelistic moment in a church event that was primarily non-evangelistic. Church leaders noted that SDA funerals could also function as evangelism in another way: the abstinence from alcohol at SDA funerals would be a testimony, since heavy drinking was a common feature of Akan funerals (see Van Dijk 2000: 206).

Mission moments were found in all of the life cycle rituals that were conducted in the church. To celebrate the introduction of life, there was the baby dedication²¹². In this important ritual, church families in celebratory, often white dress, dedicated their baby when it was more than three months old. Standing in front of the congregation, they received blessings and prayers, and were promised that all church members would take responsibility for the upbringing of their child. In this sense, the dedications were in-reach: the baby was devoted not only to God, but to the entire congregation. At the same time, they had an out-reach component, because of the many non-Adventist friends and family members who came to witness. Where funerals provided a non-offensive stage to share SDA beliefs about death, baby dedications allowed speakers to share the SDA rejection of infant baptism, and their endorsement of infant dedication. On one occasion, pastor Ansah for example said: 'For our visiting friends: we always follow Jesus Christ and the Bible, and we don't baptise children, but dedicate them. If your child is under seven years old and not yet dedicated, you can still bring him or her to be dedicated.' In this way, the pastor encouraged non-church members to bring their children to the church for dedication. This was a general call for dedication, but also a specific opportunity to let the children of non-SDA parents be dedicated in the Adventist church, which actually happened a few times.

Another highly important ritual was the so-called 'marriage blessing'. In marriage blessings, couples renewed their vows and were reminded of some key moral principles related to marital life. At the same time, these blessings were opportunities to outline the church views on the building blocks and sanctity of a good marriage. During some marriage blessings, the whole church audience, including many visitors, was encouraged to renew their vows along with the couple being blessed on stage. A marriage blessing was also an opportunity to share the specific SDA stance on jewellery. On a couple of occasions, pastor Ansah took the chance to point out that though Adventists do not wear jewellery, they do wear wedding rings. Interestingly, this also contained a message for church members, since wedding rings were a contested issue within Ghanaian Adventism (e.g. the generally more conservative Adventists in the Kumasi area tended to reject wedding rings, whereas Accra Adventists found them acceptable). Reaching 'in' and reaching 'out' were thus totally mixed.

A final important ritual was the baptism of adolescents and adults, which was performed for both church youth and outsiders. In the baptismal ceremony, confessions of faith and testimonies were articulated, and an appeal made to all who were not yet baptised in the Adventist faith to sign up for the next baptism in the church.

We thus see that life cycle rituals had a twofold function²¹³. They were important for individual church members and the wider congregation, since they ritualised important life events, solidified cohesion by communicating and embedding them, and were educative. On the other hand, the rituals were used to evangelise the wider Ghanaian community. Their significant and inherently social nature led participants to invite many friends and family members, which always included non-Adventists. Non-Adventists, including pastors, who would otherwise and especially on Saturdays not opt to frequent the church, came to witness the various events, which allowed church leaders to convey

²¹² Ter Haar observes that these baby dedications are derived from the Bible and adapted to modern Dutch society, but can also be traced to the common cultural practice in Ghana and wider Africa to dedicate new-borns (1995: 131-132).

²¹³ This applied also to other rituals, such as thanksgiving services and choir robe dedications.

specific teachings related to the ritual. It also made more indirect mission practices possible, such as warmly welcoming the ‘visiting friends’ from the pulpit, inviting the visitors to attend more church programmes, and building personal contact during the festive gatherings following formal ceremonies. Importantly, since the invitees to these rituals were mostly Ghanaians, who dominated the social networks of church members and recognised the significance of these rituals, the embedded mission practices were largely acted out within ethnic boundaries.

Marriage and family education

Marriage and family life were important topics for the church. This was expressed in many activities. In an intensive ten day marriage seminar, pastor Ansah taught participants on the themes of happy marital life and healthy Christian parenting. The pastor presented a TV programme on a local channel that prominently featured discussions about marriage, parenting, and choosing a partner. He published a book on these issues in Amsterdam entitled ‘Living in a Small Heaven on Earth’. Similar themes frequently surfaced in the Sabbath morning sermon, Sabbath afternoon programmes, and workshops at the annual camp meeting. Further, the church radio programme included a series of marriage programmes, and had call-in sessions during which listeners raised issues such as childlessness, divorce, and raising another person’s children.

Marriage and family education were in-reach: its significance sprang from church leaders’ observations that there were many broken families among members. As Kalu observes, family struggles are found throughout African immigrant communities: “cultural clashes have the strongest impact on the structure of the family, where work, money, sex, child rearing, and authority patterns become contested grounds” (2008: 288). Families were struggling with issues such as the complex task of raising children in a foreign (and secular) society or on a distance, living dispersed in different continents²¹⁴. They had to re-negotiate gender roles and finances in the migration context, where women had their own jobs and incomes, and sometimes residence permits when their husband did not²¹⁵. Because of this, the marriage seminar was considered a success as it was perceived to have positively influenced the marriages of church members.

At the same time, these trainings were out-reach: they were perceived and used as ways to reach Ghanaians from outside the church. Thus, as we already saw in 5.1.1, the marriage seminar was construed as an ‘appetizer’ to meet the needs of non-members, so as to attract them to the subsequently planned evangelistic ‘crusade’ that introduced specific Adventist doctrines. Therefore, the marriage seminar had been advertised not only from the church pulpit, but also through a special visitors’ day²¹⁶, the radio and TV

²¹⁴ It was not uncommon for church members to have children in Ghana that were raised there by relatives. Peil relates this pattern of leaving the children at home to “the insecurity of the [migration] project and short intended stay”, while “those who settle may send for a wife, children and even siblings” (Peil 1995: 349).

²¹⁵ For insightful discussions about new forms of empowerment for African women and the negotiation of gender roles in the African diaspora, see Pasura 2008 as well as Adogame and Chitando 2005: 261.

²¹⁶ The visitors’ day was organised to promote both the marriage seminar and the crusade, which were held just two weeks apart. Members had been called upon for many weeks to invite their loved ones to this day, and many non-members showed up. One of the ways by which the marriage seminar was promoted that day was the showing of a short film, in which local Ghanaian people were interviewed in the streets about their marriage problems. It featured a man complaining about his wife, who worked ten hours a day and did not have time for their children, a woman who shared why she got divorced, and a

programmes, and posters and flyers that were put up and distributed all over Amsterdam Southeast. Members had further been encouraged for weeks to bring along friends and family to the marriage seminar. The marriage seminar was turned into a DVD, and accordingly the members were instructed to dress presentably and be punctual for the filming. The marriage lectures on the church TV and radio were also destined to educate and attract outsiders in addition to helping church members.

The importance of the finding that marriage and family education in the church was employed for purposes of both in-reach and out-reach, is that out-reach obtained a 'Ghanaian' character. To address church members, Twi and English were used for church events and TV/radio programmes, and references were made to black and African identities²¹⁷. This had an including effect on Ghanaian visitors, but unintentionally excluded non-Twi/English speakers and non-blacks/Africans, even when they were present at church programmes.

Ordinary church meetings

(Fieldwork Report, 09/09/2006)

During today's Sabbath service we celebrate the arrival of pastor Ansah in the Netherlands. It is my second time to visit the church (excepting a visit years earlier). There is a young Ghanaian woman sitting next to me, who clearly stands out from most other women because of her abundant jewellery, tattoos, and make-up. Two little children crawl on her lap. She is a visitor like me, invited by one of the church members and attending the church for the first time. Although she has never been in the church before, she seems to naturally feel at home. She chats with church members, and heartily sings along with the Ghanaian national anthem when sung by the entire congregation. Even though I am the one with an Adventist background, I am filled with a sense of not knowing what to do and not understanding what is going on, and she, a non-Adventist, becomes the one that explains to me how things go around here.

At the heart of Ghanaian SDA church life was the weekly routine of church programmes. The Sabbath morning divine service was the main focus, followed in importance by the Sabbath school preceding it, the Sabbath afternoon programme following it, and the Wednesday night prayer meeting. The Sabbath morning service was a time for the members to regain spiritual strength and focus. There was encouragement by joyfully familiar songs. Prayer was another important dimension, as it addressed crucial life issues like sickness, death, birth, legal documents, and God's overall presence. Sermons, too, were vital, with themes that stressed God's trustworthiness, the need for Christian obedience, and the hope of the imminent coming of Jesus. The service was also a time for happy socialising, with the abundant exchange of greetings, hugs, jokes, and life updates before, during, and after the formal meetings. The other weekly meetings similarly served

man who said he was not married because he found it difficult to trust women. The church leaders stressed that these and other family problems led to problems in the church and the broader society, and that the marriage seminar would reveal all the secrets of a good marriage.

²¹⁷ Pastor Ansah sometimes referred to his audience as 'black' or 'African'. For example, he noted in his lectures on Christian parenting: 'Do you want your son to go out on the streets with a knife, only because he is black?'. In his lecture about the needs of the wife he said: 'Man, wake up, you are a Ghanaian, you are an African, wake up!'.

the spiritual and social needs of church members. In these ways, they were important forms of in-reach.

At the same time, these ordinary church meetings were perceived and used as mission events. Church leaders framed all church gatherings and all church departments as having a missionary function. Members were encouraged to bring acquaintances to church and be welcoming to visitors. Sometimes visitors came on their own initiative. They were warmly welcomed by personal greetings from the pulpit, a loud 'amen' shouted by the church members, handshakes, and welcoming songs. They were invited to come again, and given food after the Sabbath morning service.

The use of ordinary church meetings for evangelistic purposes had an especially strong ethnicising impact on the implied mission practices. This can be understood when recalling the fact that the Ghanaian SDA church emerged from a multi-ethnic congregation, because its Ghanaian members desired to worship in their own language and style, in order to feel more at home in church and retain members (see 2.1). Moreover, Ghanaian SDA church leaders considered it very important that their children, many of whom were born and raised in the Netherlands, learned both to speak Twi well and to understand important aspects of 'Ghanaian culture', such as taking care of your family and appreciating Ghanaian dishes. Thus, the church was a place where ethnic and linguistic identities were shared and to be preserved. Twi was thus the main language in church²¹⁸, and 'Ghanaian culture' was expressed in a number of ways including food, dress, music, dance, decoration, jokes, rhetoric, timing, and social support. Speakers often referred to aspects of being a Ghanaian, and the social issues faced by Ghanaians in the diaspora in particular: being black, being African, being in need of a legal status, being in need of a job. As illustrated by the above fieldwork report, which showed how a non-Adventist Ghanaian visitor felt more at home in the church than I did as an Adventist non-Ghanaian, in these various ways the evangelistic side of ordinary church meetings primarily addressed fellow Ghanaians.

Theological training

Church leaders were concerned about church members' theology. Some members had lacked pastoral guidance for a while due to the process of migration. They supposedly had a weak grasp of theological truths and would easily be led astray in this foreign land. For example, some went to Pentecostal churches for prayers or wore jewellery outside of church. Leaders noted that it was important for church members to gain more knowledge about their own beliefs, or to remind them of what they had learned before. Thus, a 'crusade', a ten day doctrinal lecture series, was planned to (re-)instruct members in Adventist specifics such as the heavenly sanctuary, the millennium, and the finality of

²¹⁸ For non-Twi speakers there was translation available in English and sometimes Dutch for the Sabbath morning service. This was done with much courtesy, yet not without its flaws. Sometimes technical difficulties popped up or translators were distracted, and prayers were mostly left untranslated (this changed after I officially finished fieldwork). Also, oftentimes the sermon was not translated, because pastor Ansah announced that he would preach in English, but in fact he still combined English with a lot of Twi. For the Sabbath afternoon programmes and Wednesday night prayer meetings, there usually was no organised translation available. Thus, in spite of the availability of translation, non-Twi speakers were still unintentionally excluded from full participation.

death²¹⁹. Further, a month-long Revelation seminar was held, in which the various passages of this biblical book were discussed, including specific SDA doctrines such as the Sabbath and the non-existence of hell, as well as a deconstruction of the common belief in the ‘secret rapture’ (see 3.1.1). A DVD was produced on Revelation, in part to educate members. The radio was also used for doctrinal and moral training, covering topics like the second coming of Christ, Bible prophecies, the state of the dead, the love and care of God, and the importance of obedience to God. Similarly, pastor Ansah’s TV lectures included issues such as the way to salvation, the Sabbath-Sunday question, and the biblical book of Revelation. In sermons and Sabbath afternoon programmes, the pastor gave doctrinal and moral training on the basis of what he perceived to be gaps in the knowledge of his flock. He for example taught how to keep the Sabbath (since some members went shopping on Sabbath afternoons), how to understand speaking in tongues (since some members still believed that without it one would not have the Holy Spirit), and how to love one another (since gossip and quarrels were abundant in the church).

These forms of theological training were again also intended for the instruction of non-members. Both the crusade and the Revelation seminar were to expose outsiders to theological ‘truths’. They were publicly advertised through flyers, the visitors’ day mentioned above²²⁰, and/or radio and TV announcements. The DVD on Revelation and the TV and radio programmes were also meant to teach and attract non-Adventists. In addition, as we saw above, the sermons and Sabbath afternoon programmes were considered mission events, with members being urged to bring along family and friends. In theologically educative events, the pastor also specifically addressed non-Adventists in the form of apologies for possibly offensive teaching, saying things like ‘I’m not speaking against the Catholic church, but I am only speaking the truth’ and ‘Do you still love me? Because some may be offended’.

In theological training, in-reach and out-reach were fused. To re-educate church members and educate outsiders at the same time, implied a use of language and identity that was recognisably Ghanaian. TV, radio, DVD’s, sermons, study sessions, crusades, and seminars combined Twi and English or were predominantly in Twi. During the crusade, pastor Ansah again referred to the Ghanaian identity of his audience, even though there was a minority of non-Ghanaian attendees²²¹. Again these things had an

²¹⁹ The educative value of these lectures was heightened by doing a quiz with the whole church after every session. This sometimes entailed quite abstract theology such as the topic of the heavenly sanctuary, which included the following questions:

- What is the court case in heaven about?
- God’s judgment starts with a) the dead b) the unrighteous c) God’s people
- There is only one mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ. True/False
- Which one is right: a) we die once, then judgment b) we die twice, then judgment c) we die once, two judgments

²²⁰ On the visitors’ day, the crusade was promoted by a play in which a man proved to a woman that the dead are fully dead (implying that one cannot call upon his or her dead relatives), that Jesus is coming soon (seen by End-time signs such as earthquakes), and that the full biblical law still exists (implying that all Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, still apply). The host of the programme further showed pictures of the symbols in the biblical book of Daniel. He noted that many churches stated that these prophecies were difficult to understand, but that they could be explained. He said: ‘If you want to understand the Bible very well, come to the crusade!’.

²²¹ The pastor for example said: ‘When you left Ghana, maybe you left some pictures for your friends staying behind. Jesus did the same thing: when he was on this earth, he gave us pictures to remember him, such as the cross and his baptism’.

including effect on Ghanaian visitors, but unintentionally excluded non-Twi/English speakers and non-blacks/Africans.

Socio-economic support

Church members faced an assortment of socio-economic challenges in addition to the family tensions singled out above. The most important ones were being undocumented and having financial problems (including debts, lack of employment, and insurmountable requests from relatives in Ghana). Prayers in church meetings were often directed to these problems. On one occasion, all people who lacked staying permits were asked to come forward so that the pastor could pray for them specifically. The church also had a welfare department, which helped members who struggled financially to pay their rent, have food to eat, or get nice clothes to wear to church. The pastor gave financial advice as part of the marriage seminar and sometimes during ordinary church meetings. When the congregation still gathered in a house church (see 2.1), the house was used as a shelter for the undocumented. In addition, church leaders saw the need for health education among members, which led to short health lectures as part of evangelistic campaigns²²².

Simultaneously, some of these forms of socio-economic support were extended to non-members. The welfare department, which was formally geared towards members, in a few instances helped non-Adventists. For example, the welfare leaders helped an undocumented, cancer-stricken church visitor to find a place to stay and helped pay for his rent and groceries until he obtained legal status. Helping non-members with socio-economic problems was done with the intent to care for people in need, but was also considered a tool to win people's trust and thereby a basis for evangelism. The prayers, financial counselling, and health lectures were also meant for the non-Adventist attendees of ordinary church meetings and evangelistic campaigns.

In sum, this final fusion of in-reach and out-reach located mission practices largely within ethnic boundaries, due to the combined use of the Twi language and shared socio-economic problems.

Having elaborately discussed the phenomenon of 'using the church work twice', we will now move to a couple of other dynamics that had an ethnicising effect on mission practices.

5.1.3 Bijlmer parties and Ghanaian villages: locating relational mission

(Fieldwork Report, 27/10/2007)

After church, church secretary Owusu and I go to the party of a couple who renewed marital vows in church today. The party is in the couple's own home, a rather small flat in one of the high apartment buildings in Amsterdam Southeast. Delayed by a few hold-ups, we arrive at the party a bit late, and find, next to a number of church members, a group of drunk, sensually dancing people we do not know. The Adventists sit quietly on chairs positioned against the living room's walls, while the non-Adventists dance in the open space in the

²²² These covered advice on what to eat and drink as well as a variety of other issues. For example, one of the health lectures attached to the crusade taught the following principles: 'Stop drinking coffee, tea, and alcohol. Decaffeinated coffee is not truly without caffeine. Don't become overweight. Use less salt. Exercise more. Read the ingredients on packages. Take in less fat. Apply more olive oil. Use products with high fibre. Eat more oranges. Reduce your stress level. Don't use too many medicines'.

middle. The music is very loud, but I manage to have a few conversations with the Adventists that are sitting around. Church member Charity tells me that Adventists cannot dance like those dancers in the middle of the room, since that would make people say: 'Even Adventists dance like this!'. To illustrate the 'this', she makes some sensual movements while sitting on her chair, moving her hips up and down. Dancing in this way would undermine the Adventist reputation. Adventist dancing is quiet dancing. I walk up to two male Adventists, who stand near the entrance to the living room, talking together and clearly frowning upon the dancing scene. One of them tells me that he would never dance to music like this - it is worldly music, with un-Christian words, and he only dances to gospel music. Two outgoing female Adventists for a moment tread beyond what they know to be appropriate: one for a few seconds joins in the dancing, and another briefly yells along with the stimulating music. The rest of the Adventists present quietly observe the dancers and chat amongst themselves.

In this case, we see that Adventist and non-Adventist Ghanaians mingled in an intimate setting, due to the fact that both were invited friends of a married couple throwing a party. Because of these social ties, the two groups were found in each other's up-close presence, and the demarcating missionary behaviour of the Adventists in the form of not-dancing and not-drinking was enacted towards fellow Ghanaians. It is significant that this mission practice did not emerge directly from the intention to reach Ghanaians, but resulted from ties that were intentionally formed along ethnic lines. Personal ties located mission practices within ethnic boundaries.

Clearly there were variations in the ethnic composition of personal networks. On the one hand, there were rather isolated church members like the young lady who told me that in her 1,5 year stay in the Netherlands, I was the first Dutch person she talked to aside from the electrician that once came by her house. On the other hand, there were members that had Dutch colleagues, and especially youth members had friends from various nationalities. On the whole however, the Ghanaian Adventists had the most extensive and intensive ties with fellow Ghanaians. Further, the Adventist identity did not delimit the maintenance and formation of relationships with non-Adventist Ghanaians. Sometimes visitors to the church that I had never seen before, mingled freely with church members they appeared to know. On walks with church members in Amsterdam Southeast, it was common to meet acquainted non-Adventist passers-by. Such observations demonstrated how interlaced Adventist and non-Adventist networks were in the local Ghanaian community.

Church leaders encouraged members to be involved in mission towards their loved ones: to display holy, caring, and consistent behaviour, share DVD's and books, invite them to church events, and share their addresses with church leaders. Indirectly, this instruction stimulated members to evangelise Ghanaians, since, as we saw, loved ones and broader networks were by and large Ghanaian.

Relational mission was located in different types of networks. The bond of friendship was very important. One of the elders for example had a long-standing Ghanaian Methodist friend and openly told him that he always prayed that he would get to know the Adventist beliefs. A female church member befriended a Ghanaian Catholic lady in her neighbourhood, who she invited to the SDA crusade and warned about 'false

prophets'²²³. One of the female teenagers reported chatting online with one of her friends about the Sabbath.

In other cases, business/work networks were the location of mission. A male church member practicing herbal treatment advertised his business in Ghanaian Pentecostal churches and had a largely Ghanaian clientele. During treatment, he played SDA music or pastor Ansah's sermons. In cases of positive feedback on this by clients, he passed their contact information to evangelistic leaders in the SDA church. Another male church member gave Bible studies to a former colleague in factory work. He instructed him on the basis of lists of Bible texts he learned in church and wrote in his Bible, covering topics like the Sabbath, the signs of Jesus' coming, and speaking in tongues.

Others evangelised on the basis of other social ties, such as those with house mates. A male church member shared an apartment with his Pentecostal uncle, aunt and niece. He gave Bible studies to his niece and took her along to church to educate her in 'truly Biblical doctrines'. Others built on ties with former fellow believers. A recent male convert from Catholicism to Adventism brought along befriended Ghanaian Catholics from his previous church in Amsterdam to the marriage seminar. In other cases, evangelism took place within informal labour structures. When I visited a former Amsterdam SDA church member who moved to London in her new place, I observed that her SDA sister starting a heated discussion about the Sabbath – Sunday issue with a Catholic Ghanaian plumber who came to fix their shower²²⁴.

Some members also evangelised by means of their transnational personal networks, both in the wider diaspora and in Ghana. The DVD's the church produced were sent abroad to friends and family. One of the elders helped his friends in Ireland to set up a Ghanaian SDA church. A male church member visited his family in Ohio, United States, where he worked with Ghanaian 'backsliders' who were attending other denominations, to convince them to return to Adventism. Another male church member conducted Bible studies on the phone with some of his Pentecostal, Catholic, and Anglican friends in Ghana. He advised them to meet with an Adventist in Ghana and to visit a SDA church service. The convert from Catholicism mentioned above sought to convey Adventism to his Methodist wife who lived in Ghana. A female church member was highly concerned about her Frafra-speaking village in Northern Ghana, which was dominated by Catholics and Pentecostals²²⁵.

²²³ The context of this was that leaders of different churches sought to help this lady's mother, who allegedly had turned blind because of witchcraft.

²²⁴ Such straightforward yet casual, sometimes close to humorous conversion attempts seemed to be common between Ghanaian Christians of different denominations. I also came across this in Ghana. During a ride with the *trotro* (minibus for public transportation), I observed that the SDA mother I was staying with initiated a conversation with a young man who sat next to us and seemed familiar to her. To concretise her intuition of knowing him, she asked him whether he was an Adventist. He replied that he was a Catholic going to seminary. Immediately the mother stated: 'Then I will convert you into my church!'. He replied by moving the tables around: 'Oh, I am now working with SDA's, and I'm now converting them!' and asked for her telephone number, wanting to visit her.

²²⁵ This lady felt that her village could be converted to Adventism if there would be access to the Frafra Bible. She felt that this would make them depend less on the 'false teachings' of priests and preachers and would help them to find out that Adventism is truly biblical. Most villagers, however, did not know how to read. The son of this lady's SDA brother was now learning to read and write Frafra in school in Ghana, and she stimulated him to become a missionary in his village.

To conclude, we can see that whether local or transnational, friendship or business-based, by modern means like DVD's or timeless tools like prayer, personal ties were greatly important in organising evangelism and locating it within ethnic boundaries.

5.1.4 Dual identity: participating in the local Ghanaian community

Adogame (2003) observes the ease with which African congregations in Europe exchange pulpits irrespective of doctrinal emphasis, as well as the general importance of intra-religious networking (see also Währisch-Oblau 2009: 52-53, who refers to this as 'denominational hybridity'). This pattern was confirmed by many Ghanaian-majority churches in Amsterdam Southeast. However, the Ghanaian SDA church was relatively isolated in the local Ghanaian community due to its specific theological identity. The church did not allow non-Adventist pastors to preach from its pulpit, and only engaged in partnerships with other Ghanaian Adventists across the world. Doctrinal distinctiveness mattered in the organisation of the African religious diaspora.

In some cases however, the common Ghanaian identity overruled theological differences - at least from the perspective of non-Adventist Ghanaians. This happened when the Ghanaian Adventists were invited to partake in special occasions in the local Ghanaian community. For example, the Ghanaian SDA church choir was invited to sing at the 10 year anniversary of the Ghanaian Methodist church in Amsterdam Southeast. Also, the choir was sometimes invited to partake in local church choir concerts²²⁶. On other occasions, pastor Ansah was specifically invited to participate. He was requested to preach at a service of the Ghanaian Presbyterian church in Amsterdam Southeast and went there together with four choristers. Also, he was asked to pray at the yearly local 'Dancing with the Kings' event, where a variety of Ghanaian kings in royal dress parade in an open square in Amsterdam Southeast.

The pastor and singers responded positively to these invitations. In doing so, they revealed a dualism in their identity. On the one hand, by going they affirmed that they too were part of the Ghanaian community. On the other hand, their going was in part stimulated by their distinctive Adventist identity: these invitations were viewed as opportunities for sharing their message. The choir leader for example told me that the SDA style of singing was different from that of most other choirs, because it sang in parts and often a cappella. He noted that non-Adventists appreciated the SDA style of singing and thereby could possibly be attracted to the SDA church²²⁷.

Thus, a final dynamic by which mission practices addressed Ghanaians primarily without the direct intention to do so, was the dual identity of the Ghanaian SDA church. On the one hand, they were just another church in the Ghanaian community. This was demonstrated by the invitations they received to join local events and by their positive response to these invitations. On the other hand, their specific SDA identity turned such expressions of shared Ghanaian identity into arenas for mission. A dualist identity located evangelism in the Ghanaian community.

²²⁶ In his study of Ghanaian Adventists in the UK, Ackah affirms the missionary role of singing at non-Adventist events: "The church aims to fulfill its mission principally via its church services and its singing at events that Ghanaian non-Seventh-day Adventists attend such as the Independence Day remembrance service" (2008: 8).

²²⁷ A SDA district pastor in Southern Ghana affirmed to me in an interview that SDA music is unique in the Ghanaian Christian landscape and an effective method in converting non-Adventists.

5.1.5 Structural boundaries

The many dynamics that contributed to a Ghanaian-oriented mission practice did not go unchallenged. The Ghanaian Adventists came up against all kinds of structural boundaries in their mission practice. Whilst in studies about ‘reversed mission’ the difficulty of evangelising natives is often emphasised, addressing fellow ethnics was not without its difficulties either. In this section I will describe some of these structural boundaries.

Legal boundaries hampered missionary work. The church was not always able to get the speakers they wanted from Ghana to come to the Netherlands. On one occasion, a pastor from Ghana, whose picture was already printed on the flyers of a revival week where he was to be the guest speaker, could not come because he was not granted a visa. Also, church leaders noted that the Ghanaian migrant community was so inherently mobile that it was difficult to keep track of new converts:

People get baptised here today, but tomorrow they are suddenly in Germany or elsewhere. (pastor Ansah)

The mobility also impacted on the leadership of the church. During my official fieldwork period in the church, the youth choir leader, radio director, and two elders migrated to the UK. This exodus did impact the church mission: when the radio director left, the radio ministry was discontinued.

A very real issue for the Ghanaian Adventists was the Dutch weather. The maritime climate in the Netherlands was a felt world away from Ghana’s tropical climate, especially in terms of temperature. This had an effect on church members. On bad weather days, church attendance was generally lower. During a church service in the early spring after a harsh winter, members were publicly encouraged to attend the little frequented Wednesday prayer meetings with the suggestion that ‘while the weather is getting better, the pastor pleads with us to come’. Evangelistic activities were likewise influenced by the local climate. For example, a planned Revelation seminar was delayed to another year because of the unhelpful weather at the time it was scheduled. When I interviewed choir leader Kobie in the month of December, he told me that the pastor had suggested that the choir would sing and preach in the streets, but that this was impossible to execute at the time because of the cold. Summer was the best choice for evangelistic campaigns, because, in the words of elder Kwaame: ‘When it rains, it is difficult to invite people to come!’^{228 229}.

Other structural boundaries complicated mission work not only to Ghanaians, but in general. Leaders considered evangelising in the Netherlands a much harder job than in

²²⁸ Although the weather was considered good in the summer, this season still had its complications in regard to evangelism: people were on holidays, the annual Euro-Ghanaian SDA camp meeting kept leaders and members busy and away, and other local churches also preferred doing their programmes in this season.

²²⁹ The Dutch weather conditions also affected practices in the church. Wishing to wear the same, summer-suited dresses and fitting open shoes in winter, women often changed shoes in the church leaving a pile of winter shoes in the cloakroom, and the central heating was raised to a temperature that made an unaware visitor dressed in winter clothes break out in sweat. Adogame also highlights the way in which European weather impacted dress in the Celestial Church of Christ, where dress has specific spiritual meanings (1998: 158).

Ghana²³⁰. Legal boundaries were again an issue. Leaders noted the Dutch restrictions on public evangelism in comparison with Ghana, where one could allegedly freely preach, announce, and sing in the public square²³¹:

In Ghana, if you go from house to house to preach, you don't need to call anybody. You just go there and knock on the door, enter, introduce yourself to them, if the people have time then you just preach. And also you can put a table at any corner. And then we come to preach without asking any police permission. You can build your tent anywhere and they start preaching without receiving any police permission. So in Ghana the work there is very very easy. But here in Holland you can't do it. (...) And that is why in Africa, Ghana, the Word is spreading very fast. They have so much opportunity to do it. (personal ministry director Edwin)

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DK: *Did you use the choir to sing in the streets in Ghana?*

Choir leader Kobie: *Yes, it's really easy and simple in Ghana. Not like here. Just small small houses. Walk, sing, preach. 4am. People open their windows and enjoy the music and message. Through that we win so many souls. Here you can't go out early and make noise – someone will call the police.*²³²

Financial constraints also constricted the church's missionary endeavours. The fact that it rented premises with high rents and did not have its own building, limited the number and range of events that could be put on. Weekly church activities were restricted to one day and two nights, in stark contrast to Adventist churches in Ghana, which often ran daily programmes.²³³

²³⁰ It must be noted however, that SDA pastors and members in Ghana experienced a variety of difficulties in their evangelistic work too, especially in terms of financial constraints and competition with other churches. Moreover, some areas of Ghana were felt to be impenetrable, in particular the predominantly Islamic North (where less than 20 of the more than 1.000 SDA churches in Ghana are located, and even those are mostly populated with Southerners living in the North).

²³¹ In Ghana I was however informed that SDA churches in this country in some cases need permits for evangelistic programmes, too. For example, I witnessed an outdoor SDA evangelistic programme including film, prayer, book distribution, singing, and preaching in the middle of a poor Accra neighbourhood. The organisers had had to ask permission to use the locality for their purposes. A pastor in the Kumasi area similarly noted that in case of public evangelism, the church always asked permission from the relevant chiefs and/or arranged for a police permit. A police permit would be necessary for protection from problems with the people whose land you would be evangelising on, and from being arrested because of making too much noise. The fact that the Amsterdam respondents did not mention these things may be due to the fact that they referred to more informal types of evangelism that don't require permits, that they were unaware of the need for permits for formal evangelism like crusades, or possibly to an idealised imagination/reporting of the country of origin.

²³² Elder Ababuo attributed this difference to the secular nature of European authorities: 'Like now in the Amsterdamse Poort [a big shopping centre in Amsterdam Southeast], you see the kermis [Dutch for 'fair'] But the stadhuis [Dutch for 'city hall'] gives authority for them to do the kermis. (...) And every summer there are open festivals. People are playing drums and that sort of thing. But they don't want to give the Christian people that chance. That is part of the problem here. Because what these people are doing, it is very effective when they give us Christians this chance. It will be very effective for us. (...) Because that is the most popular thing in Ghana. When we want to organise, or go to plant a church, we go to the open, public. To do the crusade. So if people from work are going home, they can hear what is going on. Here why do they give (...) time to them, those festivals, but not to religious people? Because those in the higher places, they don't think about God. They have nothing to do with God. That is part of the problem'.

²³³ It must be noted that finding sufficient appropriate worship space (that is, land and the ability to build church buildings) was one of the core challenges for the SDA church in Ghana as well. In 2008 in

Mission activities were also affected by the fact that church leaders and members lacked time to do sustained church work. With the exception of the pastor, all other church officers and leaders worked in a voluntary capacity. It was difficult to get work-strained members and leaders to be as active in mission as they would have been in Ghana. The stress placed on behaviour-based evangelism (e.g. living caring and morally exemplary lives), which does not cost much extra time, may be understood in this light.²³⁴

We have seen how mission practices were enacted mostly within ethnic boundaries. In the next sections, I will follow up on this by exploring obstacles and opportunities in the mission to Dutch people.

5.2 Evangelising the white Dutch and Europeans

5.2.1 Reflexive notes on constraints: language and race

In 3.2 we saw that a conflated emic category of ‘whites’, ‘the Dutch’ and ‘Europeans’ was in some ways delineated as a mission target. Few evangelistic efforts were however geared towards this group. It is informative to draw upon reflexive data here. From this data I propose that boundaries of language and race complicated mission to white/Dutch/European people.

My personal experience in the Ghanaian SDA church illustrated that boundaries between black/Ghanaian/African people and white/Dutch/European people were not easily overcome. On the whole, I felt warmly welcomed and easily at home in the church from the beginning of my fieldwork. However, on a closer look, I saw that boundaries were maintained throughout. For one thing, although I had a very open and free relationship with some members, there were quite a few others, especially women, who seemed somewhat uneasy about interacting with me. This was the case even after I had been a frequent participant in all major church programmes for a couple of years. Since this was a serious blow to my self-conception of being a socially skilled person, it was my continuous quest to become a more familiar person with whom one could interact as comfortably as with any Ghanaian church member. This pursuit eventually succeeded only partially. A befriended church member explained to me that the Ghanaian church members did not know ‘what to talk about with a white person’. This suggestion reflected

Koforidua in the Eastern region of Ghana, I was shown an unfinished church building that had not progressed since 2001 because of lack of financial means. Local church members worshipped in the school building right next to the site under construction, and to their frustration lost new converts because of their unattractive place of worship. However, such building related problems did not necessarily limit SDA churches in Ghana in developing daily activities, since there were alternate locations that could be used, such as SDA schools.

²³⁴ Another issue that can be mentioned as a specific ‘hindrance’ to evangelising in the diaspora as compared to Ghana, is that Adventism is much more institutionalised in Ghana due to its larger number of adherents (there are 70 times more Adventists in Ghana than in the Netherlands). A district pastor in the South of Ghana particularly mentioned the missionary importance of the many SDA schools in the country, where large numbers of non-Adventists are enrolled and exposed to Adventist values and beliefs. At the SDA Valley View University in Accra, for example, 60% of the student body is non-Adventist. According to a pastor in Kumasi, the SDA school system is a particularly effective tool to reach Muslims. Further, the district pastor in the South of Ghana noted that the SDA church in Ghana attracts new converts because of the aesthetics of their funerals, with youth carrying the coffin and parading very officially in their scouting uniform - another evangelistic means difficult to simulate in the diaspora.

my experience in many conversations, especially those with women, where I felt that the conversation dropped in awkward silences as soon as the exchange of polite greetings was over, and left me struggling, with all the social skills I ever imagined myself, to have to keep the talk going. Language difference and especially the low status associated with speaking imperfect Dutch or English likely was another factor. I only found out in a late stage of the research that quite some church members, with whom I had always conversed in English, spoke a fair level of Dutch (see also 3.2.2).

To my surprise, there were moments when I suddenly seemed to successfully communicate my willingness to break down boundaries, not by the many words I had attempted for this purpose, but by embodying concrete tokens of Ghanaian identity: when I spoke some words of Twi, visited Ghana, wore Ghanaian dress, and ate Ghanaian food. This parallels the experience of Warner (1997), who found himself being included in the religious immigrant groups he studied through bodily actions such as eating, singing, and ritual motion, and his resulting suggestion that we must move “beyond cerebral to embodied understandings of religious communities” (p. 220)²³⁵. For example, my Twi hardly developed over the course of the fieldwork, but with the same few words I kept surprising, impressing, and cheering people. When I sang along with a Twi song at the Euro-Ghanaian camp meeting in the Netherlands, an unknown lady from a London Ghanaian SDA church came up to me and said: ‘You are wonderful, singing the Twi!’, and gave me her contact information. After I visited Ghana, church members with whom I otherwise had difficulty conversing, initiated talks with me by asking how I had experienced their country. When a bit shyly I wore a Ghanaian dress, bright green and including head cover, for the first time in my life at the Euro-Ghanaian camp meeting, I was stunned to find that ladies from the Paris Ghanaian SDA church, whom I did not know, literally came running to me and kissed me on my décolleté. After the church service that day, a swarm of Amsterdam church members one by one came to take pictures with me in my green dress. Interestingly, in response to such tokens a common conclusion was that ‘we need to find you a Ghanaian husband!’. Since there are few ways that are more including for an outsider than to marry an insider, this expression revealed how boundary-breaking these embodied markers of ‘Ghanaian-ness’ were. A solemn conversation with an elder about a church member who was interested in marrying me, affirmed this very point. Although the elder had doubts about this member wanting to marry a white woman (see 3.2.2), after thinking it over he realised that it *was* possible, since I seemed to feel at home in the Ghanaian lifestyle. The way by which he came to this conclusion illustrates the bodily loci of boundary breaking: ‘You (referring to me) can handle the noise, and you even went along with us to the camp meeting, you ate with us, slept in the same way, some people were complaining but you were not even complaining, and you are wearing Ghanaian cloth today’.

When we reflect on what these reflexive notes mean for the enactment of mission to white/Dutch/European people, we can observe that it seems hampered by the boundaries of language and race. Successful mission to secular white/Dutch/European

²³⁵ Warner (1997) explains the “contributions of bodily ritual to the production of solidarity” by the following principles: “they allow repetitive action and thus enhanced synchronization; the multivocality and diffuseness of the symbols they are directed toward or through which actions are coordinated do not require propositional consensus to promote solidarity; they employ common human capacities – motion, sound, taste - and are hence capable of crossing cultural boundaries; they can promote consciousness of kind, awareness of our species-being” (p. 232).

people would seem to benefit from the development of somewhat intimate relationships. My case illustrates how complicated this may be. I took initiative to build close relationships as a researcher, which few white/Dutch/European people are likely to do spontaneously. Even with that initiative, these relationships were developed only partially over the course of years. Further, in my case, deeper connection was reached momentarily when I put on a Ghanaian ‘body’, which is another thing few white/Dutch/European people are likely to do. To the extent that somewhat intimate social ties are necessary for mission, the boundaries of language and race limited opportunities for evangelising white/Dutch/European people ²³⁶.

5.2.2 Reaching Dutch Adventists: layers of contested identities

In 3.2.1 we saw that Dutch Adventists were in some ways a mission audience for the Ghanaian Adventists. In practice, this amounted to very few missionary acts. This silence was confirmed by Dutch SDA leaders. Whereas these leaders were somewhat accustomed to receiving criticism from Antillean/Aruban Adventists through letters or in church discussions, they rarely received such feedback from the Ghanaians. Pastor Postma, the former Dutch pastor of the Ghanaian SDA church, characterised the Ghanaian Adventists as conservative in a pleasant and open way, illustrating that he had never received a negative response to his openly expressed consumption of caffeine. I propose that this lack of mission practices resulted from layers of contested identities in the relationship between Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists.

First, the shared Adventist identity was divided by the boundaries of language and race, as well as a few others, which will be discussed below. This limited the number of encounters between Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists. Though Dutch SDA leaders preached a gospel of inclusion, which the Ghanaians echoed, the Ghanaian SDA church remained a relatively isolated group within the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC). The Ghanaians did not attend all regional or national gatherings. The church secretary reported that in the past, English translation was not always available at such meetings, or was organised in a separate space, which he experienced as quite discouraging. Important

²³⁶ There was another obstacle in relation to evangelising the Dutch. We saw this already in 5.1.2: non-Ghanaians were often excluded by ‘using the church work twice’. In regard to reaching the Dutch, church life and mission were not mutually constitutive, but in tension. This was aptly illustrated by the following case. On my first fieldwork visit to the church (the week before pastor Ansah came to the Netherlands), a connected Protestant and Roman Catholic Dutch church visited the Ghanaian SDA church through the mediation of the then ‘Kerkhuis’ (see chapter 1), which organised excursions to immigrant churches in Amsterdam for established churches. On this day, the Ghanaians clearly prioritised their own events over interacting with these Dutch visitors. The weekly church bulletin that always featured the Sabbath’s ‘special event’ on the cover (such as ‘choir day’, ‘Africa day’, or ‘marriage blessing’), did not announce the visitation of the dozens of Dutch visitors as the day’s special event, but rather the baby dedication held for a church family. The Dutch churches were however mentioned by name and called ‘special guests’ in the announcements inside the bulletin. After the church service, there was an arranged meeting between the Ghanaians and the Dutch visitors, but the leader of the ‘Kerkhuis’ struggled to get church members to join. The latter preferred eating and chatting with church members and other fellow Ghanaians. A church member who I had just met, escorted me to the room where the meeting took place, because I wanted to witness it. However, he did not know or care who the visitors were, and did not consider it important that I would translate those parts of the conversation that were in Dutch. He was simply enjoying his cake sitting next to me, as the discussion with the Dutch visitors was conducted with a handful of the Ghanaian leaders. Clearly, whereas ongoing church life facilitated the evangelism of Ghanaians, it hampered the evangelism of Dutch people.

national events that the Ghanaians always attended were the biennial national conventions (in Dutch: 'Toogdagen'), which they went to by transport that was organised by their church, and events for youth and children. However, at such gatherings they kept to themselves. At one of the national youth rallies, I observed that the Ghanaian youngsters mostly stuck to themselves. Only a couple of extraverted boys interacted with Dutch youth from other churches. During the lunch break at one of the national conventions, the members mingled only amongst themselves amidst thousands of Dutch, Antillean/Aruban, Surinamese and other Adventists. A Ghanaian lady who always passed around *bofrot* (sweet fried dough balls) in the local church, casually walked among the Ghanaian church members offering a big box of her treats, staging a Ghanaian mini-church within the national assembly. In another context of potential interaction, I experienced quite some difficulty in inviting Ghanaians to the national meetings of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS), where some of my Dutch SDA friends were involved. Many seemed unmotivated to attend and travel to an unknown meeting when this was not organised on a church level (which, as noted, *was* the case for the frequented national conventions). Once I asked a close friend from the Ghanaian church, who was an important photographer for the church, to do the photography for one of the ATS meetings. In response, he was reluctant to agree and wanted to meet with me personally first to discuss all the ins and outs of the meeting. When we met, he further noted that he wanted him and I to go to the meeting together, so that people would not get suspicious about him, a 'black photographer' walking around. When I asked him to do the photography again for a subsequent meeting, he initially hesitated because he felt that the temperatures were too cold in the places where 'we' (white Dutch Adventists) had our meetings²³⁷. In just this one case of a Ghanaian doing the photography for a non-Ghanaian Adventist gathering, unfamiliarity, race, and temperature all featured as issues of division and separation²³⁸.

A second contested identity was geographical: Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists had clashing geographical imaginations. Where according to official global SDA mapping, the Netherlands is an organisational unit in the world church, in many ways the Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam mapped themselves primarily as part of the Euro-Ghanaian SDA diaspora. Although the Ghanaians were faithful to the NUC in formal matters like tithing and taking up requested tasks (such as singing at national events), their heart was preoccupied much less with national Dutch SDA affairs than with diasporic Ghanaian SDA affairs. The beloved annual Euro-Ghanaian camp meetings meant considerably

²³⁷ One of the other church members I was close to, kept responding positively to my invitations to attend the ATS meetings, but equally confirmed the importance of temperature. When we entered the church building for one of these meetings, he commented: 'It is finally warm here!'. The separating role of temperature was significant, not only because the Ghanaians were used to a strongly heated church building on colder days, but also because health was a crucial theme to especially the undocumented, who don't get paid when they can't work. The possibility of getting sick because of cold temperatures was therefore sufficient to keep people away.

²³⁸ Such issues did not only limit the number of encounters, but also complicated methods. Elder Ababuo expressed that he did not know how to reach out to Dutch Adventists through any other way but prayer: 'Prayer is the key to everything. Because I do not know how to do it [how to convey specific religious practices to the Dutch Adventists]. It is my prayer God will show me what to do. So that they [the Dutch Adventists] too will benefit. I know it will help them! But I don't know how to do it! (...) How will this echo in the Union? That is why I say I don't know, but if God permits he will find some mysterious ways, how this can go through.'

more to them than the five-yearly Union session²³⁹ or biennial national conventions (in Dutch: 'Toogdagen'). Further, pastor Ansah was highly devoted to the needs of his church members as well as to travelling around Europe and Ghana to serve other Ghanaian communities. This meant his almost total absence from Dutch national pastor's meetings. Because of the different undergirding geographical imaginations, there was a tension between the orientation on the diaspora and the desire to reach Dutch Adventists - a tension that was usually won in favour of the former.

A crucial modality of contested identity was hierarchy. With their views on certain Dutch SDA practices, the Ghanaians had something to give: Adventism in undiluted form. However, the hierarchy implied in this came up against another hierarchy: church ranks:

(Fieldwork Report, 11/08/2007)

I attend the Sabbath service of the Euro-Ghanaian Adventist camp meeting held in the Netherlands. Various Ghanaian Adventist pastors working in Europe sit on stage, in addition to one of the white Dutch leaders of the Netherlands Union Conference and his wife. In front of a jewellery-free audience of hundreds of Ghanaian Adventists, the Dutch leader's wife on stage wears a necklace. The presenter speaks in Twi and is constantly translated in English by an interpreter. He interrupts his presentation by telling his interpreter not to translate his next message into English, and, in Twi, urges the audience not to react to this necklace.

In this case, the habit of Dutch Adventists that shocked the Ghanaians most, was displayed openly at the highlight of Euro-Ghanaian SDA church life. However, instead of approaching the case evangelistically, it was hushed by calling upon members to keep quiet. This is in enormous contrast to the confrontational way by which church members were openly reproached from the Ghanaian pulpit, with speakers telling specific listeners to wear longer skirts or wake up during the sermon, and publicly announcing sexual sins of members mentioned by name. The relative silence concerning the pastor's wife's necklace was representative of the very different, quiet approach to Dutch Adventists. The key difference here was another pattern illustrated by this report: the Dutch Adventists that the Ghanaian Adventists encountered were oftentimes Dutch *pastors* and their families.

Ghanaian Adventists had a strongly hierarchical understanding of church positions: pastors and church elders were held in very high esteem. Pastors and their families were treated with all manner of courtesy and support. In Amsterdam, some members felt shy of talking to pastor Ansah. Being an elder was considered highly honourable and expressive of moral excellence. Pastors and elders were honoured with their titles even before and after their official functions²⁴⁰. A young member studying theology was already referred to as 'pastor'. An elder who laid down his position was still named 'elder', sat with the elders in the back of the church, and showed up on pictures where 'the elders' featured. The authority attributed to church pastors and elders applied beyond ethnic boundaries. It was ascribed to Dutch Adventist pastors, and even more strongly to

²³⁹ The Union session is meant to evaluate the church policy and management of the previous five years, plan policy for a new term, and (re-)elect church leaders.

²⁴⁰ For this reason, my father, who moved to the role of 'second man' as a secretary in the NUC after he had been the president, was considered exceptionally humble. As I was told, 'such a move would never be made in Ghana!'

those who were also administrators in the NUC (the main leaders of which were all Dutch people). Visiting pastors and Union leaders received laudations, food at the highest table, and personal assistance in carrying their suitcase back to the car. This practice of church rank hierarchy was in clear tension with a possible 'practice' of truth hierarchy. Applying a hierarchy of elders below pastors, Ghanaian church elders with a sense of mission to Dutch Adventists did not feel quite authorised to 'preach' to visiting Dutch pastors. The same applied to pastor Ansah, the strong leader of the congregation, who approached Dutch pastors with great reverence and expressed that the NUC was above him:

Everything I do the Union knows. I just spoke to pastor Jansen [the then president] about the baptism, and the marriage seminar. He knows everything. He knows my movement. He has to know before I can do it. So he knows my movement. So anything he wants me to do, he can tell me to do and I will do it. Anywhere he wants to send me within the Union, I am prepared to go. (pastor Ansah)

In practice, truth hierarchy was overruled by church rank hierarchy.

A final arena of contestation was denominational belonging. On the one hand, the Ghanaians distanced themselves from some theologies of their Dutch counterparts. On the other hand, the Ghanaians were organisationally tied to the Dutch church. An example was the financial relationship. In line with worldwide SDA practice, the Ghanaian Adventists as a local church paid their tithes to the NUC²⁴¹. In an inverse flow and also in line with global Adventism, the NUC covered a large percentage of the costs of evangelism for the Ghanaian church as a local church. The NUC also paid for the yearly extensions of the staying permit of pastor Ansah and his wife. Further, there was an exchange of ministerial capacity. The Ghanaian choir/singers and pastor Ansah were requested to minister at specific SDA events and other SDA churches. In reverse, Dutch pastors with regularity preached in the Ghanaian church and had been closely involved in its very emergence (see 2.1). Further, there were formal lines of communication: the Ghanaian church secretary shared updates with the NUC on Ghanaian membership, leadership, and church programmes. These organisational connections between the Ghanaian Adventists and the NUC/Dutch Adventists underscored the ambivalent simultaneity between organisational belonging and theological alienation. The mission target was simultaneously mission partner, the 'them' was simultaneously 'us'.

These layers of contested identities in the relationship between Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists produced an almost total lack of mission practices to Dutch Adventists. In the next and final section that looks at evangelism to white/Dutch/European people, we move from a discussion of constraints to an examination of opportunities.

5.2.3 Reflexive notes on opportunities: social ties, mobilisation and prayer

We have seen that evangelising white/Dutch/European people was rare, due to a variety of tensions and ambivalences. There were however a few avenues by which white/Dutch/European people were addressed in missionary ways. To understand this, I will again draw on reflexive data. My own presence was employed for mission in two

²⁴¹ Paying tithes was strongly promoted in the church. However, members sometimes expressed that they received little in return for their tithing, in particular because one of their key longings had not yet become a reality: obtaining their own church building.

ways, which I will discuss subsequently: evangelising me *and* mobilising me to reach other white/Dutch people.

(Fieldwork Report, 8/12/2007)

I am visiting church secretary Owusu in his house. He tells me that he wants to talk to me about my faith. He knows that I am a Christian, but not yet baptised, and not yet sure of Adventism. He asks me: 'What have you learned in these 9 months that you spent in our church, Dani? Did you receive answers to your questions?'. I tell him that I learned several things, but that I still have questions about Adventism, and even about basic Christianity. We chat extensively. He listens patiently, makes notes of the things I say, and also talks for long periods of time. He tells me that I must pray on fixed times, not give up, not attach too much value to academic matters, and choose selectively what I read.

In this case, a befriended church member was highly concerned about my unbaptised status and went to great lengths to understand my philosophical and theological questions. His extensive efforts were exceptional, but his basic concern was widely shared. Church members assumed that I was baptised, since I faithfully participated in the Ghanaian SDA church and, for those who knew, was the daughter of an Adventist pastor - a fact that, in the Ghanaian SDA context, implied baptism. Oftentimes the Ghanaians found out about my unbaptised status in conversations about other topics, and were without exception greatly astonished by it. Their amazement usually translated immediately into the attempt to persuade me to get baptised. Many a conversation and interview were complemented by a discussion of this issue. Various arguments were used to convince me: that my father was a pastor and that by being unbaptised I neglected my exemplary role as a pastor's daughter (plus insulted my dad), that baptism is closely related to salvation and reaching heaven, and that baptism would finally give me, a seemingly faithful Adventist, the authority to become a missionary among Dutch Adventists²⁴². Pastor Ansah told me that he had meant one of the special baptismal robes for 2008 baptismal candidates (white with a vertical stripe of printed *Kente* in the middle and flown in from and designed in Ghana) especially for me. His wife Akosua shared that she had had a dream about me getting baptised, which she considered to be a message from God.

The Ghanaian Adventists sought to support and edify me in my Christian walk in more ways than prompting me to get baptised. Many church members naturally checked my church attendance, as they did with most attendees. On the rare occasion that I skipped a Sabbath service, members called me up or confronted me when they saw me again, implying the need for an explanation. There were more suggestions for behaviour: though I often received compliments for the way I dressed (which was generally considered both aesthetically and morally appropriate), I received a critical remark when wearing henna nail polish²⁴³. Also, I received support on a cognitive level: one lady gave me a video featuring an Adventist creationist scholar who discussed the theory of evolution. She commented that she had heard that I worked at a university, and thus would be confronted with flawed ideas like evolution.

²⁴² See Koning 2009, for an elaboration of these arguments and analysis of the undergirding value differences between the Ghanaian Adventists and me.

²⁴³ Nail polish and other make up were not highly esteemed in the church, and, in addition, the henna style of my polish was associated with Islam.

Clearly, I, a white Dutch, was evangelised by the Ghanaian Adventists. Although we saw in 5.2.1 that the boundaries of language and race complicated the development of intimate ties between us, I was still relatively close to church members because of my very presence and participation in church. The importance of social ties was reflected in the few mission practices that extended to other Dutch people. Dutch acquaintances were invited to church events. Ghanaian SDA church members invited Dutch colleagues and Dutch people whose houses they cleaned. Pastor Ansah zealously invited a Dutch lady who worked for the printing office in Amsterdam that printed two of his books²⁴⁴, thus using the opportunity of a business contact. Youth members brought Dutch friends to church. In other cases, Ghanaian Adventists conversed about faith with Dutch acquaintances. One of the church members explained to the Dutch woman whose house he cleaned, why he did not eat pork, and showed her the relevant biblical passage on clean and unclean food in the biblical book of Leviticus 11. He also gave her some books by prophetess Ellen White (see 3.2.1). One of the elders talked with his colleagues in the cafeteria of a hospital about the sermons in church, asked and answered questions on faith, and worked on his Sabbath school lesson during breaks. Social ties, therefore, enabled mission practices to the Dutch.

Another strategy was to mobilise known Dutch people to reach unknown Dutch people. Church leaders shared the conviction that it was more effective to divide mission along ethnic lines: to let Ghanaians reach Ghanaians and let the Dutch reach the Dutch. Thus, when an unknown Dutch lady was spontaneously baptised into the church (see 7.2.1), a couple of church leaders told me that it would be good for me as a Dutch person to link up with her. Pastor Ansah often imagined me as a reviving ‘catalyst’ among Dutch Adventists and Dutch youth. In one of our conversations, he said:

Me and my wife always pray, talk, and gossip about you, what you could do for the young people of this country. You are completely different from your contemporaries. Your future is brighter, for yourself and for the church. Who knows what God is planning to use you for? Your dissertation will have major impact. Scatter the relevant chapters everywhere, in every church. (pastor Ansah)

In a group interview (with the assistant-pastor, an elder, and a visiting Adventist from Ghana), one of the interviewees initiated a discussion about the theory of evolution, in which all eagerly participated. After some discussion, pastor Ansah, whose house we used for the interview, joined in the discussion, and listed a cluster of arguments to refute the theory. The conversation that followed my question how this information could be brought to the Dutch, illustrates the hope that I could serve as a bridge:

Pastor Ansah: It begins with one person, who will understand, that it's not a matter of theory, but a matter of powers. It must be someone who is a Dutch. And I'm speaking to that person [referring to me].

(All laugh and clap)

Pastor Ansah: It can take one man to change the whole world, to change that evolution is a theory that we should accept. It can take one woman to change the mentality of the Dutch young people. To save this country (...). And I'm talking to that person [referring to me].

²⁴⁴ These books were respectively on family life and spiritual leadership.

(All laugh and clap some more)

Assistant-pastor Baidoo: *Ah, this meeting is good!*

Elder Ababuo: *We will help you.*

Assistant-pastor Baidoo: *This is a prophecy, a prediction.*
(Laughter and discussion)

Assistant-pastor Baidoo: *Maybe in the end, like pastor Ansah said, you will come to understand us more than any other Dutch, Adventist Dutch. Then God can use you.*

In this conversation, I was cheerfully given the role of saving the country of the Netherlands and changing the Dutch youth and Adventists, on the grounds of being Dutch ('it must be someone who is a Dutch') and my closeness to the Ghanaians ('maybe you will come to understand us more than any other Dutch'). I became the bridge: a missionary trained by the Ghanaians and sent out to the Dutch²⁴⁵. This was affirmed in literal words when I formally said goodbye to the church, months after the end of the official fieldwork period. Pastor Ansah prayed for me in front of the church, depicting me as someone who departed as a missionary or ambassador to share with others what I had learned in this church. Mobilising a known Dutch person was a mission strategy to reach unknown Dutch people.

Finally, the church was not strictly tied to ties: church leaders used spiritual means, in particular prayer, to transcend social boundaries. Prayer was free: not limited by anything that was not surpassed by the God who understands all languages, loves all races, and cares for the poor and undocumented. Now and then there were prayers for the Dutch Adventist church, for example for the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC) or the five-yearly NUC session, as well as for the Netherlands in general²⁴⁶. Prayer was an opportunity to curtail the limitations of language, race, and class²⁴⁷.

5.3 Evangelising other ethnic groups: the denominational factor

Non-Ghanaian/non-Dutch ethnic groups were rarely talked about in terms of evangelism. Some mission practices however did address them. In some cases, these other ethnic groups were reached through public types of evangelism. Examples were the

²⁴⁵ In addition to being seen as a bridge in the form of a missionary sent by the Ghanaians to the Dutch, on a few occasions I was also perceived as a bridge in the form of a resource of knowledge about Dutch/European culture. When I confided some personal questions on Christianity to a Ghanaian SDA pastor from the UK who I met at the Euro-Ghanaian camp meeting, he expressed how much he appreciated our talk, as he believed it helped him to know how to speak to people from 'my culture'. He noted that people usually do not ask him the question (concerning cultural relativism) that I wrote down for him on a paper, which he kept in his Bible to preserve his new knowledge.

²⁴⁶ Pastor Ansah for example prayed from the pulpit: 'It seems that God wants us to spread the gospel in Holland. God, touch every soul in this nation'.

²⁴⁷ Similarly, in a study of two African churches in Germany where congregants lacked German skills, healing and music were observed as strategies to address non-immigrants (Karagiannis and Glick Schiller 2008: 273, 274).

posters for the marriage seminar that were hung all over Amsterdam Southeast, and the preaching of a youth member in the Amsterdam subway. In other cases, other ethnic groups were addressed through personal ties. Examples were a member who took her Ivorian friend to the church, and a member who asked me for a Dutch Bible or Sabbath school quarterly for her Surinamese colleague.

Interesting and more substantial in this regard was the denominational factor. Whilst the inter-ethnic potential of public and network evangelism is available more generally, being situated in a global denomination established in the Netherlands produced a unique tie to other ethnic groups. For the Ghanaian Adventists, the denominational link connected them with an ethnically heterogeneous audience from the local to the national to the global level. On the local level, pastor Ansah was invited by other, Antillean/Aruban-majority or multi-ethnic SDA congregations in the Netherlands to run seminars and crusades. On the national level, pastor Ansah was asked by the Netherlands Union Conference to additionally pastor an Antillean/Aruban-majority SDA church because of a sudden vacancy. Also, the church participated in national SDA offerings (e.g. for Internet evangelism) and projects. In discussing the social aspects of evangelism, elder Charles recalled such a project:

Elder Charles: *Last year we had to collect money for an ADRA programme²⁴⁸. For young girls in Asia, Indonesia or so. They take young girls for prostitution... and we were in Ganzenhoef [an area in Amsterdam Southeast close by the church]. So they gave us some T-shirts, ADRA T-shirts, so I was wearing one and we were wearing one, and we went to Ganzenhoef, on Sabbath afternoon. And somebody asked me: eh... but where do you come from? When we were collecting the money, he said: where do you come from? I said: I come from Ghana. I said: we are helping some people (...) Bangladesh or whatever, for girls who are forced into prostitution, and they want to mobilise these girls again, back to school and that sort of thing. I said it's for people in Asia. The man looked at me and he said: hey, you Ghanaian you are collecting money for people in Asia [laughs]. You also need money for Africa! I said: I know, I know. But this time it's for people in Asia. So we were just laughing, he said: you are not serious, I said it's serious, I know what I'm doing [laughs].*

DK: *He was surprised.*

Elder Charles: *Yes. He was surprised seeing a black man, African like me, collecting money not for Africa but for another place.*

The surprise of the passerby in this quote demonstrates that the link to a denomination produced out-reach practices to unexpected groups, with whom little or no ties existed. On the global level, the Ghanaian Adventists, like other local SDA churches, joined in the weekly Sabbath school offerings, which went to mission projects all over the world. In sum, while the embedding in a denomination produced a Ghanaian-oriented mission agenda (see chapter 3), this same factor had an opposite effect on mission *practices* by broadening their scope.

²⁴⁸ ADRA stands for Adventist Development and Relief Association, an organisation that works worldwide (see www.adra.org) and has a chapter in the Netherlands (see www.adra.nl). The programme referred to in this quote was part of a national SDA project.

5.4 In conclusion

In this chapter, the mission practices of the Ghanaian Adventists were investigated to answer its central question: *How does the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in its evangelistic practices?*

The key framework to answer this question was the relationship between ‘place-making’, that is the (re)production of actual, ordinary, everyday life (Koning 2009: 207) on the one hand, and evangelism on the other. For the Ghanaian Adventists, place-making was much concerned with the reproduction of cultural-linguistic identity and the production of socio-economic certainty. The mutual constitution of place-making and evangelism ran through most of the mission practices, and implied that primarily fellow Ghanaians were addressed. On the congregational level, this happened in two ways. The first originated with the church itself: ‘using the church work twice’. Many church practices were simultaneously employed for church members (in-reach) and outsiders (out-reach). Marked by Twi/English language, references to black/African identities, socio-economic issues relevant to Ghanaians, and Ghanaian invitees, these two-fold practices addressed church members and *Ghanaian* outsiders. In other words, the importance of in-reach allowed for or facilitated out-reach to Ghanaians. Inversely, it hardly allowed for but rather hampered out-reach to white/Dutch/European and other non-Ghanaian people. Thus, place-making and reversed mission were in tension.

The second dynamic on the congregational level originated in the wider Ghanaian community, which recognised the relatively isolated Ghanaian SDA church as part of this ethnic community in the form of invitations to local Ghanaian events, such as choir contests and royal ceremonies. Such events had a ‘place-making’ function: they served to reproduce cultural-linguistic life in the diaspora. The Adventist Ghanaians contributed to this by participating, but at the same time located their mission practices here. Again, place-making and mission to Ghanaians were mutually constitutive.

Further, place-making and evangelism were related on the individual level of church members. To reproduce cultural-linguistic identity and produce socio-economic certainty, church members formed social ties along ethnic lines. Since most evangelistic practices of individual members flowed through personal networks, these practices were mostly limited to Ghanaians. Social ties located mission within ethnic boundaries. There were exceptions to this: white/Dutch people and representatives of other ethnic groups were also addressed or mobilised through personal networks, but to a much lesser extent.

The three relationships between place-making and evangelism point to the *embedded* nature of evangelism. Evangelism was embedded in church life, the local community, and personal networks. It therefore emerged in ‘Ghanaian’ forms and places. Inversely, because of the embedded nature of evangelism, few practices addressed white/Dutch/European people. Because the Ghanaian Adventists came up against boundaries marked by race, language, geographical imagination, and church rank, there was little ground on which to plant mission practices to white/Dutch/European people. Some things however provided the necessary embedding for inter-ethnic evangelism, such as social ties to certain white/Dutch people, mobilising white/Dutch acquaintances, the use of prayer, and, to reach other ethnic groups, being part of a denomination.

In the next chapter, we will further explore how boundaries were constructed in evangelistic practices by comparing the Ghanaian SDA case with the other immigrant churches.

6 Agency and structure: mission practices of immigrant churches

In this chapter, I will discuss the mission practices of the 14 immigrant churches in the Netherlands that were studied in comparison to the Ghanaian Adventists. The main question of this chapter is: *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic practices?*²⁴⁹

6.1 Evangelising fellow ethnics

Like the mission endeavours of the Ghanaian Adventists, the mission work of other immigrant churches was mostly directed towards the fellow ethnic/linguistic group. This was in line with the mission discourses discussed in chapter 4. Mission practices were not geared to specific, theologically delineated groups (such as ex-Christians, other Christians, or non-Christians, which were sometimes distinguished in mission discourses), but focused on the ethnic/linguistic communities in general. Thus, the ICF Chinese ministry organised Christmas events for Chinese people, the Korean Reformed pastor planted churches among Koreans²⁵⁰, and the Ethiopian evangelical church organised youth meetings to evangelise Ethiopian youth. In some cases, the churches added a spatial component by regionally dividing the task of reaching fellow ethnics in collaboration with sister churches in other parts of the country. For example, the Korean Reformed church in Rotterdam focused on Koreans in the South of the Netherlands, whilst the Amsterdam branch focused on Koreans in the North. In this section I will explore in what ways mission practices emerged within ethnic/linguistic boundaries.

6.1.1 Asian faces, Turkish post-boxes: singling out ethnic groups in public life

How does one address a specifically delineated ethnic/linguistic group in the multicultural public arena? Immigrant churches creatively employed selection strategies. A popular tactic was locating post-boxes with names of fellow ethnics for depositing evangelistic materials. This strategy, which we already saw in the Ghanaian SDA case, was used by the Antillean/Aruban SDA church, the Ethiopian evangelical church and the ICF Turkish ministry. Some went to great lengths to uncover the addresses of fellow ethnics. The Ethiopian evangelical church received addresses of Ethiopians and Eritreans in the Amsterdam region from an Ethiopian foundation and a local organisation for refugees. They used these addresses to mail promotional materials. Likewise, the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses gathered and visited 'Persian' addresses in their assigned region in the Netherlands.

Other strategies had to do with recognising fellow ethnics in the streets. The ICF Chinese ministry steered through the colourful Rotterdam streets by looking for 'Asian faces', to distribute Chinese flyers with invitations to Bible studies and church services.

²⁴⁹ Due to the socio-political sensitivities concerning mission to Muslims, data on this topic has been omitted or anonymised depending on the permission given by respective church leaders and members.

²⁵⁰ After the Eindhoven plant (see 2.2), the Korean pastor aspired to plant a church in Maastricht, as he knew there were dozens of Korean students studying there.

Since they could not distinguish Chinese from Koreans or Japanese at first sight, they looked for Asian faces in general, and then approached the person to double-check whether they spoke Mandarin. Others copied this strategy of recognition based on facial features and language. The elder of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church handed out letters with Bible texts in Portuguese to Portuguese-speaking passers-by. The leader of the ICF Turkish ministry began his ministry by giving out leaflets, including a form to apply for the gospels in Turkish, to Turkish people that he saw out in the streets.

Another method was to advertise in the facilities of ethnicity-based organisations and businesses. Thus, the Chinese ministry members left flyers near the Chinese newspapers at the exit of Chinese supermarkets in Rotterdam. Japanese Christians hung flyers for their Bible studies, parenting courses, patchwork workshops, and Christmas concerts in local Japanese stores and the Japanese elementary school in Amsterdam. Ethiopian evangelical church members hung flyers in Ethiopian restaurants. In all these ways, immigrant churches intentionally singled out specific ethnic/linguistic groups in public life.

6.1.2 Manipulating cultural symbols, meeting cultural needs

Cultural ‘stuff’ played an important role in directing mission strategies. Many church leaders intentionally manipulated cultural symbols to become recognisable and appealing to fellow ethnics. Language was crucial in this. According to Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000: 107), language commonality is central to immigrants in the development of “networks with people of similar background”, “the reproduction of customs in a new and different socio-cultural milieu” and “the feeling of personal comfort”. The evangelistic practices of the churches built on the significance of language. Church websites, brochures, flyers, radio and TV programmes as well as church events featured in the designated tongues, sometimes combined with Dutch and/or English. The prison ministry of the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish had its choir sing mostly Spanish songs in various Dutch prisons, and held Spanish-speaking masses there for special occasions. The mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church distributed promotional materials in Papiamentu. Urdu Church Holland had a weekly TV programme with singing and preaching in Urdu. The elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church used flyers in Amharic. The ICF Kurdish ministry regularly handed out materials in Kurdish languages: the New Testament in Sorani, the Old and New Testament in Kurmanji, and a cassette of the biblical book of John in Zazaki. Examples abound of this conscious use of specific languages to direct evangelism to specific groups.

In addition to language, a host of cultural symbols was brought into action. I will illustrate this with a somewhat extended fieldwork report.

(Fieldwork Report, 19/01/2007)

Today, the ICF Kurdish ministry has planned one of its ‘Kurdish feasts’ in the ICF church. As I am waiting outside, talking to one of the ICF church pastors, a big bus arrives from the North of Holland with about twenty Kurds. The first one to happily jump outside is, I am told by the pastor, a recently baptised new convert. He immediately lights a cigarette and is joined by a cheerful crowd coming out of the bus. It is clear that everybody is very excited. I meet my personal Kurdish friend, Leyla, in front of the church. She is an agnostic woman who has nothing to do with the ministry. I have asked her to accompany me today. Her accompaniment is the main reason that I, as a non-Kurd, am allowed to participate in this special feast, since, in principle, non-Kurds can only come when they bring a Kurdish person.

When we enter the school, Leyla and I are warmly welcomed by a woman in festive Kurdish dress. Various people immediately come to greet Leyla. We sit ourselves down and enjoy tea, coffee, and cookies with Kurdish converts. We converse with them about our studies and jobs.

When the church is filled up with more and more visitors, the official programme begins. A Kurdish flag and a big cross feature prominently on the stage. A male musician enters and starts to sing and play Kurdish music. Gradually, the visitors go up front to dance Kurdish dances. Leyla intensely enjoys the music. She closes her eyes and sings along with the familiar songs. She is quick to join in the dancing, and for the sake of participation I also join - however clumsily and perhaps to the frustration of some. The leader of the Kurdish ministry and his Dutch wife also partake in the dancing. Leyla and I sit down again and just listen to the songs being performed. Leyla's translation of the lyrics suggests that a secular love song is being Christianised. The secular song is about a person who has been waiting for his lover for a long time. Halfway through, the ministry leader takes the microphone from the singer and sings 'hallelujah', turns the awaited lover into Jesus, and raises his hand to the sky. A Christian moment features in a culture-oriented event.

A bit later, I start chatting with a Muslim girl in another part of the school hall. It becomes clear that she is not aware that this Kurdish celebration is a Christian event. Suddenly, a beautiful female Kurdish singer from Sweden enters the stage, dressed in a bright red dress. Leyla tells me that red is the favourite colour of Kurdish people. The singer sings dramatically about Jesus with the repeated phrase 'blessed Jesus, Messiah'. In between stanzas, she prays with closed eyes, silent movements of her mouth, and her hands moving in the air. After her performance, we watch an abbreviated Jesus movie. It is synchronised in Sorani and edited with a particular emphasis on the miracles of Jesus and his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. When the movie is over, it is time for food. One of the helpers in the Kurdish ministry prays over our food, and we eat chicken, sour vegetables and wraps. After eating, we listen to some more songs, and the ministry leader shakes Leyla's hand. When Leyla has to leave before the programme is over, one of the ladies we talked to earlier warmly says goodbye to her and writes down her email address to invite her for future activities. Luckily, I am welcome to stay even though Leyla departs.

Then the ministry leader starts his sermon. He repeatedly uses the word 'certainty', stressing that one can have certainty about reaching heaven through Jesus. He also emphasises that one does not have to give up one's Kurdish identity to be a follower of Jesus. He walks to the Kurdish flag on the stage, points to it and says: 'This is our first certainty'. He then walks to the big cross on the stage, points to it, and says: 'This is our second certainty'. He stresses that the Kurds are a special people to God. At the end of his sermon, he calls people repeatedly not to have fear, not to look at others, and to come forward to give their lives to Jesus. Eventually one lady answers the call and walks forward. The leader proceeds with a more general call for prayer, and to my surprise many attendees go forward. After the prayers, there is coffee, and people start dancing again. One of the ministry members, a girl who had translated for me after Leyla left, tells me that the Kurdish members never refer to themselves as 'Christians', but always as 'believers'. They do this because, in her view, Kurds associate the former either with Orthodox Christians (who would never speak about Jesus as Saviour) or with Western Christians (who are associated with wearing mini-skirts). She also explains that the ministry stresses the cultural and festive aspects of the Kurdish feasts more than their Christian aspects, but the Christian identity is openly expressed on their flyers and website. When I leave, the ministry leader calls out to me: 'Take your friend along to the House for Kurds (see 2.2), and also to our next feast in April!'

This fieldwork report demonstrates how a specific ethnic group was reached out to by employing a variety of cultural symbols. The Kurdish feast was not unique. Ethnic food, for example, played a role in the mission practices of many churches. Food is central in the reproduction of ethnic identity in immigrant religious communities (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 90-92). A neglected dimension of this is the importance of food as a mission strategy. Examples are plentiful. The Antillean/Aruban SDA church held special ‘Antillean days’ in which *kokada*, Antillean sweets, and *tutu*, an Antillean dish, were indispensable. They also organised a ‘breakfast from Curacao’ preceding the church service, to which they invited outsiders. The Cape Verdean Nazarenes sometimes served Cape Verdean dishes after church to attract people. Members of the ICF Chinese ministry shared personal testimonies over Chinese dumplings during the Chinese New Year, which they organised annually with missionary intent. The Ethiopians celebrated Christmas with Ethiopian food, which partly had the function of drawing outsiders. The Korean Reformed church held banquets with mainly Korean traditional food for special events like Easter, birthdays, or the Korean Harvest Festival, to which non-Christians were invited. Food was also a significant aspect of the Pakistani Christian conference organised by Urdu Church Holland. The leaders noted that it did not work to simply invite Pakistani to come and listen to a sermon, but that they *could* be attracted by fellowship and eating together. There was a powerful appeal in food, and church leaders were aware of this.

Some churches used flags for evangelistic purposes. We already saw the prominence of the Kurdish flag on stage at the Kurdish feast. The flyers for such feasts also depicted the Kurdish flag, as well as the contours of Kurdistan, with the text: ‘Welcome to the Kurdish feast for all Kurds! Is it possible for a Kurd to believe in Jesus? Kurdish dancing and Kurdish singing!’. The Antillean/Aruban SDA church also used flags for evangelistic purposes. They had two pamphlets to invite people to attend church services. One was in Papiamentu and had a picture of a palm beach on the cover. The other was in Dutch and had a picture of the Netherlands topped by pictures of the Dutch and Antillean flags.

Next to the conscious employment of food and flags, churches adapted to specific cultural needs. The emphasis of the Kurdish ministry leader on the harmonious fit of ethnic and Christian identities was not unique. According to Ebaugh and Chafetz, religious immigrant groups that, through migration, move from a minority to a majority status have to “contend with the need to redefine their ethnicity to incorporate a religious identity that is non-traditional and often despised in their homelands” (2000: 41). The ICF Chinese ministry faced precisely this challenge: like the Kurds, they were concerned about showing that ethnic and Christian identities were not mutually exclusive. Annually, they organised a celebration of the Chinese New Year and invited non-Christians. They shared personal testimonies with visitors, and showed movies about how the gospel came to and is received in China. When I asked the ministry leader to explain why they chose to show these specific movies, he said:

I think that the thing behind it is that the gospel is now rooted in China. It's not something very new, or it's not something that is so unfamiliar. And actually, a lot of people in China believe in it. So it's kind of an encouragement and motivation for people to really have interest in understanding this, at least. It's not the foreign stuff, but it's actually being rooted in China, in the culture. (leader of the ICF Chinese ministry)

He noted that it is still common among Chinese to view Christianity as a Western religion. He considered it necessary to teach the universality of Christianity and to show that its adoption is not a betrayal of China as a country or culture. Ebaugh and Chafetz similarly found that for members of a Chinese immigrant church in the US, “a key issue is how to maintain their identity as cultural Chinese while adopting the despised religion of Western imperialism; how to ‘Sinocize’ Christianity” (2000: 33). By engaging with this issue, the Chinese ministry in Rotterdam adapted their message to the cultural needs of Chinese immigrants²⁵¹.

In addition to dealing with the relationship between ethnic and Christian identities, other churches adapted their mission practices to religious sensibilities. Most prominently, church leaders that were active in reaching out to Muslims adjusted religious rituals, the content of studies, the language used, social interaction, personal behaviour, and other mission strategies to accommodate Muslim sensibilities. Also, the Ethiopian evangelical church adapted its mission strategies to an Orthodox audience²⁵². By manipulating cultural symbols and meeting cultural needs, immigrant churches intentionally addressed those with whom ethnicity and language were shared. We will now move from a discussion of the more intentionally ethnic forms of mission, to additional dynamics that located mission practices within ethnic boundaries.

6.1.3 Blending church life and mission

The importance and ethnicising impact of ‘using the church work twice’, which we saw very strongly in the Ghanaian SDA case, was widely affirmed in the other immigrant churches. Church life and mission were oftentimes blended, because evangelistic qualities were attributed to regular church practices. Since many churches had emerged to celebrate Christianity in specific cultural forms and to reproduce ethnic identity, this mix of church life and mission produced evangelistic practices that in the first place addressed fellow ethnics. The mutuality was specifically manifested in life cycle rituals, the importance of which we also noted in the Ghanaian SDA case. Church leaders observed that the occasions of weddings and funerals were good opportunities for mission, since they were attended by a religiously diverse audience from within their respective ethnic groups. The Ethiopian evangelical church choir for example sang Christian songs at the weddings of church members, which were frequented by many non-members. The Chaldean priest led out in Iraqi funerals that were attended by many non-churchgoing and

²⁵¹ In this way, the issue for the Chinese and Kurdish Christians mirrored that of the Ghanaian Adventists: the former sought after a ‘cultured’ form of Christianity, whilst the latter stressed that Christianity is beyond all culture (see chapter 3).

²⁵² In collaboration with various other Ethiopian evangelical churches in Europe, the church organised a theatre tour that featured a famous converted Ethiopian actor and singer, aimed at evangelising Ethiopians in Europe. The play’s plot revolved around a Coptic Orthodox father and a son who converted to Jesus-oriented Christianity. In the story, the son persuades his initially angry father that his conversion is good. The son points out that in the biblical story of the wedding at Cana, Mary, a very important figure in Orthodox traditions, has said that one should obey Jesus. After the play, the actor gave his personal testimony and called on people not to give their heart to angels or saints, a clear allusion to Coptic Orthodox belief, but to God’s own son, Jesus. In the mission strategy of this play, the evangelical Ethiopians thus adapted to the Orthodox worldview by staging Mary as an authority and by referring to ‘saints’.

non-Christian Iraqis. He deliberately used such occasions to talk with people he did not know and share a spiritual message. He confronted visitors with questions like:

If you are lighting a candle in this church today, but you don't believe in this church, why did you come here? You are not honest towards yourself! (priest of the Chaldean parish; original in Dutch)

Life cycle rituals were useful evangelistic tools, because they brought together Christian and non-Christian/other Christian fellow ethnics.

The blend of church life and mission was further produced through shared interests between church members and fellow ethnic outsiders. The Japanese Protestant church, for example, organised 'Bible and art' classes. These educative meetings had emerged from the interests of church members *and* served to attract Japanese unbelievers who supposedly had similar interests in European culture and art:

(Fieldwork Report, 15/02/2008)

It is Friday morning, the time of the weekly women's meeting of the Japanese Protestant church. Today's programme consists of the monthly 'Bible and art' class, guided by Tomoko, one of the female church members, who is a professional painter. We meet in a small rented room of a large Dutch Reformed church in Amstelveen, where the Japanese Protestant church also rents a room for their weekly church service. There are five of us: Tomoko, three other church members amongst which another painter, and me. I am warmly received and we start with prayer and singing. One of the ladies hands me the Japanese lyrics of the songs - luckily I can at least hum along with the familiar melodies. Tomoko then introduces us to the painter that will be studied today: Giotto. The women have decided to study his work specifically, because there is an exhibition of his paintings in the Bible museum in Amsterdam that they plan to visit. We sit around a table with a stack of Japanese art books, with names such as 'Who's Who in Western Art', 'Themes and Subjects in Western Art - Bible', and 'The Art Bible', in addition to a collection of art-related articles from a Japanese newspaper, and a New Testament. Tomoko tells us about Giotto's life story and works. She reads descriptions from the art books and passes around pictures of paintings. For each individual work of Giotto, we begin with reading the Bible passages to which it refers. We read passages from Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts, linking, for example, Matthew 2:13-15 to Giotto's painting 'The Flight into Egypt'. Different discussions emerge. The women observe that various paintings refer to Bible stories that they consider non-canonical. One of the members notes that Giotto still remains very close to the biblical text, in contrast to some other painters. Tomoko points out that Giotto wants to draw attention to the story, not the painting, which can be seen by his unusual choice to paint Jesus from the side rather than the front. All women zealously take notes. After the two-hour class, we chat extensively over Japanese cookies and chips.

The women who attended this 'Bible and art' class were all church members. Part of their intention, however, was to draw outsiders, especially since their group had thinned down when two women had re-migrated to Japan. The ladies of the Japanese Protestant church also organised other activities that were of interest both to themselves and Japanese outsiders, such as patchwork courses and making paper corsages, which they occasionally linked together with Bible studies.

Finally, there were many socio-economic projects that were intended to support both church members and evangelise outsiders by tackling issues that were relevant to

specific ethnic/linguistic groups. The Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, for example, was involved in various social projects for Spanish-speaking people, from visiting prisons to giving juridical advice and psychological help. The ICF Kurdish ministry helped Kurdish asylum seekers in their quest for legal documents by contacting lawyers and the IND (the organisation for entry into the Netherlands). The Japanese Protestant church connected with the loneliness of especially Japanese women, whose men were off to work all day, by organising social meetings like lunches and a Valentine's party. They also ran marriage seminars, highly relevant to the marital strain caused by the heavy work load of Japanese immigrant men. The support of church members was thus combined with evangelising fellow ethnics, because of shared problems and challenges in specific ethnic/linguistic groups.

6.1.4 Layers of networks

Immigrant churches were located in layers of networks: from the personal networks of church members to the institutional networks of the congregation, and from ties to Dutch Christians to transnational relationships. The nature of most of these networks was such, that they affirmed the tendency to enact mission practices within specific ethnic/linguistic boundaries.

Mission on the micro level flowed through church members' personal networks, which primarily consisted of fellow ethnics. The Ethiopian elder illustrated:

In our [Ethiopian] community, we know each other. This community is more close-knit than in the West. It's a big family. Within this community, you have other close-knit communities, like blood relations, but in general we know like oh, he is a Muslim, or he is Coptic, or he is evangelical. So we kind of know each other. Then there are other demarcations like: he believes in the Bible, but no, he is only traditional. Or yes, he is Muslim, but he is open. So it's not a systematic approach, no it's every day new and focused on whatever happens and on the attitude of the people we meet. (elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church; original in Dutch)

Friendship networks were crucial. The focus on friends was stimulated by the fact that leaders of many churches advocated friendship evangelism. They had often experienced that impersonal methods, such as street evangelism, were significantly less effective. In the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, friendships were the most important means of evangelism. Church members invited friends to church services, cell group meetings, and youth nights. The ICF Chinese ministry also centralised friendship evangelism and struggled to find ways to reach those with whom they had no friendship ties. The Chaldean priest's mission towards Chaldean Catholics that were inactive, unknown, or had moved to other denominations (see 4.1.2), was supported by the friendship networks of families that he visited²⁵³.

Another personal network that was specifically important for evangelism emerged from the participation of church members in secular organisations that were run by fellow ethnics. Many members of the Japanese Protestant church, for example, were active

²⁵³ These families gave the priest the contact information of befriended Iraqis, and talked positively of his visits to the latter.

members of a local society for the Japanese elderly. Some were also teachers at the local Japanese school or partook in its Parent-Teacher Association. One member helped out in a Japanese association that organised New Year celebrations. Further, Ghanaian members of the ICF English-speaking African ministry attended meetings of region-based or school-based Ghanaian associations, where they talked informally about their faith and invited others to come to their Sunday meetings. Also, the pastor of Urdu Church Holland and his wife were generally well-known in the Pakistani community in Rotterdam. They were invited to events at a local, secular Pakistani organisation and celebrations of individual Pakistani immigrants. People that were met in these ways were invited to church events.

Congregational networks likewise co-produced mission practices that targeted fellow ethnics. The fact that churches were known and recognised by other individuals and institutions within the ethnic group created opportunities for evangelism. For example, the Dutch pastor of the Japanese Protestant church was asked by Japanese couples to marry them in church. In one case, both the husband and wife were not Christian, but considered it romantic to be married in church. In the preparations, the pastor studied with them about biblical views on marriage and Christian perspectives on salvation. For this couple, the eventual marriage ceremony was the first time they experienced a church service. The pastor was still in touch with the couple. Another case was the pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, who was regularly invited to speak in Indonesian Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Although he was against evangelising other denominations, he did hope to establish a more charismatic flavour there: more humour, interaction, and an informal atmosphere.

A somewhat different example was the Serbian Orthodox parish. In the Serbian community, the vast majority was nominally Orthodox, but not active in parish life (see 4.1.2). On certain occasions, however, nominal Serbian Orthodox believers called upon their ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Most of them celebrated the 'slava', the celebration of a family's patron saint. For this event, priests were invited to perform a ceremony in the family house and bless traditional dishes. In other cases, priests were invited to give a blessing at a youth or sports event. The priests considered such invitations as opportunities to encourage their hosts to be more active believers:

You try to make clear to these people: just think about it seriously. If you are already following the tradition, why would you follow only half of it? (student priest of the Serbian Orthodox parish; original in Dutch)

Also, great numbers of Serbian Orthodox believers who did not visit Divine Liturgies most of the year, did attend Christmas and Easter services. Here again, the priests seized the expression of a continued tie to Orthodoxy to stimulate the religiously less active Serbs, prompting them to attend more often than a few times a year.

Not only the wider ethnic community, but also relationships with Dutch Christians affirmed the ethnic mission work of immigrant churches. In some cases, the 'Dutch factor' was very strong, enabling the very existence of this work. Dutch Christians had been crucial in the formation of certain churches/ministries, such as the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses, Urdu Church Holland, and some of the ICF ministries. In some cases, Dutch Christians provided financial support. The ICF and some of its ethnic

ministries were financially supported by Christian Reformed sister churches and committees. Urdu Church Holland was economically backed up by a partnership with a Dutch Reformed church and allowed to use its church premises for free. In addition, Dutch Christians/churches helped to fill ministerial gaps. Dutch Nazarene pastors preached in the Cape Verdean Nazarene services when they were temporarily without a Portuguese-speaking pastor. The meeting of the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses was made possible by Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses who spoke or were learning Persian, and who fulfilled vital functions in the ministry to Iranians in the Netherlands.

In other cases, the Dutch factor was not crucial but still important in facilitating ethnic mission work. Dutch people contributed as mission workers. A Bible study group of the ICF Chinese ministry was led by a Dutch woman who had been a missionary in China. The ICF Kurdish ministry had some Dutch people in its missionary team, and Dutch ICF members helped to distribute evangelistic flyers among Kurds they knew. Likewise, Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands passed on the addresses they found of Persian-speaking people to the closest local congregation of Persian-speaking brethren. Dutch Christians furthermore provided training: the leader of the ICF Turkish ministry had been trained by a Dutch man who did a mission project among Turks in the Netherlands. Dutch churches also provided a place to worship: the Japanese and Korean churches worshipped in the spaces of Dutch churches. Thus, although some Dutch Christians may have hoped for immigrant Christians to revitalise the secular Dutch, they took up a variety of roles that enabled and affirmed mission practices to specific immigrant groups²⁵⁴.

Finally, transnational networks added to the picture. Transnational networks reinforced the tendency for evangelism to be carried out within ethnic/linguistic boundaries. There were transnational flows to the country of immigration, within the wider diaspora, and to the country of origin. One type of transnational flow to the country of immigration were speakers from the country of origin that were invited for special meetings. The Antillean/Aruban SDA church for example invited preachers from the Netherlands Antilles for evangelistic campaigns. Next to transnational recruiters, transnational potential converts were invited. For example, a member of the ICF Chinese ministry invited her non-Christian music teacher, who lived in China but was giving some lectures in France, to stay with her in Rotterdam. In the couple of days that the teacher stayed, she was invited to the Chinese Bible study group and members shared their testimonies with her.

On the level of the wider diaspora, some immigrant churches were involved in church planting in Europe. The Pakistani pastor travelled extensively throughout Europe to help set up Urdu-speaking churches (e.g. in France, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and

²⁵⁴ Within the unique composition and structure of the ICF, Dutch Christians supported ethnic mission work in myriad other ways. Dutch ICF'ers helped the ICF ethnic ministries in practical matters. For example, a women's meeting of the ICF French-speaking African ministry was supported by Dutch people who did the sound engineering, and a Kurdish missionary feast was supported by Dutch people who took care of the food distribution and clean-up after the dinner. Also, the ethnic ministries were supported through education. The first leader of the Chinese ministry was trained by ICF in his mission work among Chinese in the Netherlands. Also, through the mediation of the ICF, one of the leaders of the ICF French-speaking ministry received private theology lessons from a Dutch pastor who had lived in Congo and spoke French.

Italy). Leaders of the ICF Kurdish ministry helped establish a Kurdish church in Germany and trained other Kurdish Christian leaders living in Europe. Further, cooperation with established churches was vital. The pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church held crusades in other Ghanaian/African churches in Europe. Also, Urdu-speaking church members went to London to evangelise together with local Urdu-speaking churches.

Finally, transnational ties stimulated evangelism in the country of origin (that is, ‘re-reversed mission’). The former leader of the ICF Chinese ministry was sent by ICF as a missionary to China. The Ghanaian pastor of the Pentecost Revival Church held crusades in Ghana. The Kurds trained Kurdish Christian leaders living in Iraqi Kurdistan and ministered there through personal visits and social projects. A member of the ICF English-speaking African ministry re-migrated to his home land, Cameroon, and became a spiritual leader with help of the ministry’s training. In some cases, work in the country of origin was more easily done by pastors living in the Netherlands than by pastors in the country of origin. The Pakistani pastor regularly returned to Pakistan to preach and conduct baptisms. Local church leaders were eager for him, as a mobile pastor, to do the baptisms they had prepared for, as they feared to get in trouble with local authorities if they would do it themselves.

A rather consistent picture emerges from the discussion of the different types of networks that immigrant churches were part of. In spite of the fact that these networks crossed religious, ethnic and national boundaries, they all reinforced or even enabled mission practices that targeted specific ethnic/linguistic audiences.

6.1.5 Challenges of mission in a migration context

We have seen how immigrant churches intentionally and unintentionally produced mission practices that addressed fellow ethnics. This discussion would be unbalanced without reference to the many structural difficulties that the churches came up against. Recruiting in a migration context is not easy. In 4.1.2 we already saw in what ways this context was conducive to the loss of believers. Nearly all the other mission related challenges that church leaders reported, also had to do with the particularities of migrant life.

First, many churches experienced severe time restraints. Church members had little time to evangelise, because they were loaded with responsibilities of family, work, and studies. The leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry for example told me that he had had much more time to evangelise in Ghana. In the Netherlands, he did not have an extended family around to help him in the household, and in addition, he was now responsible for the economic support of his family back home. Time was also an issue for the mission *audience*. Church leaders observed that their mission audiences in the Netherlands had little time, which made it hard to create moments of contact. The mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church noted that Antilleans/Arubans in the Netherlands had less time for a chat in the streets than in the Netherlands Antilles. The elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church similarly observed that the Ethiopians in the Netherlands had less time than they had back home:

In Ethiopia and Eritrea there are a lot of people in the streets, who sit on the side walk, who like to talk with you. For example, there is a woman who has finished cooking or doing laundry, relaxes in the sunshine, and chats with the neighbour who also has just finished. You don’t go to a café to have a good

time. It takes at least one hour to prepare coffee. (...) In the Netherlands we are forced to live like people here, so evangelism also changes, techniques change. One of the biggest problems we face in evangelism here is that we have little time. We have all kinds of programmes going on, work or studies. (elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church; original in Dutch)

Next to time, the theme of facilities surfaced. The Chaldean priest longed for the parish to have its own building, but this proved very difficult because of the very high costs involved. There were also legal challenges. The Ethiopian evangelical church for example employed loudspeakers to preach and sing at Queen's Day, a national holiday, but stopped when they discovered this required a permit – something which they found hard to obtain. Another challenge was, again, the Dutch weather. The Ethiopian evangelical church had to cut short their distribution of evangelistic flyers on the Amsterdam streets in the Christmas season, because it was too cold for them. Further, some pastors were singlehandedly responsible for specific ethnic/linguistic communities in the Netherlands and in charge of various church branches in the country, which was demanding and, in some ways, limiting²⁵⁵. In addition, churches had to deal with the fact that new converts moved around inside or outside of the Netherlands, voluntarily or involuntarily, and were therefore hard to trace and follow up with. A Kurdish man was for example taken into custody to be sent out of the Netherlands a few days after he became a Christian. This type of transience hampered church growth: various leaders noted that their churches grew little because new members moved out of the local area or out of the Netherlands altogether. A final difficulty of doing evangelism in the migration context was the dispersion of fellow ethnics in the Netherlands. This difficulty is of special interest because it markedly differed from the Ghanaian SDA case. Whilst the Ghanaian Adventist church was located in a neighbourhood where many Ghanaians lived, other churches had to deal with the fact that fellow ethnics did not live close by and were scattered throughout the country. The pastor of the Japanese Protestant church for example expressed:

In Japan, we had daily contact with Japanese people. We miss that here in the Netherlands. In Japan, we befriended our neighbours. In Japan, all the friends of our children were Japanese. And our children learned to play instruments and sports like judo and kendo from Japanese teachers. (pastor of the Japanese Protestant church; original in Dutch)

The leaders of the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses likewise noted that their preaching was labour intensive. Their mission strategy consisted of going to people's houses, yet the Persian-speaking inhabitants in the area assigned to them (the Central-Western part of the Netherlands) were scattered.

²⁵⁵ The pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB for example related the relatively slow growth of the Rotterdam branch to the fact that he lived far away from Rotterdam. Having to guide a big church in Amsterdam, he lived in Almere, a city close to Amsterdam, but relatively far from the small church in Rotterdam that was established later. He longed to find another pastor to lead the Rotterdam branch but struggled to find someone who was both bilingual and bi-cultural (Dutch/Indonesian). The Chaldean priest similarly felt constrained in his ability to develop church activities, since he was the only priest for the six Chaldean centres in the Netherlands. The Japanese pastor also felt challenged by the simultaneous responsibility for three church gatherings in the Netherlands.

In sum, reaching out to fellow ethnics was far from straightforward, in spite of the advantages of shared language, culture, networks, and so on. It was a task permeated with challenges that were found in the migration context.

6.2 Routes to the white Dutch

The ideal of reaching out to ‘the Dutch’ was not reflected in mission activities very much, but it was not altogether neglected. In the following, I will discuss some common routes to evangelising the Dutch, as well as a common difficulty.

6.2.1 Building bridges

(Fieldwork Report, 25/10/2007)

This evening I join the weekly evangelistic training of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church. There are twelve of us: one Surinamese, one Cameroonian, one Nigerian, eight Ghanaians, and me. Today we concentrate on part three of the evangelism manual written by the church pastor, discussing ‘Christ’s method of soul winning’. We read John 4 about Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman, interspersed with questions raised by the pastor. The pastor asks his pupils questions like ‘Why was there a controversy between Jews and Samaritans?’, ‘What is the right motivation for mission?’, and ‘Who is our target group?’ In response to the last question, students suggest different answers: those in the bars who are drinking and smoking, visitors of the red-light district, those involved in ungodly practices, the unrighteous, and the ones in the occult. The pastor himself concludes that ‘our target group is the people in the disco’. He further asks ‘Are the natives our target?’. The response is not very clear, a few nod slightly. The lady from Cameroon says: ‘Yes, and the Muslims too’. The pastor adds: ‘And I should help every Buddhist man, Indian man, and so on’. He then uses me as an example: ‘Imagine she is sitting next to you in the metro. And she is...’, the Nigerian man fills in: ‘Reading a pop magazine’. The pastor proceeds: ‘Then, don’t start talking about religion with her immediately, but start for example by talking about the weather. And be aware, too, that there is a man-woman relationship going on’. The pastor urges the group to create opportunities for mission, noting that he always sits next to whites in the metro, going against usual black - white seating. He prompts: ‘Ask the person: do you know what time it is? Or talk about the weather. The Dutch love to talk about the weather!’ Later, the pastor raises the question: ‘How do you convince a Dutch person?’. The Cameroonian lady answers: ‘I tell them that Jesus Christ loves them, died for them, that He already paid the penalty, and that He loves them as they are. I show Bible verses. But it’s very difficult, especially when they say they don’t believe at all.’ But the pastor objects: ‘No soul is difficult!’. To answer the initial question about how to reach a Dutch person, others refer to the theory of evolution. One pupil observes: ‘They say we came from apes’, to which another responds: ‘They have a solution for that: from a cell in the ocean came fish, from fish came apes, from apes...’, which stirs a great laugh among everyone. A small discussion on the theory of evolution ensues.

Again later, the pastor admonishes: ‘Some colleagues say that the Netherlands is Sodom and Gomorrah. But how can you say that? How can you say to a native person that you want to win that he is going to hell straight? All that they have here in the Netherlands, don’t we have that in Africa too, and even worse? Didn’t we have prostitutes in Africa? It’s not Sodom and Gomorrah here. Holland has many missionary opportunities. Compare it with the Philippines, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. In Korea, recently a few missionaries were captured.

Some Muslims set fire on Christians. Can we be fair? There is a lot of opportunity here in Holland!'.

In this fieldwork report, we see a pastor seeking to equip a group of church members to relate to Dutch people for the purpose of evangelism. He gives specific suggestions to get closer: talk about the weather, sit next to them on the metro, don't think they are 'difficult', and don't judge their permission of prostitution. Building such cultural bridges was very important to the pastor. Drawing on an implicit contextual theology, he sought, in his words, 'to take religion and tradition out, and bring Christianity'. Thus, he claimed that he altered some aspects of how he traditionally ran church life to better fit the Dutch: he allowed men and women to sit side by side (instead of separate) in church, and implemented a relaxed dress code (no hair cover required for ladies, and jeans and make-up allowed). For the purposes of effective evangelism, this pastor made an effort to educate church members in and adapt church practices to 'Dutch culture'²⁵⁶. This kind of bridge building was an interesting contrast to some of the cases depicted by Catto (2008: 133, 164), where 'exotic' cultural aspects like the skin colour, dances and dress of non-Western missionaries were deliberately used to attract native British.

Compared with cultural study and adjustment, language differences were considered to be a more prominent challenge - even though the majority of church leaders spoke at least a fair level of Dutch. One of the leaders of the ICF French-speaking African ministry for example desired to reach out to Dutch people 'who don't know Jesus' in a specific neighbourhood in Rotterdam. Due to his allegedly poor Dutch, however, he prayed that God would send him someone to translate his preaching²⁵⁷. Churches used specific strategies to deal with the language problem. One option was to make the most of a little knowledge of Dutch by using it at moments of high symbolic value. The Korean Reformed pastor was an example. He did not speak Dutch and had little contact with non-Koreans, but at the end of church services, he pronounced the benediction in Dutch first and Korean second. He did so in order to directly and hospitably give the blessing to the Christian and non-Christian Dutch attendees, husbands of Korean female members.

Some employed the second generation. In 4.2.2 we saw how some church leaders believed that, in the future, their offspring would reach the Dutch. Through certain practices, the churches were already working towards this ideal. In some immigrant churches, second generation youth were assigned to do the one-on-one translating for me as a visitor, because of their Dutch language skills. The pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church trained youth for church positions and evangelism, sensing

²⁵⁶ In his study of the Nigerian-initiated Redeemed Christian Church of God in Edinburgh, Obinna (2010) observes similar efforts: the church had tried to attract native Scots by serving the 'contextual' soup, hamburgers, tea, and coffee. Währisch-Oblau points out that Pentecostal/charismatic immigrant pastors in Germany recognise that gospel music is attractive to Germans and accordingly employ it as a mission strategy (2006: 39; 2009: 234). More generally, she observes that "it is likely that many migrant pastors, when engaging with a German context, do indeed tone down their message and manage without rituals that they know would be alienating" (2009: 303).

²⁵⁷ In contrast, groups like the Indonesians and Antilleans/Arubans that were linked to the Dutch through the colonial past had few language problems and even used the Dutch tongue in their evangelistic activities. They did not, however, direct these to Dutch people, but rather to fellow ethnics, who were their most urgent target group. An even stronger contrast to the language difficulties was an Orthodox parish in the Northern Dutch province of Friesland, which not only used Dutch, but also the local dialect of West Frisian as its liturgical language (see www.orthodoxfriesland.nl).

their great potential to reach the Dutch because of their language abilities. The Pakistani couple likewise sought to spiritually strengthen and prepare their youth, in part to reach the Dutch in the future. Thus, future generations were set up to do the job²⁵⁸.

Another strategy to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps was to partner up with Dutch-speaking Christians and churches. Some church leaders referred the interested Dutch they encountered to Dutch-speaking churches. In other cases, a shared church building was conducive. The Koreans worshipped in the church building of a Dutch Orthodox Reformed church, and gave their hosts the invitations to their yearly Christmas concerts, in order to distribute them among other Dutch. The pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church claimed that he encouraged a Dutch man to adopt the leadership of this church. This pastor's approach to me revealed that incidental contacts with Dutch people were also used to build bridges, such as when, at the end of our first interview, he asked me to comment on a Christian book to make it more appealing to the Dutch:

I would like to put my ideas about the different manifestations of God's glory [talked about earlier in our conversation] in a book form. I'm looking for people with integrity who don't take your ideas. Maybe I give it to you and you critique it from your perspective and then I launch it. And then I will translate it from English to Dutch. And then print it out and give it for free. That's another way I want to use to let them [the Dutch] see the idea of the glory. (...) Anything you think you can contribute... you can structure it from a university perspective, and how the Dutch think... so that when it's in a book form, the Dutch will accept it. I want to use you for that. [laughs] Because we all want to reach the Dutch. You're a Dutch, so you know how they reason, and how to present messages to them. So why don't I use you? (pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church)

In other cases, the 'bridging Christians' were not Dutch people, but church members or affiliated organisations who were proficient in Dutch. In order to have worship services in both English and Dutch, the multicultural evangelical MCTC had three women from Suriname, and sometimes a man from Ghana, doing the translation into Dutch. The African-majority Pentecost Revival Church had a translator who was a second generation Ghanaian born in the Netherlands. Similarly, most services in the Russian Orthodox parish were translated into Dutch by two Orthodox monasteries in the Netherlands. Some of these translations were motivated by the presence of Dutch spouses. The Dutch-speaking pastor of the Japanese Protestant church projected songs and prayers in church services in both Japanese and English, and sometimes Dutch, since

²⁵⁸ Results from a research on Korean missionaries in the US suggest that the course of the second generation may be more complex than anticipated. Kim (2010) found that second generation Koreans in the US whose parents were cross-racial/cultural missionaries are paradoxically both more Americanised and more Korean. Kim attributes this paradox to youth reacting against an upbringing with parents that neglected their children because of their zealous engagement with evangelism, and youth simply wanting to chase the American dream and 'be normal'. Both factors would prompt them to 'be American' yet not hunt after inter-ethnic ties for evangelistic purposes. However, this is somewhat in contrast to second generation Korean American Christians who are not the children of cross-racial/cultural Korean missionaries working in the US. Typical second generation Korean American Christians don't like the fact that their parents attend an exclusive immigrant church and seek to expand their religious ties. There are growing numbers of second generation Korean American churches that seek to be different from their parents' church by drawing a broader audience - extending beyond ethnic lines (Kim, personal communication).

no less than a third of the Japanese members had a (sometimes non-Christian) Dutch spouse. Many leaders in the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish spoke excellent Dutch. They started to use some Dutch in their liturgy and educational classes, because the parish had a relatively high percentage of Dutch members, oftentimes spouses of other members.

Immigrant church leaders thus sought to cross ethnic boundaries by building cultural and linguistic bridges. Here we see an affirmation of the power of evangelistic attitudes and practices to integrate immigrants into the host society. As discussed in 1.4.1, Pasura (forthcoming) linked this potential to the agency implied in an evangelistic agenda, and Karagiannis and Glick Schiller (2008) affirmed it in the urge to translate church services in a European language. Here we saw the ‘integrative’ qualities of evangelism expressed in the employment of cultural education, symbolic use of a European language, training and sending out of the second generation, partnership with Dutch Christians, and the responsibility given to affiliated Dutch-speaking individuals or organisations.

6.2.2 Spirituality and spontaneity

While seeking to build cultural and linguistic bridges was one way of crossing boundaries, spiritual strategies were another. The work of Währisch-Oblau (2009: 271-303) brilliantly clarifies that for Pentecostal/charismatic churches inspired by a ‘spiritual warfare’ theology, evangelism consists of a purely spiritual battle that does not require communicative strategies. To evangelise is to engage in intensive prayer and the exorcism of territorial spirits rather than in linguistic or cultural training. Consequently, most pastors in her study were not concerned about linguistic and cultural preparation. Spirituality overruled social considerations. This is the inverse of what we found in the mission discourses discussed in this study in chapters 3 and 4, where church leaders often prioritised social over spiritual considerations. For mission practices, I found that spiritual means were considered crucial and efficacious²⁵⁹, but were always combined with linguistic-cultural bridge building. Thus, the pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church used prayer and fasting for the Dutch, next to cultural training and bilingual worship services. The leader of the ICF French-speaking African ministry prayed and fasted to reach the Dutch, but also for a Dutch translator. To them, the spiritual battle was also an earthly battle.

Responding to spontaneous encounters was another approach to evangelising the Dutch. Although most leaders and members of immigrant churches had their strongest social and symbolic investments in specific ethnic groups, they were still physically located in Dutch society. Their evangelistic intentions combined with this shared living space gave way to mission encounters with Dutch people in specific societal domains, such as

²⁵⁹ Next to spirituality, another way by which the relevance of linguistic, cultural, and social distance was negotiated was the use of the Internet. The website of the multicultural evangelical MCTC had a section entitled “Migrant as a Missionary”, which read: “I am a migrant. I have a heart to evangelise in my current country. However, there are some forces - including racism, discrimination, shyness - resisting me. Can you help me to evangelise without any hurt? Yes, in the advanced world almost every home has a computer and Internet. They will take a decision, to accept or not to accept Christ, on the computer via Internet. Please, read the following steps to evangelise now” (http://mctc.nl/souls_for_the_lord/index.php?mission=yes).

neighbourhood, school, and work place²⁶⁰. Other encounters with the Dutch were not directly structured by these domains, but happened spontaneously in public life:

(Fieldwork Report, 20/10/2007)

I'm sitting in the metro on my way to the Ghanaian Adventist church. I see a Ghanaian man who is so festively dressed that I assume he's also going there, even though I do not recognise his face. I nod at him friendly, and ask: 'Are you also going to the Adventist church?'. He negates the idea immediately: he is a Jehovah's Witness. He proceeds right away with asking me various theological questions, placing the leaflets connected to each question in my hands. 'Do you believe in an immortal soul?' No. 'Good. Do you believe in hell?' No. 'Good. And in Jesus Christ, that he is the son of God?' Yes. 'Oh no, that is not good. He was not God.' The man takes the leaflet about hell back again, and gives me an extra leaflet about Jehovah. He also gives me a flyer with the address of the Jehovah's Witness' Kingdom Hall in Amsterdam Southeast. He asks for my phone number and I give it to him. He calls me three times later in the day, but my phone is off as I'm in church all day. He leaves a couple of messages on my voice box, clearly pointing out that Jesus Christ is *not* God.

In this metro meeting, my own initiative had been essential to evoke a zealous mission attempt. However, it is noteworthy that little more had been necessary than a question. That spontaneous encounters evoked missionary behaviour was demonstrated more widely. During my first-time visit to the Celestial Church of Christ in Amsterdam Southeast²⁶¹, I was given a personal prophecy and a host of other spiritual counsels:

(Fieldwork Report, 10/09/2006)

I am about to join the Sunday service of the Celestial Church of Christ, together with a fellow researcher. Still outside, we shyly ask one of the white-robed men whether we can join today. He calls out friendly: 'Of course, it's for everybody!'. Inside, after we have covered our heads and taken off our shoes, the warm welcome continues. A lady comes up to me and kisses me with vigour. A group of singers sings a welcome song. We don't have to explain to anybody why we are there: we just feel accepted, even though we have never been there, and, together with one other lady, are the only whites present. The service is long. After about three hours of intense prayer, preaching, and singing, we decide to leave, whilst the service has not yet ended. Before I leave the building, I quickly visit the rest room. My fellow researcher waits for me outside. When I return to go to the exit, a young lady, who had been fervently involved in the prayers, stops me and says: 'Wait a little, don't go yet, I have a message for you. For a long time I had been thinking that I needed to talk to you, but I wasn't sure what the message was'. Interested, I affirm that I would like to hear the message. We go to a separate room with a few others, and she starts prophesying

²⁶⁰ To illustrate, the Serbian Orthodox parish directly neighboured a Dutch Reformed church. The two churches developed a cordial relationship, which involved informal discussions about theological differences, such as the Orthodox use of icons. The leader of the ICF Turkish ministry used a school assignment to talk about his faith with his all-Dutch class mates. Working as an electrician, the elder of the Cape Verdean Nazarene church had Dutch colleagues with whom he regularly talked about faith, church, and God.

²⁶¹ The Celestial Church of Christ is an Aladura church. CCC congregations can be found throughout the Euro-African diaspora (Adogame 1998). In this thesis, when speaking of the Celestial Church of Christ, I will refer to the congregation in Amsterdam Southeast, unless explicitly discussing literature on this church type in general.

messages that God has for me, each time starting with the mediating phrase ‘Tell my daughter...’. Constantly shaking her body, she prophesies that I have a special, kind spirit, but that I have to think less and rid my fears. I have to concentrate in my studies, do more and more studies, and then I will get a good position, and also a house and a car. I have to read psalms 5, 103, and 37. Within three months something will happen ‘of which I think every day’. God is always close to me. The message ends with the advice that I should light seven candles, let three people pray for me, and buy a necklace with a cross, today. I say that I already have a necklace with a cross at home, to which one man responds that I can come back later to let it be blessed. Then, in front of a sacred space in the church entitled ‘Mercy Land’ (with sand on the ground and adorned with coconuts, honey, milk, candles, and pictures of Jesus), I have to kneel down and hold the seven candles in my hand. Three men form a circle around me and sing, then start to speak loudly, each individually praying his own prayer using exorcist language like ‘take away from her the spirits not from God’ and requests like ‘bless her’ and ‘rebuke her’. After the prayer, one of the men proceeds to light one of the seven candles in Mercy Land.²⁶²

For the Celestial Church of Christ, securing “both spiritual and practical solutions to all problems through prayer-rituals, has been claimed by members to be their major strategy for mission” (Adogame 1998: 155). My presence was slotted into this scheme. It was my initiative to enter the church, but, once I was there, my presence was enough to evoke missionary acts of prophecy and prayer.

Spontaneous encounters with the Dutch did not depend on initiatives from Dutch people. Immigrant church leaders took initiative in public life. Some leaders talked to Dutch fellow passengers in public traffic like bus, metro, and tram. The pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church befriended a non-Christian Dutch man whom he met on the streets walking his dog. The pastor developed a close friendship with the unemployed man by putting him in charge of designing the church website and flyers, and allowing him to use the church premises for free while his apartment building was being renovated. In a different vein, the Russian and Serbian Orthodox parishes held outdoor Easter and Christmas processions in the proximity of their church buildings, watched by passersby and visitors of neighbouring cafés. In these spontaneously connecting ways, evangelism again appeared in ‘integrative’ forms.

6.2.3 The hindrance of resource efficiency

In 5.1.2 and 6.1.3, we saw how the blend of church life and mission produced a mission practice that was oriented on fellow ethnics. This common dynamic emerged from a calculation of costs and benefits: why spend money, time and energy on organising a big church event that is unsuited for evangelism? And why organise an evangelistic event that is irrelevant to church members, who have plenty of needs too? Fusing in-reach and out-reach was a matter of resource efficiency, and one without a compromise of ideals for those churches that were most interested in reaching out to fellow ethnics.

However, resource efficiency complicated inter-ethnic mission agendas. The pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church primarily aimed to reach the Dutch, but invited black preachers from all over the world to lead out in crusades and revival meetings in his church. This choice ‘suited’ his predominantly black church membership,

²⁶² For an elaboration on the use of religious symbols in the CCC, see Adogame 2009.

but much less so the white Dutch he desired to reach. He observed that the Dutch would be more attracted to a white speaker and planned to invite one in the future. Yet, since he observed that ‘when you are a black preacher, you will attract more black followers, and when you are a white preacher, you will attract more white followers’, his dilemma remained. Should he invite a black preacher, who would appeal to his almost exclusively black membership yet much less so to his white mission target, or should he invite a white preacher, who would appeal to whites but less so to his almost exclusively black membership? Such racialised tension between internal and ‘reversed’ mission was often undergirded by cultural differences. Währisch-Oblau (2006: 39) quotes a Ghanaian pastor heading an African-majority charismatic church in Germany, who illustrates this: “If I really want to reach out to Germans, I need to shorten the service and also make it less noisy. But then, the Africans will complain”.

There were other complications related to resource efficiency. The multicultural evangelical MCTC gathered in a church building in Amsterdam Southeast. Initially, this locality had been chosen to cater separately to the non-Dutch speaking members of the multi-ethnic mother church (see 2.2), who lived in this part of Amsterdam. However, now the pastor intended to reach each and every ethnic group (see 4.3), he felt constrained by being located in a ‘black neighbourhood’²⁶³:

We believe that God has brought us here to evangelise Europe again. But if you look at Southeast where all of us are, it's about a 66% black population. Very few whites. So that's why if we really want to reach the whites, we need to go to where they are. Because if not, we'll only be reaching immigrants, in this part of Amsterdam. Most are Ghanaian, we used to have more Surinamese, but now the Ghanaians are growing. So if we stay here as churches, yeah then we should forget about the Dutch population. Because even some of them they are so scared to come to Amsterdam Southeast. Because they have the wrong impression. Because they think that this is a place where everybody carries a gun. That it's not safe. So we have to move out, if we want to reach them. (pastor of the multicultural evangelical MCTC)²⁶⁴

The tensions between in-reach and out-reach for those immigrant churches concerned with inter-ethnic evangelism may be exacerbated by what Währisch-Oblau (2009: 221, 228, 330) suggests to be the different aspirations of church *leaders*, who want to be international and evangelise Europe, and church *members*, who want a ‘home away from home’. However, on the basis of the two cases above, I would like to add that leaders are themselves ambivalent in regard to their missionary pursuits, since their interest in ‘natives’ is combined with the desire to please their church members²⁶⁵.

²⁶³ The relationship between residential pattern and the scope of immigrant evangelism was also observed among West Indian Pentecostal communities in New York City (McLean 2008: 88).

²⁶⁴ The intention to move out of Amsterdam Southeast in order to reach more whites was mirrored by the Ghanaian Methodist church, which moved from the Western part of Amsterdam to Southeast because most Ghanaians lived there (Klomp 2009: 118).

²⁶⁵ There were more difficulties in reaching out to the Dutch besides resource efficiency. Finances was one: the pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church managed to have its own worship space but had financial debts, due to payments for its renovation and high rent. The same pastor reported legal restrictions: ‘One time a guy was giving handbills at the Ganzenhoef market [a local market], and the police just came and arrested him, asked him why he was giving out handbills. Then they released him. They said: before you give out handbills, you need to get a permit. And we didn’t know. So we said: we apologise, we want to obey the nation’s laws. But we didn’t know that just to give flyers, you need a

Before concluding this chapter, I will discuss how mission practices were directed to other ethnic groups.

6.3 Reaching other ethnic groups: additional mode of immigrant mission

That immigrant churches were active in evangelising groups that were neither fellow ethnics nor whites/Europeans is a little noted point, yet appeared to be an important part of their overall mission practice. A mixture of factors produced such mission activities. In the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, we already saw that participation in a denomination was linked to inter-ethnic mission practices. This relationship was corroborated by the other cases. The Cape Verdean Nazarenes for example helped building churches in Ukraine and Mozambique as part of a worldwide project of the Church of the Nazarene.

Another factor was the multicultural public domain. Public evangelism in Dutch cities meant that a variety of ethnic groups was addressed, in spite of the intention to reach particular groups primarily:

In Ethiopia, you don't have to search for Ethiopians, you anyhow have them all around. Except when you are focused on a specific ethnic tribe or village. You can just start doing whatever. But here, for example, somebody in Amersfoort [a Dutch city] had prepared leaflets in Amharic. Perhaps he met a few Ethiopians there. Of course he had also taken along Dutch and English leaflets, and I think they distributed those leaflets much more. Because the Amharic-speaking people are not always in the streets. (elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church; original in Dutch)

Church leaders and members encountered different ethnic groups in specific societal domains such as work and school, which became places of mission. For example, an elder of the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses shared evangelistic tracts with his Sudanese colleagues, and the mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church gave an Adventist book to a Surinamese colleague.

Further, some mission practices were shaped by a Christian universalism that stressed that 'everybody', no matter what culture, class, or colour, had to be reached. These practices had a public character. A member of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church regularly evangelised in the main shopping area of Amsterdam Southeast, where many different ethnic groups can be found. He played gospel music and handed out small pamphlets with John 3:16 and the name of the church to passers-by. Ethiopian evangelical church members preached in the Amsterdam streets, stations, public traffic, and red-light district, and left flyers in the train. On Queen's Day, a national holiday, they preached, sang, and distributed flyers in the crowded city.

Some universalistic mission practices consisted of church activities that were expressly open to the public. The Russian Orthodox parish organised lectures²⁶⁶, taught courses on how to paint icons, and held bazaars and open days, including a parish tour. The Serbian Orthodox parish held open days once or twice a year, with the intention for

permit. So now we don't give flyers, if we want to give flyers, we put it in their postbox. We don't stand on the market any more to share it. So we changed that strategy'.

²⁶⁶ They taught on topics in theology and the humanities like Orthodox Christology, Russian liturgical music, and Byzantine history.

outsiders to get acquainted with the parish and learn about the Orthodox faith. The multicultural evangelical MCTC envisioned starting its own elementary school to instil Christian virtues into children. According to the pastor, this was ‘the best way to spread the gospel’.

Finally, some mission practices were informed by missiological categories that transcended ethnicity, such as locality or religion. The pastor of the MCTC encouraged his members to be active in their neighbourhoods and apartment buildings. He instructed them to be observant towards local inhabitants (e.g. to bring flowers for a birthday party, or to help newcomers to paint their house) and invite them to church events. The Korean Reformed church supported two missionary families in Morocco. This was, in the words of the pastor, ‘to prevent the spread of Islam in Africa’. The Koreans supported the missionaries with money, prayer, and a group of their youth and students, who were sent to Morocco each summer to help.

We thus see that Cape Verdeans reached out to Ukrainians, Iranians to Sudanese, and Koreans to Moroccans. Clearly, the mission of immigrant churches was not limited to ‘internal’ or ‘reversed’ modalities, but involved reaching out to ‘third party’ ethnic groups.

6.4 In conclusion

The central question in this chapter was: *How do immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in their evangelistic practices?*

We have seen that church leaders demonstrated their agency in evangelistic work. They brought into practice many of their ideals. In spite of a variety of challenges, they sought to reach fellow ethnics by creatively navigating the multicultural public arena and deliberately engaging with cultural symbols and needs. To reach the Dutch, they gave cultural training and delegated the task to more promising recruiters like second generation immigrants or Dutch Christians. They also used spiritual means and spontaneous encounters. To reach ‘everybody’, they preached in public places and travelled abroad. The boundaries of evangelistic practices in many ways paralleled the boundaries of evangelistic intentions.

This parallel was not only the direct outcome of intentions, but also produced by supporting structures. This was especially the case for the out-reach to fellow ethnics, which was strongly undergirded by a variety of networks and the organic blend of church life and mission. Also, evangelising people from other ethnic groups was facilitated by participation in a denomination.

The strongest obstacles were experienced in trying to reach the Dutch. The Dutch were a particular group with particular needs met in particular places, which were often in tension with the particularities of church members. Where the resource-efficient mix of in-reach and out-reach was conducive to evangelising fellow ethnics, it limited the ability to evangelise the Dutch.

In the following two chapters, we will move from the discussion of the mission practices of immigrant churches, to examine how these practices were actually *responded to* by mission audiences.

7 Loss and gain: responses to the Ghanaian SDA church

In this chapter and the next, I will highlight the perspective of the church audiences to investigate how the mission endeavours of the churches were *responded to*. This is a topic little attended to beyond generalist statements that immigrant churches are not very successful in reaching ‘natives’. In the European context, little research has been done on the motivation of immigrant Christians to join specific churches (Währisch-Oblau 2009: 116)²⁶⁷. In this chapter, I will discuss the responses to the Ghanaian SDA church. The central question is: *How do the audiences of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in regard to conversion?* As I outlined in 1.3.3, I refer to conversion as being incorporated into specific Christian beliefs, practices, and/or states of being. In 1.3.1 I noted that in the responses to mission, boundaries are constructed and reconstructed by (in some ways) becoming or not becoming part of the evangelising group. In this chapter, I will examine how different audiences started identifying with the Ghanaian Adventists by adopting (part of) their beliefs, practices, and/or states of being.

7.1 Ghanaian responses

The mission work of the Ghanaian SDA church made an impact. The radio and TV programmes were tuned into by a wide audience and prompted outsiders to call or visit the church. The marriage seminar brought dozens of visitors and many reports of improved family life. The books that pastor Ansah published on spiritual leadership and family life were bought mostly by outsiders, including Pentecostal pastors, and quickly sold out. The church frequently had first-time visitors for the Sabbath service, the music of the church choir was appreciated in the community²⁶⁸, and the Daniel seminar was allegedly tuned into by thousands of listeners on the Internet. Also, pastor Ansah was constantly busy handling phone calls from non-Adventists who approached him for counsel, prayer, healing, and deliverance. About ten non-Adventist adults²⁶⁹ were baptised in the church each year²⁷⁰. These various responses mostly came from Ghanaians - the target group that I will start this chapter with. For methodological reasons, I mostly interacted with those Ghanaians who responded with baptism and/or frequent church

²⁶⁷ A wonderful exception is the study on African Catholics in the Netherlands by Van der Meer (2010).

²⁶⁸ For example, the Ghanaian SDA choir won the first prize in a musical concert in which 15 other local, mostly Pentecostal church choirs performed.

²⁶⁹ This excludes baptisms that took place in Ghana or the wider diaspora as a result of the mission attempts of the church. Church members occasionally shared that friends and family members abroad had become Adventists, sometimes due to their own evangelistic efforts. Also, pastor Ansah’s TV programme (shown on national TV) was quite popular in Ghana, and he reported having baptised hundreds of people, including a few Pentecostal pastors, after a crusade in Ghana.

²⁷⁰ In line with worldwide SDA practice, baptism was the condition of membership and took place through the total immersion of the body. The Ghanaian Adventists required those who had been baptised (by immersion, sprinkling, or otherwise) in other denominations, to be baptised again. Adventist ‘backsliders’ were not required to be re-baptised but often volunteered to do so. By being baptised, one got access to functions in the church and was allowed participation in the congregation’s quarterly ‘business meetings’. Church leaders and members considered baptism very important, referring to the command and example of Jesus.

attendance. Since it proved very difficult to bond with those who had only loose ties to the church²⁷¹, substantial conversation was limited to the group with stronger ties. The following analysis is mostly based on the interaction with this selected group.

7.1.1 Becoming Seventh-day Adventist: individual trajectories

In this section, I will depict the individual trajectories of three converts that were baptised in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam during or just before my official fieldwork period. The descriptions are condensed versions of the stories that were narrated to me. I depict the trajectories here in order to sensitise the reader to some of the important issues at stake in the conversion of Ghanaian immigrants in the Netherlands to Adventism.

Judith

Middle-aged Judith grew up in a Methodist family in Ghana. As a young woman, she was invited by some friends to join a Pentecostal church. She was attracted to the youthfulness of the membership and pastor of this church, especially when compared to the older people in the Methodist congregation.

When she migrated to the Netherlands, she initially attended a Pentecostal church, but stopped going there because of some conflict with the pastor. For some time, she ceased attending any church. She shared an apartment with a couple that attended the Ghanaian Adventist church. The couple took along Judith's little daughter and son to church on Sabbaths, and invited Judith to come along as well. Judith was reluctant at first, attending rarely. When she did attend, one of the church members kept her company, chatted, and brought her food at lunch time.

Over the years, Judith started attending more regularly. She did so initially because she wanted to make her children happy and support the possibly 'saving' influence the church might have on them. Judith did not come with the intention of becoming a member. She joined the Sabbath school baptismal class²⁷² led by pastor Ansah, but her motive was to learn, not to get baptised. Her outlook changed when she had a special dream. In this dream, she saw herself sitting next to a woman in the context of a Communion service. The woman gave her a dirty towel²⁷³ and said: 'Why don't you do it, everybody else is doing it too!', inviting her to put the towel on her hands. Judith refused, but the lady kept pushing her to do it. When Judith woke up from this dream, she did not understand it, but she believed that she had heard the voice of God and knew that she wanted to get baptised.

After her baptism, Judith stopped shopping on Sabbaths and moved to one of the regular Sabbath school classes. She felt happy and content in the church. She thought that the Adventist church was important because of its Sabbath-keeping. She also valued the 'simple' and 'systematic' church service, in contrast to Pentecostal services where there was, as she put it, dancing, clapping, 'stamping', 'screaming', 'exaggerating', and the need to have a position in order to do something. Judith also appreciated her new church's

²⁷¹ My attempts to bond with first-time or irregular visitors were complicated by the lack of a trust relationship, which made conversations rather short and shallow, combined with the fact that such visitors often quickly left after the programmes.

²⁷² This was a special Sabbath school class intended for adults and older youth who were not yet or just recently baptised.

²⁷³ In the SDA church, the Communion service is preceded by the ordinance of foot washing.

business meetings²⁷⁴, which in her view were lacking in other churches. As of 2011, she was still a member and frequent attendee of the church.

Kennedy

Middle-aged Kennedy grew up in Ghana with Muslim parents. There were many churches in his area. Both the Salvation Army and the SDA church had a strong presence. Since his parents did not strongly encourage their children to follow Islam, some of Kennedy's brothers were involved in these two churches. As a young teen and into adulthood, Kennedy attended the Salvation Army church. There was a lot of mingling between the various churches, and Kennedy had a good impression of the SDA church.

When Kennedy migrated to Europe, he lived in Germany, Norway, and the UK. In the UK, he attended a Salvation Army church on Sundays but also regularly went to an Adventist church on Saturdays. He was seeking 'the truth' and did research in both churches. His conclusion was that the Adventist church was true to the Bible. Around this time, his sister, who lived in Canada, sent him video tapes of one of pastor Ansah's 'crusades', which impressed him a lot.

After having lived in the UK for five years, Kennedy moved to the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, he visited the Salvation Army church, but found it incredibly boring - not a place where he felt he could learn anything. He started attending the Ghanaian Methodist church in Amsterdam, which was close to his house and, in his words, 'a normal church, not like charismatic churches where they speak in tongues'. However, he did not agree with all the practices in this church, such as 'pressuring' members to pay certain sums of money. Every now and then he visited the Ghanaian Adventist church in Amsterdam, but he usually worked on Saturdays.

When he heard that pastor Ansah was coming to pastor in the Netherlands, he could hardly believe it and was very excited. He visited SDA church services to listen to Ansah's sermons and attended the ten-day 'revival' the pastor held soon after he came to the country. The 'revival' meetings answered many of Kennedy's theological questions. In the course of the meetings he told his wife that they had to sign up for baptism. He and his wife started attending the Adventist church exclusively.

Kennedy felt happy in the church and saw God blessing him with a steady job. He believed that God's hand was with pastor Ansah and experienced him as a man of integrity who listened to God. Also, he believed that SDA doctrine was in line with the Bible. The keeping of the Sabbath, adult baptism by immersion, and rejection of glossolalia were very significant to him. As of 2011, Kennedy was still a member and frequent attendee of the church.

Dorcas

The young Dorcas was raised in an Adventist family in Ghana. Soon after her birth her mother migrated to the Netherlands. Dorcas was raised by her grandmother in Ghana. This grandmother attended a 'Sunday church' but encouraged her children to be SDA. Hence as a child, Dorcas always went to the Adventist church. In the meantime, in the Netherlands, Dorcas' mother started dating a Pentecostal man and began to attend his church.

²⁷⁴ These were quarterly meetings where the various church departments informed church members about their activities, giving ample room for discussion.

At 13 years of age, Dorcas and her siblings followed their mother to the Netherlands. They joined their mother in attending her new-found Pentecostal church. At first, Dorcas had to get used to the clapping and dancing, which she had not experienced in the Adventist church in Ghana, but soon she felt happy and at home.

Several years later, Dorcas started dating James, who was an Adventist. She told him that if he really wanted to be with her, they would have to go to their own churches individually. James agreed. For seven years, they attended their respective churches. Dorcas still went to the Pentecostal church that her mother had introduced her to. The couple got married and had two children. Sometimes Adventist members came by the family's house to discuss the Bible with Dorcas in an attempt to bring her to Adventism. However, Dorcas had no interest, sensing that it would be very difficult to swap churches again. Most importantly, she dreaded the thought of having to take off her earrings and necklaces. She valued her fashionable appearance, matching her white outfit with white jewellery, her blue outfit with blue jewellery, and so on.

Over the course of time, James started having second thoughts about their agreement. It was boring to him to attend church without Dorcas, and he was tired of girls making moves on him because they thought he was single. Dorcas, however, stood firm. Then, pastor Ansah got involved in urging Dorcas to get baptised and come to the SDA church. Dorcas strongly opposed, but the two started communicating intensively, exchanging questions and answers back and forth. This included discussing Dorcas' greatest concern: not being able to wear jewellery anymore. Over time, Dorcas became convinced that to take off her jewellery was an act of obedience to God. On top of that, one Sabbath morning, she listened to a sermon of pastor Ansah that was very impressive to her. She decided to get baptised.

After the baptism, Dorcas felt like she was a part of the church. She removed her jewellery, and arranged not having to work on Saturdays anymore. She was happy that her children, previously attending church with dad on Saturdays and mum on Sundays, could now attend one church with both of them. She also had a better, less conflict-ridden relationship with James. She however lost contact with most of her friends from the Pentecostal church, and had a less intimate relationship with her mother. As of 2011, she was still a member and frequent attendee of the church.

These three stories provide some clues about the conversion trajectories of non-Adventist Ghanaians to Adventism. In the next sections, I will draw on these and other stories to outline patterns of conversion to Adventism in the Ghanaian immigrant context.

7.1.2 Choosing to belong: following members and a popular pastor

As we saw in 1.4.1, the importance of attachments is widely noted in studies of conversion. It was illustrated by the above stories, where housemates and boyfriends played critical roles. In this section, I would like to outline the four most important attachments that contributed to the conversion of non-Adventist Ghanaians to Adventism. One of these attachments is commonly noted in the literature, the other three are less observed and more specific to this context.

Marriage and conversion are closely linked (Stark and Finke 2000: 119). In the case of the Ghanaian Adventists, having a SDA spouse was decisive in many conversions. Although not all church members had a SDA spouse, church leaders clearly taught that husband and wife should *both* be Adventist. Furthermore, church members informed me that it was a matter of cultural custom for a wife to follow her husband to his church,

although I also observed a few cases where a husband followed his wife²⁷⁵. That wives followed their husbands was already illustrated above by Kennedy's decision that he *and* his wife were to get baptised. This husband-wife dynamic was sometimes transnational in nature. Husbands who had changed allegiance in the Netherlands tried to convert their wives who still lived in Ghana. Joseph and Kimberley, a married couple, illustrated this. In Ghana, the two attended a Pentecostal church. When Joseph migrated to the Netherlands, he switched to the SDA church (see his story below), while Kimberley still attended their Pentecostal church in Ghana. Talking on the phone, Joseph began to encourage Kimberley to visit Adventist churches in her area. She followed his suggestion, started attending both the Pentecostal church and an Adventist church, and eventually moved to exclusively attend the SDA church. Six years after Joseph migrated to Europe, Kimberley followed him to the Netherlands. Three months after her arrival, she was baptised in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam. She noted that Joseph had been the central factor in her move to Adventism:

Without Joseph, I would have stayed in my church or have moved to another charismatic church. I had heard about SDA before, but nothing would have moved me there. (church member Kimberley)

In some cases, the bridging role was adopted by a less noted social tie: children. As we saw in the story of Judith, mothers followed their children to the SDA church. There was an Anglican lady who occasionally attended the SDA church because her children wanted to join their Adventist friends. She considered the church to be very educative for her children, referring to the Sabbath school classes and a workshop on the dangers of hip-hop that was held. Another mother, who had a background in a host of churches, was persuaded to come to the SDA church because it allowed her girls to partake in its youth choir. Thus, non-Adventist mothers were drawn to the SDA church because they wanted to please and educate their children²⁷⁶.

Another social dynamic was particular for the migration context. Ghanaian immigrants who just arrived in the Netherlands often followed the more established Ghanaians they knew²⁷⁷. Just like the more established Ghanaian immigrants introduced newcomers to the places where they could get jobs, take Dutch language courses, or get medical treatment without having insurance, they were also guides in the local religious market place. An example was Stella, who was a Methodist in Ghana. She became an Adventist in the Netherlands, because her sister, who migrated before her, attended the SDA church in Amsterdam. Another example was Samson, who was an Anglican in Ghana. In Amsterdam, he moved in with his brother, who had become an Adventist in the Netherlands. To be together, Samson followed his brother to the Adventist church:

²⁷⁵ I came across three cases of male church members that had been brought into the SDA church through their wives. Two of them had been non-practising Christians; the third one had a Muslim background.

²⁷⁶ The special role of children in this context was connected to the important social function of churches in the local Ghanaian community. To a large extent, social life was located in the church, and this also applied to the children: many Ghanaian churches in Amsterdam Southeast had elaborate programmes for the youth.

²⁷⁷ In regard to Ghanaian migration within Africa, Peil notes the importance of family and business contacts in choosing the destination of immigration (1995: 346-347). I similarly observed that many attendees of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam already had family or other contacts in the Netherlands when they arrived.

Then the first day I came here in the Netherlands, I stayed with my brother. It wasn't my intention to go to the Adventist church. Because I was staying with him [the brother], and on Saturdays we didn't go anywhere, so when he was going to church I just followed him. (...)

Initially I didn't go to SDA with the mindset to become an Adventist. But it was because I was staying with him, living in the same room with him. I cannot just look at him going to church and I'll be sleeping in the house. So I followed him for two or three months. And listening to what they teach, I think they taught what was really in the Bible. So I decided I have to stay here. So I don't have to go back to Sunday. (church member Samson)

Thus, it was not only the available churches that influenced religious choices in the diaspora (see 3.1.2), but also available connections with individuals. The converting influence of family and friends continued after the initial adjustment period, such as through invitations to church events, personal Bible studies, and testimonies of 'character'.

A final and crucial type of attachment that I wish to highlight was the connection to the church pastor. Pastor Ansah was commonly referred to in conversion stories. We already saw his prominence in the above stories of Kennedy and Dorcas. In general, converts referred to the pastor's appealing style of preaching and his humble, caring, and godly character. In some cases, they depicted him as the key factor in their conversion. For example, the previously non-Christian William narrated to me that, on a visit, the pastor had prayed with him while holding his hand. This had been a very meaningful bodily gesture for him. The visit, the prayer, and the holding of hands had been so moving and persuading to William, that he came to church the next Sabbath and was baptised at the next baptism. Choosing a church was choosing a pastor that he wanted to be associated with. The link between choosing a church and choosing a pastor was succinctly pointed out by church member Samson:

If it had been any other pastor, I don't know whether I would have become a SDA. (church member Samson)

This pastor-oriented type of conversion fits with what has been observed for Pentecostal/charismatic immigrant churches. Währisch-Oblau notes that members of Pentecostal/charismatic immigrant churches have extremely high expectations of their pastors' prayers and problem solving skills. In the Ghanaian Pentecostal immigrant context specifically, the pastor figure functions as a "surrogate family head", who helps with all kinds of social, economic and legal issues in the host society, fulfils critical functions in regard to marriages and funerals, and forms a link to transnational Pentecostalism (Van Dijk 1997, 2001). The central role of pastor Ansah in attracting outsiders was similar to that of Pentecostal/charismatic pastors, even though he operated in the different organisational context of the SDA denomination. In addition to his strong involvement with practical and spiritual issues, his specific popularity was related to his high professional attainment²⁷⁸ and the perception that he was genuinely Christian. Since Ansah led the Ghanaian SDA congregation, becoming SDA was often a choice to belong to him, his spiritual power, and the group that he shepherded.

²⁷⁸ This included a high level of education and important positions in the SDA church in West Africa, a TV ministry in Ghana, and expertise on family issues.

Choosing Adventism in many ways was to choose to belong: to belong to a pastor, a spouse, one's own children, or one's previously migrated relatives. In some cases, this implied a halt or disruption in belonging to others: disappointing another pastor, or loosing the bond with a mother. Conversion was thus not a move from non-belonging to belonging, but an alteration of loci of belonging. The negotiation of these moves was linked to other aspects of conversion to which we will now turn.

7.1.3 The spirit under the surface: dilemma's of knowledge and experience

It has been noted that part of the general appeal of Adventism is its stress on Bible study. This educative/intellectual factor was observed as a key source of attraction to Adventism in Madagascar (Keller 2005) and is mentioned in a study about Adventism in Tanzania (Höschele 2007: 206; Adventist Christianity is here referred to as the "reader's religion"). For the Ghanaians in Amsterdam, the Bible study factor played a clear role as well, but was also ambivalent because of trade-offs between knowledge and experience²⁷⁹.

Many converts were attracted to the SDA church because of its religious beliefs. The story of Kennedy above already illustrated this. The appeal of the church was often phrased in terms of Adventism being 'true' and 'biblical'.

DK: *What do you like best in this church?*

Church member William: *How they preach, read the Bible, always talking with the Bible. That's why I like it. (...)*

Since I came here, the Bible, they are reading everything, preaching everything different from the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church you don't go to church and take a Bible class, you go there and they say something and you respond, then you go out. But here there is Sabbath school. The preaching is good. Better.

-

I had already attended a Bible school in Ghana, I have a certificate. And I had in mind that we all serve one God. But after coming to SDA, I realised there are certain quotations in the Bible that are misinterpreted by other churches. So after coming to SDA, I found out that this is the right way to go. (...)

I convinced myself to be SDA because of the teachings, that I had from pastor Ansah. We are all searching for the truth. We want to go to heaven. (...) If I found the truth, why should I leave it and go for the lies? (church member Samson)

Some new Adventists referred to *specific* religious beliefs that they valued. As can be expected for its centrality in SDA identity and vast implications for practical life, the Sabbath was an important one:

Sunday and Saturday worship. I didn't know the difference. I was always asking myself: why this Sunday and Saturday. Because the Bible never specified anywhere that Sunday should be worshipped. But after listening to pastor Ansah's preaching, I collected everything, he gave the quotations that I have, I have them in the house. And I found out that truly, Saturday should be worshipped as the day of Christ. (church member Samson)

²⁷⁹ In proposing these trade-offs, I do not wish to postulate an ontological divide between knowledge and experience, but merely aim to demarcate the different emphases that were expressed by informants.

Theological considerations and doctrinal differences were clearly important in the selection of a church in the diaspora. Although socio-economic challenges loomed large, motivations were not merely pragmatic. The appeal of truthful doctrines was further coupled with the appeal of Bible study and learning in general:

Roman Catholics never open the Bible, while in SDA, with just the little study I've done, I learned so much! (church member Kwabena)

In SDA you get more clarity, you learn about the Sabbath, about Daniel and Revelation. You don't learn this in the Sunday churches. (church member Osei Tutu)

An important part of pastor Ansah's popularity was his ability to bring about understanding. The pastor was said to stand out from other pastors in terms of his knowledge of the Bible. His style was positively contrasted with the preaching about 'miracles' and 'money' that allegedly dominated the message of other pastors:

In Ghanaian churches, they teach about prosperity, not about salvation, or the word of God, but mostly about prosperity, and miracles. Pastor Ansah gives more details on what to do and not do. He goes into the Bible more. It helps you spiritually as an individual. (church member Kimberley)

In this quote, Kimberley makes a series of contrasts between the preaching of pastor Ansah and some other pastors: 'Ghanaian churches' teach about prosperity and miracles, while Ansah talks about salvation, morals, and the Bible. Church member Andrews, formerly attending a Pentecostal church, expressed a comparable sentiment in narrating that he had been tired of all the 'miracle stories' and wanted to experience 'true learning'. Kwodwo, not a member of the church, stated something similar. He was a worker in the radio station located right next to the church. I met him when I waited for a church member who was being interviewed for the local radio. Seeing pastor Ansah's preaching on one of the TV's in the station, I told him that I wanted to figure out how to watch Ansah's programmes online. The outgoing Kwodwo exclaimed in response:

Non-church member Kwodwo: *Aaah, I love him [pastor Ansah]! He is so, so... you see, I am not an Adventist, I'm not really into any... I was born a Methodist and I stay a Methodist, but he is great.*

DK: *Why do you think he is great?*

Non-church member Kwodwo: *Because... all the other pastors talk about the same things. Miracles, money, money, money. But he... he gets into you, just puts himself into you. Aaah!*

Andrews and Kwodwo thus pointed to a saturation point in hearing prosperity preaching and the appeal of a different type of message.

Some not only favourably contrasted the SDA emphasis on Bible study with the prosperity gospel, but also with charismatic experience. We already saw in the above stories of Judith and Kennedy that they appreciated the educational emphasis and quiet services in the SDA church as 'simple' and 'normal', without all that 'stamping' and 'screaming'. Others affirmed this by negatively commenting on Pentecostal 'noise':

In Ghana, the [Pentecostal] church was noisy, with drums and so on. Everything here is calm now. Inside me it feels calm because of the Word of God. (church member Kimberley)

God told me: don't go to Sunday church. It's a disco church. Then I asked God why. He said: see the way they dress, the way they play music [makes beat sound], dance, they don't listen to the pastor. They don't keep any word they heard. They forget everything before they come home. (church member Betsy)

To others, however, the emphasis on education and understanding in the SDA church formed a trade-off with missing a certain kind of spiritual experience. As noted in 3.1.1, non-Adventist Ghanaian Christians often believed that Adventists do not believe in the Holy Spirit because they do not speak in tongues nor seem to strongly manifest the Spirit in other ways. Since most converts in the Ghanaian SDA church had a Pentecostal or charismatic background, they had to deconstruct this unattractive conception by noting that the Spirit *was* present in the SDA church, but manifested in a different way. An example was Joseph, who had attended a charismatic Sabbath-keeping church in Ghana and became an Adventist in the Netherlands. He narrated that it seemed that Adventism was spiritually 'flat', but that actually the Spirit in this church was 'boiling *under* the surface', whereas in other churches the Spirit was 'boiling *on* the surface'. In other words, the lack of explicit pneumatic phenomena in the SDA church was not because of the Spirit's absence (or spiritual 'flatness'), but because of his more implicit presence. A similar line of reasoning was expressed by Samson in his comparison of the charismatic Anglican church that he used to attend and the Adventist church that he converted into:

Church member Samson: I used to think there were no miracles in SDA. But the difference is that they don't call the person out from the congregation, and pray for the person to be falling down, cry, scream and so on. But in SDA, with just the prayers that we'll be going through, a person will be delivered. This is a very great difference. In the Anglican church, they invite some pastor from outside to perform miracles, people will be falling down, and speak in tongues.

DK: How do you feel about these kinds of miracles and tongues?

Church member Samson: The gift of God is in different ways. But the Bible says that tongues are to be understood. But in the Anglican church tongues are not understood. I don't agree with that.

In this quote Samson points out that his previous idea, that 'there were no miracles in SDA', was mistaken since miracles did happen, but in a hushed way: through prayers without 'falling down', 'crying', and 'screaming'. In addition, he stipulated what he had learned in the SDA church: that the way charismatic Anglicans express the gift of tongues is without understanding and therefore not biblical.

These converts had learned to legitimise that in the SDA church the Spirit was not present in the forms they were used to. Pastor Ansah however explained that to many non-Adventists, the SDA church remained unattractive because of its apparent spiritual 'flatness'. Being Adventist was a boring form of being Christian, since Adventists do not speak in tongues, nor give a lot of attention to powerful miracles, nor dance to music with a beat during church services.

It must be noted that whilst the conversion to Adventism often implied some 'loss' of the Spirit, the way to conversion was often filled with spiritual encounters. Some claimed supernatural healings, which motivated them to join the SDA church. Dreams

and visions were recurrent in conversion processes. In discussing a Pentecostal church among the Ewe in Ghana, Meyer clarifies that “what happens in dreams is considered real; a dream can give a believer insight into the spiritual realm and the power of the Holy Spirit or the machinations of evil spirits. Dreams are a fully accepted means of receiving revelations concerning the invisible” (1999: 158). Judith’s story above already pointed to the role of dreams. For one of the church members, a converting dream actually revealed the visible: he dreamt about the church where the Ghanaian Adventists worshipped. When he came to the church, he recognised the place from his dream, which confirmed to him that this was the divinely appointed place for him to stay. Another illustrating case was a female convert who was baptised in the SDA church after a series of supernatural revelations in the form of voices, visions, and dreams²⁸⁰.

In 7.1.2, we saw that conversion to Adventism was a negotiation of loci of belonging, which implied the loss *and* gain of contacts. In this section, we saw negotiations between the loss of a certain type of experience and the gain of a certain type of knowledge. We now move to a third negotiation of loss and gain among Ghanaian converts to Adventism.

7.1.4 Money and morals: sacrificial spirituality

In 1.4.1 we saw that the link between migration and conversion is often understood in pragmatic terms, since immigrant religious institutions often help immigrants with all kinds of social and economic adjustment. The relationship between non-Adventist Ghanaian immigrants and the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam both affirmed and challenged this idea.

²⁸⁰ This lady had been affiliated with a variety of churches: Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, Pentecostal, and various others. She was on a continuous quest for God to direct her to a good church. Being illiterate, her move to the “reader’s religion” was enabled by a strong reliance on spiritual experiences. The following is a condensed and relatively heavily grammatically edited version of her complex story: “I always prayed to God to help me find a good church. In a dream, God told me about four different churches, including the Saturday church. He said that all four churches would be good for me. But I insisted that God would choose. Then I felt it would have to be the Saturday church. Sometimes when I walked in the streets, I felt as though someone was following me. The person was invisible, then I saw somebody wearing a white cloth, then the person disappeared again. The person said: ‘It’s good, Saturday church’. In bed in the morning, somebody woke me up with the words: ‘Betsy, wake up, take a shower to go to Saturday church!’. Then I went to the meetings of the SDA crusade. When I went there, I heard someone say: ‘Don’t listen to them’. It was a loud voice, I recognised that it belonged to the Devil, because God speaks more slowly. Then I heard a second voice, saying: ‘Don’t listen, that is the Devil’. Sitting inside the church pews, I heard voices again. Someone kept urging me: ‘Can you get baptised for me?’. I was not sure. I saw angels in the church, a small girl coming to me, a person in a black suit, a circle. The night before the baptism that was held at the end of the crusade, I dreamt that I was standing in front of a river. In my dream I asked God whether pastor Ansah was a pastor of God, or a pastor of the Devil. I wanted to make sure that pastor Ansah did not use any voodoo to make people believe whatever he says²⁸⁰, and that his preaching was inside the Bible. The answer I received was that pastor Ansah is a clear man, with a good message. In the dream I also saw that somebody put me in the water. When I woke up, I was shaking heavily. Then I realised that I wanted to follow God’s instruction to get baptised. I went to the church and got ready for baptism. When I walked up to the baptismal font, I heard a voice saying: ‘Don’t go to the water, you can’t be baptised!’. But I also saw another person, who said: ‘You are lying, it’s for me, and you can’t change her mind. Let her go to the water!’. I saw a big cross in the water, shaking. I was in a kind of shock. Then I saw a light inside the water and I was baptized.”

The importance of social and economic considerations in regard to the conversion of immigrants was affirmed by 1) the motives of Ghanaian non-Adventist immigrants to not convert to Adventism and 2) the motives of Ghanaian Adventist immigrants to leave Adventism. Money was a pervasive issue. Ghanaian SDA church members often reported how their attempts to invite friends and neighbours to special church programmes were to no avail because of the invitees' hectic work schedules. Ghanaian immigrants often had multiple jobs and were responsible for families and possessions across nations. This made it quite a challenge to attend church programmes at all, and even more so to attend evangelistic campaigns, which the church usually ran in the evenings for more than a week in a row. More specifically for Adventism, attending church on Saturdays was unappealing to many. Saturday was a day for work and catching up on domestic chores. Betsy for example noted that before she became an Adventist, she did not like the SDA church because on Saturdays she wanted to go shopping and cook for the next week. Others said that Saturdays were lucrative days to work. This was an opportunity that was hard not to neglect, since in the vast majority of cases the very reason for living in Europe was to make money. Ghanaian immigrants continually faced financial pressures from dependent family at home, who believed money came easily to those living abroad. Finances were also a reason to *leave* the church. Samson, the convert with an Anglican background, stopped attending the SDA church after several months. He often had to work on Saturdays, a duty which may have been difficult for him to decline due to his undocumented status. Another example was Betsy, who became an Adventist after a variety of spiritual experiences. Her church attendance was frequent for some months, but then she started coming only sporadically. She explained that changes in her financial situation made it difficult for her to attend: she lived in the very North of Amsterdam, and could not afford the required metro tickets to get to Southeast.

Socially, conversion to Adventism was also not quite 'adjusting'. In the Ghanaian community, Adventists looked somewhat funny. Sometimes they were mocked or laughed at by their friends, and pitied and preached to about their alleged legalism and many rules. As illustrated in the above story of Dorcas, the ban on jewellery was the most important SDA 'rule' that turned off females. Non-Adventist Ghanaians were strongly aware of this 'rule'. Ghanaian SDA leaders knew that the proscription of this item was an obstacle, as it was highly valued in the Ghanaian community. The case of Ama illustrates the difficulty of leaving jewellery behind. Ama had an Anglican background, but became an Adventist through her husband. Even after having been an Adventist for many years, she sometimes still found herself tempted in front of shop windows displaying ornaments, having to correct herself by saying: 'No! The Devil is a liar!'. Another case was Agnes, Betsy's non-Adventist Ghanaian neighbour, who was not responsive to Betsy's invitations to come to church. According to Betsy, Agnes declined because she feared that she would get ugly when she would become an Adventist, having to discard her earrings and make up. The newly baptised Betsy herself simply resisted the proscription of jewellery, but revealed that this did involve some social costs:

People in [the SDA] church don't like me. Ghana people gossip. They had critique on my clothing, of course. (...) Somebody told me: why do you get baptised to God, when you wear earrings? I said: yeah, I like earrings. I know this church doesn't wear earrings. You don't wear it, but let me wear it, God judge me, not you. Also nail polish. Because my nails are brown. They say I make it too green. I said: this polish doesn't send me to heaven. My clothes don't send me to heaven. My good things send me to heaven.

You can do make up and so on, you can do anything, when you do good things. (church member Betsy)

Next to jewellery, an important ‘socially unadaptive’ feature was the relation between Sabbath-keeping and Ashanti funeral culture. In Ghana, the main rites of Ashanti funerals are commonly held on Saturdays, and many Adventists believed that participating in them was a violation of the Sabbath. This was a real dilemma, since Ashanti funerals are highly important, being “a field of strategic interaction, providing the ritual context for the creation of remembrance and identities, the elaboration of differences, the competition for status and power, and the negotiation of culture and social bonds and values” (De Witte 2003: 533). The predicament was heightened when it concerned the funeral of one’s own parents or other close family and friends. In the words of convert Betsy:

Saturday church. You know why Ghana people don’t want it? Because if your real real mother²⁸¹ is dead, you must go to the funeral. The last respect. They do it on Saturday. It’s culture, you want to cry, give her last respect, on Saturday, you can’t do it on Friday. (...) That’s why Ghanaians don’t go to Saturday church. And the Saturday people, when they come to the funeral at six o’clock in the evening [local sundown, thus the end of the Sabbath], it is almost over. (church member Betsy)

The importance of the funeral issue was corroborated by its prominence in the conversion process of Kwabena in Amsterdam. A Roman Catholic with a link to the SDA church through his younger brother, Kwabena’s central concern in becoming an Adventist was how he could attend his mother’s burial in Ghana if his family would decide to bury her on a Saturday²⁸².

These matters of money and morals made Adventism not the most ‘adaptive’ choice in the Ghanaian community. The phenomenon that there were enduring conversions to Adventism, as well as a vital church body, challenges the idea that conversion in the migration context equals a choice for socio-economic adjustment. Instead, I propose to describe the Adventist identity of Ghanaian immigrants as a ‘sacrificial spirituality’. SDA converts gained many things (e.g. specific social relationships, Bible knowledge, and hope of salvation), but also had to give up important economic and social goods: jobs, money, jewellery and funerals. While the social costs of not wearing jewellery and not attending funerals were common sacrifices for Adventists in Ghana, the economic costs of losing jobs and money became especially ‘sacrificial’ in the migration context, where money was the core incentive in locating oneself.

7.1.5 Types of conversion: denomination, local church and personal renewal

Was a baptism in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam a choice for the SDA denomination, that is a church body with distinct beliefs and practices embedded in a

²⁸¹ Indicating the biological mother and not other female relatives or non-relatives also addressed as ‘mother’.

²⁸² The tension between Adventism and Ashanti funeral culture was substantiated by an experience in Ghana. In the Ashanti region in Ghana, I joined a meeting of family members who were discussing the burial of their recently deceased mother. One of the mother’s daughters was a SDA, and she requested that the Saturday burial, which included refreshments, could be complemented by an offering of refreshments on Sunday for her Adventist friends, who could not attend the ceremony on Saturday. Her request, however, sparked more heat in an already heated debate that mainly revolved around finances.

global organisation? We already saw that specific SDA beliefs were important to many converts. The same held for specific SDA practices. Some converts referred to the SDA health message as appealing. Others noted the democratic character of the SDA church, such as Judith in the story above. Samson valued that Adventists voted on church issues, whilst in the Anglican Church he experienced that decisions were made top-down. Again others mentioned the ‘proper’ way that Adventists handled money. Kimberley noted that in her former charismatic church, money was exchanged for blessings, and she felt bad when she didn’t have any money to give. Betsy appreciated the anonymous way of giving money in the SDA church (tucked in an envelope put in an offering basket), rather than the public way of showing off the amount, which she saw in other churches. In identifying oneself with specific SDA beliefs and practices, conversion had a ‘denominational’ character.

Some converts however viewed the distinction between Adventism and other denominations as minimal or irrelevant²⁸³, pointing to a shared God and shared religious practices²⁸⁴. Furthermore, few converts had much knowledge about national or global SDA affairs. For them, ‘Adventism’ was the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam, coupled with some experiences in Ghana. In this sense, their conversion amounted to identification with a local church, rather than with a global denomination. This limitation to the local level was intensified by specific motives of conversion. The prominence of pastor Ansah and specific social ties in conversion stories already pointed to this. Other factors, such as the appreciation of the Ghanaian SDA music or the Twi language²⁸⁵ also made conversion to Adventism more ‘local’ than ‘denominational’ in character. A special case pointing to a different dynamic in ‘local conversion’ to Adventism was that of

²⁸³ The minimal understanding of denominational divergences may in part be understood in the light of the general ease by which African Christians shift church affiliation or attend different churches simultaneously (Ter Haar 1998: 96), and the finding that many supposed differences between SDA and non-SDA churches were not absolute (see 3.1.1). Also, it was not uncommon for Ghanaians to have close relatives attending various churches (for example, one church member had a Methodist mother, Anglican father, SDA brother, and used to go to the Presbyterian church), which enhanced the sense of identification with other churches. Finally, for Ghanaians who attended non-SDA non-charismatic churches, there seemed to be an additional sense of identification based on the uncommonly ‘quiet’ liturgy.

²⁸⁴ Convert Dorcas for example said: ‘Look, it’s all the same, just like when I went to the Sunday church. In the Sunday church we also go to church on Wednesday nights, and go to church on Friday nights. And here we do the same thing. So I feel like, it’s no different. No different actually.’ (original in Dutch).

²⁸⁵ As seen in the introduction of 3.1, many other Ghanaian churches defined their identity and mission in international terms. That this cosmopolitan identity was attractive to their members was for example demonstrated by the fact that the membership of Ghanaian Pentecostal churches far exceeded that of Ghanaian ethnic/regional organisations in the Netherlands (Van Dijk 2004: 86). We may thus wonder how converts with a Pentecostal background experienced the move to a church that identified itself and its mission in ethnic rather than international terms. Interestingly, the only remark I heard on this was Kimberley’s, who said that she appreciated the Twi songs in the SDA church in comparison to the Western music style in her previous, charismatic church. Thus, she appreciated an aspect of the explicitly Ghanaian identity of the church. I never encountered other remarks on this topic. A possible explanation for this is that the church membership of the internationally oriented Ghanaian churches hardly looked different from that of the ethnically oriented Ghanaian SDA church. In other words, the fact that the SDA church was filled with Ghanaians/Africans/blacks did not give away its ethnic identity, since the international churches, somewhat ironically, looked the same. This, combined with the fact that the specific mission focus on Ghanaians was more explicit among church leaders than among members, led to a relatively limited awareness of the different scope of identity and mission.

Joseph. In Ghana, Joseph attended a charismatic church. The leader of this church had a divine vision in which he was instructed to keep the Sabbath, which shifted the whole church from Sunday to Sabbath keeping. He migrated to the Netherlands and moved in with a Ghanaian family in Amsterdam. Knowing that his specific type of church was not represented in the Netherlands, he told the lady of the house that he was looking for a Sabbath keeping church. The lady's hairdressers happened to be related to one of the Ghanaian SDA church leaders, and, thus connected, Joseph was baptised in and became a frequent attendee of the SDA church. Joseph's story points to the way in which the search for specific religious practices is related to the local religious market: immigrants look for the church that most closely resembles their religious preference among locally available options. Joseph's baptism in the SDA church was a choice for a local church in a specific context, not for a denomination. He was not sure what church he would attend if he would return to Ghana, but expected that he would probably attend both the Adventist church and his previous, charismatic church.

Finally, some baptisms expressed neither a choice for the worldwide SDA denomination nor for the local Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam, but ritualised personal spiritual renewal. After attending an impressing seminar, experiencing impact of some sort in one's private life, and/or in hoping to gain prosperity 'benefits' as a result, baptism was the embodiment of a new start. Many who were baptised for these reasons were never seen in the church again or quickly disappeared.

Having looked at the responses of Ghanaian immigrants to the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam, we will now move into a discussion of the responses of Dutch people.

7.2 Responses of the white Dutch

7.2.1 An individual path: the case of a seeker

In this section, our attention turns to responses from the diffuse emic category of 'whites', 'the Dutch', and 'Europeans'. Were there any converts from this group, and how did white/Dutch/European people construct boundaries in regard to conversion? I will start with depicting in some detail the unique case of a Dutch young woman, who was spontaneously baptised in the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam in 2008, without having any social ties to the church.

The Dutch young woman's name was Merel. She had been raised a Catholic, but became an atheist in her childhood. Her parents divorced when she was a child, and she considered the prayers of fellow Catholics to images, in order to prevent the divorce, total nonsense. When she grew older, she started to call herself a Buddhist. She was intensively involved in meditation and yoga practices, in addition to various kinds of alternative spiritualities, such as astrology, and had a library of New Age literature.

However, over time she gradually moved from Buddhism and alternative spiritualities to Christianity. This change was related to a variety of developments. First, there were a few things that she missed in Buddhism. She did not find the 'unconditional love' that she was looking for. Also, she found herself living with countless fears that she could not get rid of through Buddhism. Further, she had specific spiritual experiences that moved her to Christianity. Almost dying from a serious disease, she experienced a force that kept her alive, which she believed to be the Holy Spirit. Importantly, she also had a few contacts that attracted her to Christianity. She befriended two Ghanaian Christians

who lived in Italy, whose answers to her questions had helped her a lot. Moreover, she married an American man, who was a Christian and inspired her through his in-depth research into the Bible.

When Merel became a Christian again, she first went back to Catholic churches, the type of Christianity most familiar to her because of her upbringing. She had, however, come to believe that the Saturday-Sabbath was the true day of worship, and explored various Protestant churches in Amsterdam. She had the idea that only Seventh-day Adventists were keeping the Sabbath. On the Internet she found a list of SDA churches in the Netherlands and decided to visit the multi-ethnic SDA church in Amsterdam Southeast a few times. Merel however did not call herself an Adventist. She supported the Sabbath doctrine and the belief that the world is in the End-time, but did not believe in the prophetic status of Ellen White (see 3.2.1) and felt that vegetarianism was not necessary (something which Adventists encourage, but do not require).

Because of her new beliefs, Merel started to pray that she wanted to get baptised. She prayed that God would show her how, as she did not have her own church. As a child, she had already been baptised through sprinkling, but she wanted to get baptised by full body immersion, as well as on a Sabbath day, as a sign of her rebirth and new life. In this same time period, she decided to visit the Ghanaian SDA church, which she knew about through her online search. She went there out of curiosity. Also, it suited her search for an English-speaking church, related to her wish to attend together with her American husband. Further, the idea of a Ghanaian church appealed to her, as she had affinity with Ghana and Africa²⁸⁶. In general, she noted that she liked other cultures, and that she did not strongly feel 'Dutch'.

When Merel visited the Ghanaian SDA church for the first time, the church happened to have a number of baptisms scheduled for that day. As she sat in the church pews and found out that people were to be baptised, Merel felt that God told her that this was meant for her. She was unsure at first, especially since she was there alone, without her husband or any of her friends and family members. However, she became increasingly convinced that this was meant for her. She went into the hallway of the church and asked one of the church members if it was possible for her to get baptised together with the others. The church member was stunned. He took her to pastor Ansah in a separate room. There, the pastor asked Merel if she knew what she was doing. Merel replied that she believed that Jesus was her Saviour and that she wanted to give her life to Jesus. Pastor Ansah responded by saying that then, he could not deny her the wish to be baptised. Within moments, Merel was dressed in a baptismal gown and waiting in the queue of people getting baptised. When she was baptised, she cried intensely and the church responded with great enthusiasm and countless hugs²⁸⁷. To me, she described it as 'an incredible experience I will never forget'.

In the weeks after her baptism, Merel visited the Ghanaian church several times, sometimes accompanied by her husband. She noted that the Dutch Protestant churches she had visited were quite unattractive to her, but that she enjoyed the more expressive and musical aspects of the Ghanaian church. However, Merel eventually stopped coming

²⁸⁶ Merel had worked in South Africa, had had plans to go to Ghana (which were cancelled because of unexpected pregnancy) and had two Ghanaian friends from Italy.

²⁸⁷ That the spontaneous event made quite an impression on the church was also demonstrated by the fact that a picture of Merel hugging pastor Ansah in the baptismal font was included in the yearly church calendar. The pictures that were included in this calendar were voted for by the church media team.

to church. She missed a certain intimacy in her interaction with church members, which she depicted as very warm, but lacking in depth and one-on-one contact. In her view, this was not related to cultural differences. She confessed that she herself had not been strong in following up on the contact she had been trying to make with the women in church. Moreover, Merel missed some depth in what the church offered in terms of content. Admitting that she likely was ‘spoiled’ by the in-depth Bible studies of her husband, she expressed the feeling that the church offered only ‘crumbs’ of content, doing a children story here, a song there, and so on. She missed depth in both church doctrine and practical application. Thus, Merel did not attend the church anymore. She did stay in contact with pastor Ansah, however²⁸⁸.

What does Merel’s unique story show? First, the Ghanaian SDA church functioned as a *temporarily* meaningful place to this Dutch woman. The church did not play a decisive or even any recruiting role in the coming about of Merel’s move to Christianity, Sabbath-keeping, and baptism. She had made her theological moves on the basis of a host of experiences and contacts unrelated to the congregation. Merel also did not consider herself an Adventist. To her, over time, the meaning of the Ghanaian SDA church became concentrated on the memory of the baptism. The Ghanaian SDA church had been a vessel in Merel’s journey, not its destination. This selective, seeker-type of engagement with immigrant churches may be a wider phenomenon among Westerners - many of the responses below could be counted as such. A second point relates to ‘culture’. Merel had looked for an English-speaking church because of her American husband, and was attracted to the Ghanaian church because of her affinity with Ghana, Africa, and ‘other cultures’ in general. This suggests that immigrant churches, especially those that are English-speaking/translating, could be appealing to Dutch people who have a non-Dutch spouse or are otherwise internationally oriented. Garces-Foley expresses a similar idea in her in-depth study of a multi-ethnic church in the US: “...multiethnic churches will grow most easily among cosmopolitan, boundary-crossing churchgoers, because they experience greater benefits and fewer costs in this setting” (2007: 131)²⁸⁹.

I will now move to a wider discussion of the responses of white/Dutch people.

7.2.2 Music, joy and exorcism: favouring the body over the mind

Both Ghanaian and Dutch audiences of the Ghanaian SDA church grappled with dilemma’s of knowledge and experience, albeit in different ways. Ghanaian converts to

²⁸⁸ In the week before I met her to talk about the story leading up to her baptism, she had visited the pastor to ask him how she, as a woman, could improve her (allegedly biblically required) submissiveness to her husband. Being a feminist, Merel struggled to implement submissiveness. She remarked that the meeting with pastor Ansah, who was trained in family counselling, had helped her a lot.

²⁸⁹ In regard to ‘non-cosmopolitan’ Dutch, I never encountered responses that explicitly rejected the Ghanaian church because of racial or cultural reasons. This may be due to political correctness on the part of the Dutch I met. Considering my overall observation of the racialised life experience of church members, however, it is not unlikely that racial difference did keep white Dutch people away from the church. During my research, I grew increasingly aware of Dutch perceptions of ‘Africanness’, which casually associated Africa with ‘pre-modern’ items such as widespread poverty, lack of hygiene, and tribal wars. Adogame likewise connects this “image of a dark, handicapped continent” with the question whether Europeans will “really ‘listen’ and ‘accept’ the ‘good news’ from Africans instead of lingering on in their mindset” (2008b: 260).

Adventism loved the gain of knowledge, but had to adjust to the loss of certain spiritual, bodily experiences. The Dutch, inversely, were little impressed by the knowledge in the church, but fascinated by the spiritual, bodily experiences they gained. In this section, I will discuss Dutch people's mixed appreciation.

With some regularity, non-Adventist white Dutch people visited the Ghanaian SDA church. They were mostly friends, colleagues, or neighbours of church members and usually were invitees to special events like weddings and evangelistic campaigns. Often, they expressed an appreciation of the ways in which the church stimulated their senses. This included references to the enjoyable atmosphere in the church. A young Dutch girl, the neighbour of one of the church members, told me that she had liked her day-long church experience as the church was not 'stiff' - evoking a contrast with the generally dusty image of church in Dutch society. In another case, a young Dutch man with a Dutch Reformed background showed up in church. He was interested in becoming Adventist and looking for a specific church community. A white-majority Adventist church near his place of residence had been reserved and unwelcoming. A Jamaican friend connected him to the Ghanaian SDA church, and after visiting the Sabbath morning service, he told me that he wanted to get baptised in this specific church, because here he experienced high degrees of 'conviction' and 'joy'²⁹⁰.

The senses were specifically stimulated by the music and dancing at church events, which many visiting Dutch people enjoyed. This was well-illustrated by two Dutch families who were invited to witness a marriage blessing in the church. They liked the music during the church service and happily danced away at the party afterwards, which was held in one of the rooms in the back of the church. Such enjoyment has been observed more widely. Adogame for example notes that white people are attracted to Aladura churches in Europe because of "aspects of their ritual such as their music and dancing" (2004: 499).

However, there was not only appreciation. The Dutch families that danced along at the marriage blessing party appeared rather bored with the sermon that was part of the service, which elaborately discussed the second coming of Jesus and called the audience to morally prepare for it²⁹¹. While sensory experiences (through the 'atmosphere', music, and dance) were received positively, theological and moral messages were received negatively.

This dual picture was reiterated and further specified by the responses of Dutch Adventists. I often heard Dutch SDA visitors comment positively on the alleged joy, warmth, liveliness, and community spirit in the church. Some Dutch Adventists were real 'fans' of the Ghanaian SDA church. Pastor Postma, the Dutch former pastor of the Ghanaian SDA church, expressed that he experienced a natural ease and genuine sense of homecoming with the Ghanaians. He felt that the church gave him the opportunity to express certain emotions that were less commonly accepted elsewhere. He also told the

²⁹⁰ Some church leaders were also informed that this young Dutch man wanted to be baptised. However, after that one meeting I never saw or heard about him again.

²⁹¹ Währisch-Oblau observes a strikingly similar dualism when depicting the 'Gospel Service' of an African immigrant church in a German Protestant church: "The large Protestant church in the main city square was well-filled with many Germans who clapped and swayed along with the music provided, but kept quiet during the sermon, while a minority of Africans from different churches cheered the preacher along" (2009: 301).

Ghanaians that he appreciated their joy and music, joking: 'You have the spirit of joy, whilst the Dutch sing as if they go to the hospital!'. Similarly, the Ghanaian SDA church was a young Dutch Adventist man's favourite church in the Netherlands because of its 'lively character'. Another, older Dutch Adventist had visited Ghana for a church project and fell in love with its people. He wore a *Kente* tie to the Ghanaian youth rally and danced enthusiastically to the singing of the Ghanaian choir at a national convention.

One of the most striking responses of the Dutch Adventists was the positive reception of their Ghanaian brethren's proficiency in the spirit world. During the time of fieldwork, I came across two cases where pastor Ansah was called upon by Dutch church leaders to lead out in exorcism. In one of the cases, the family that was suffering from demonic presence attended a SDA church in the North of the Netherlands²⁹². Logistically this was not a commonsensical place for a pastor from Amsterdam to minister. The fact that Ansah was called upon, demonstrated not only that he was attributed the capacity to deal with demons, but also that no other SDA pastor in the Netherlands seemed sufficiently skilled to handle the situation. Pastor Postma, the Dutch former pastor of the Ghanaian church, witnessed one of the exorcisms. He told me that the experience had helped him to realise that he does not have to be so afraid of encounters with demons. It had struck him that pastor Ansah had talked and dealt with the demon in a casual manner. In this way, pastor Ansah's proficiency in exorcism did not only fill a gap of expertise in the Dutch SDA church, it also had an educational impact on Dutch pastors in regard to dealing with demons.

In a comparable vein, in the Dutch SDA context pastor Ansah and his elders had a unique skill in regard to prayer for healing. The following case serves to illustrate this point²⁹³. A male Dutch Adventist member was diagnosed with a terminal disease, which led him to explore the world of prayers for healing. He first considered consulting Jan Zijlstra, a non-SDA Dutch evangelist who is well-known for claimed cases of healing. In a discussion with his extended family about this option however, it was decided that this was a questionable choice. I suggested to the man that he could ask for the help of pastor Ansah, who was experienced in such prayer. Although this was my own suggestion, nobody suggested alternatives, in spite of the fact that his family members were nearly all SDA and lived all over the Netherlands. The man thus decided to consult pastor Ansah, which resulted in a prayer meeting in the man's local church. Pastor Ansah and two of his elders came and prayed for the healing of the sick and anointed them with oil. The

²⁹² I was given more details about this case by the family members. It concerned a Dutch family with two foster daughters of Hindustani background. One of the girls suffered from demon possession, which was attributed to her deceased mother's involvement with spirit practices. The girl had outbreaks of rage with foam at the mouth, using violent words and action. According to the mother and sister, she once adopted the physical features of a tiger and attacked the mother. The family felt the presence of the demon in the entire house. To break away from their suffering, the family contacted pastor Postma, who referred them to the expertise of pastor Ansah in this matter. Pastor Ansah came to the family's house with two elders, who had fasted for three days, and a Dutch local pastor, who translated English into Dutch and vice versa. Candles were lit in every room in the house, the pastor anointed every member of the family with oil, except for the possessed girl, and, with a very loud prayer, laid his hands on the girl to deliver her. After the battle of exorcism was over, the family reported being restored to a harmonious household: the girl did not have outbreaks again, and they did not sense the demon in their house anymore. Also, both girls were baptised, in part because pastor Ansah had recommended it, suggesting that God could better protect those who are baptised.

²⁹³ The event described here took place after my official fieldwork period.

responses to this meeting reinforced the idea that with his experience in prayer for the sick, pastor Ansah filled another niche in the Dutch SDA church. Firstly, even though the prayer meeting was a not widely advertised event in a local church, a variety of members from other, even distant SDA churches in the Netherlands had come. Secondly, the attendees I talked to afterwards unanimously expressed that they had never experienced something like this before. The church was filled with a strongly emotional atmosphere uncommon to mainstream SDA church experience. One Dutch SDA pastor present during this occasion was so impressed by the event that he asked to put the item of 'prayer for the sick' on the agenda of a pastor's meeting for broader consideration. The expertise of Ansah and his elders seemed to meet a need in regard to a spiritual approach to healing.

The recognition of the Ghanaian Adventists' proficiency in the domains of exorcism and healing underscores the idea that the Dutch brethren's appreciation was especially located in bodily experiences. Further, these domains expand on the ways in which the contributions of African Christians to Dutch/European Christianity usually are assessed. According to Ter Haar, the perception of contributions is usually limited to the "decorative aspect", especially in the form of the exotic African church choir (1998: 161). The difference may be attributed to the denominational context, which linked Ghanaian and Dutch Adventists together. Connections were not very strong (see 5.2.2), but strong enough for the Dutch Adventists to notice the Ghanaians' special skills - skills that may not be noticed as easily by Dutch Christians who are not institutionally tied to immigrant Christians²⁹⁴.

Moving to the other side of the picture, Dutch Adventists seemed to have low receptivity to their Ghanaian brethren's positions on moral and theological issues²⁹⁵. Whereas other immigrant SDA churches in the Netherlands recognised pastor Ansah's expertise in Christian practical living and Adventist theology and invited him to do family seminars and 'crusades' in their church facilities, I never came across Dutch-majority churches that did so. Also, the non-Ghanaian Adventists that attended programs in the Ghanaian SDA church were predominantly Antilleans/Arubans and Surinamese - not the white Dutch. Individual cases affirmed the lack of receptivity on the part of the Dutch. A young Ghanaian Adventist lady said that she no longer talked to Dutch Adventists about homosexuality, because they had been giving her 'glassy looks' when she shared her views.

²⁹⁴ The role of denominational embedding in facilitating the influence of immigrant on indigenous Christians was also seen in the UK, where white Adventists adopted the practical needs oriented evangelistic strategies of black Adventists (Griffiths 2008: 300). The relevance of the denominational factor extends beyond the SDA church. It was also demonstrated in a study of Zimbabwean Catholics in the UK. The Zimbabweans transformed the liturgy and religious rituals in the parish they were part of by their singing, dancing, drumming, and religious uniforms. This was enthusiastically received by some white Catholics (Pasura forthcoming), though some felt that the Zimbabwean songs were too long and excited (Pasura 2010).

²⁹⁵ I came across one clear exception to the low receptivity of Dutch Adventists to the Ghanaian Adventists' theological and moral views. A Dutch-Antillean SDA couple living in the far east of the Netherlands actually was attracted to the moral strictness in the Ghanaian SDA church. The couple visited two of the Euro-Ghanaian SDA camp meetings (where the number of whites could be counted on one hand amidst hundreds of Ghanaians), and occasionally attended the Ghanaian church services in Amsterdam. The husband felt that the Ghanaian SDA teachings were 'more to the point' whereas in Dutch SDA churches 'anything goes'. His wife added that 'in the Dutch churches they all say: sleep nice, but what we should hear is: wake up!'

In another case, a Dutch SDA lady with prominent earrings joined a Sabbath school class in the Ghanaian SDA church. Some members discussed the church ban on jewellery and peeked at the lady. Afterwards, the lady told me that she thought the Ghanaians' strong objection against jewellery was 'cute' (in Dutch: 'schattig'). Thus, the contrasting opinion of the Ghanaians had not given her food for thought or even raised her defenses, but rather was somewhat amusing to her.

The low receptivity of Dutch Adventists to the theological and moral convictions of the Ghanaians is in line with Ter Haar's general assessment of the Dutch/European Christian appreciation of African Christianity. She observes "a general reluctance in both church and theological circles to enter into meaningful contact with African Christians in spite of official statements", and "no allowances for a serious input from non-Western Christians" in Dutch theological faculties and institutions (Ter Haar 1995b: 27; 1995a: 140). Along the same lines in a more recent study, Währisch-Oblau notes that European Protestant churches reject the criticism of Pentecostal immigrant churches as "fundamentalist and culturally irrelevant" (2006: 46).

The dual picture that emerges here may be understood as a form of orientalism. As Baumann (2004: 19-21) points out, the orientalisating strategy of othering does not simply consist of a binary opposition, but is made up of a reversed mirror image in which positives of the other are contrasted with negatives of the self, and vice versa. The Dutch liking of the Ghanaian joy, liveliness, and community spirit implicitly evoked a contrast with the more dry and individualistic style of their own lives and churches. On the other hand, some Dutch people were quick to associate the morals and theology of the Ghanaians with a past that was preferably left behind, along the lines of 'how they do things is exactly how things were done in my grandparents' time'²⁹⁶. Thus, the little appreciation of Ghanaian theology was not related to perceiving it as "black spirituality" (Ter Haar 1998: 161), but to seeing it as old-fashioned Adventism/Christianity²⁹⁷. A time factor was involved in evaluation. Baumann refers to the "denial of contemporaneity" that has been delineated as an important strategy in othering others (ibid. p. 20). This perspective seems applicable to the views about the Ghanaian Adventists: 'they' have the experience and community 'we' have unfortunately 'lost' (their positives are our negatives), and 'they' have the morals and theology 'we' have happily 'lost' (their negatives are our positives)²⁹⁸. Thus, the general approach to the Ghanaian Adventists was not marked by the common European Christian lack of a "theology of

²⁹⁶ Catto interestingly points out an inverse kind of reasoning with the same effect of keeping immigrant Christians at a distance. She quotes a Latin American missionary in the UK as saying: "Some part of Britons say 'we are grandfather of mission, so we don't need you'" (2008: 137). In this quote, the British are said to construct themselves as superior in stressing that their mission antedated that of the Latin Americans. Thus, whilst some Dutch Adventists stayed aloof from Ghanaian theology by projecting it into the past, these British stayed aloof from the Latin American missionaries by projecting themselves into the past.

²⁹⁷ In the Dutch SDA context, the idea that the little appreciation of Ghanaian theology was not race-related was affirmed by the fact that the theologies of other non-Western immigrant Adventists were similarly assessed.

²⁹⁸ The idea that contemporary Ghanaian SDA theological and moral views would be a copy of past Dutch SDA theological and moral views obscured clearly existing differences between the two, such as the Ghanaians' religious jokes and explicit forms of sexual education.

receiving” (Währisch-Oblau 2006: 46), but consisted of a specific mixture of receiving and non-receiving.

7.2.3 Singing but not preaching: Ghanaians and the unity in diversity model

The theme of unity in diversity was very important to the Dutch SDA church. Leaders aimed to communicate the need for tolerance of theological and cultural differences in the context of a heterogeneous membership, including liberals and conservatives, blacks and whites, immigrants and indigenous, old and young, etc. Thus, where the Ghanaians sought to de-culturalise Dutch Adventism, which in their view was a mixture of ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ (see 3.2.1), the leadership of the Dutch SDA church often attempted to ‘promote’ culture.

Ghanaian Adventists were slotted into the unity in diversity model in various ways. First, with their colourful, conspicuous dress, non-Dutch tongue, and African features, they turned into an educative token of diversity. Thus, the Ghanaian choir was asked to sing at the two biennial national conventions I observed. The choristers featured in their bright red and yellow robes on the front page of an article about diversity in the church in the national SDA magazine. Further, the Ghanaians participated in the diversity model by partaking in the exchange of cultural knowledge and symbols. At a regional SDA gathering where the Ghanaian church was represented, participants were encouraged to get to know each other’s cultures by means of a list of questions. The list included simple queries like ‘Why do the Dutch drink coffee?’ and ‘How do you say *I love you* in Ghanaian?’. At another regional gathering entitled ‘Enjoy each other’s colourfulness’ (in Dutch: ‘Geniet van elkaars veelkleurigheid’), the Ghanaian choir sang next to other choirs, and the Ghanaians served Ghanaian dishes as did churches and members representing other cultures. One of the national conventions coincided with Ghana Independence Day, which was publicly announced by one of the convention speakers. With some elaboration, the speaker educated the audience about Ghanaian history. In other cases the Ghanaians themselves initiated cultural exchange. This was illustrated at a national SDA youth rally that was organised by the Ghanaian SDA youth²⁹⁹. One of the Ghanaian young ladies taught the multi-ethnic audience to speak some words in Twi. She also staged some of the other languages that were represented, such as Dutch and Papiamentu. Another example was the Ghanaian church choir, which often sang in Twi when ministering to a national audience, even though they had a repertoire of both Twi and English songs.

The ‘unity’ aspect of the unity in diversity model was strongly expressed by pastor Postma, the previous Dutch pastor of the Ghanaian church and president of the SDA church in the Netherlands at the time of fieldwork. The pastor greatly appreciated the Ghanaian Adventists and wanted to increase their connection to the wider SDA church in the Netherlands. He suggested that he and I would visit SDA churches throughout the country together, to give presentations about the Ghanaian church. On his blog at the national SDA website, he posted a poem he wrote about his visit to Elmina, a former centre of the slave trade on the Ghanaian coast that was partly run by the Dutch. Preaching in the Ghanaian church, he often expressed that Dutch Adventists were happy to worship with their Ghanaian brethren. He constantly built bridges in his sermons,

²⁹⁹ Youth groups from different SDA churches in the country take turns in organising national youth rallies, which take place twice a year.

using words and phrases in Twi and making cultural adaptations like asking someone to stand up during the sermon to read a Bible passage. He tried to connect the Ghanaians to Dutch society by inviting them to visit the ‘Keukenhof’, a famous Dutch flower garden. He expressed how much the wider SDA church needed the example of the faith commitment of the Ghanaians. Finally, he told the Ghanaians that they were needed in the wider SDA church as missionaries and bridge builders. In one of his sermons, he climaxed his appeal by saying that pastor Ansah could be the next president of the Netherlands Union Conference.

The Ghanaians were thus a token of, participant in and invitee to the unity in diversity project. In this way they were given much recognition³⁰⁰. However, in practice, the unity side of the model did not allow much room for *conflicting* diversity. Diversity was taught to promote tolerance, not to advance clashes. Thus, especially for national events, the Ghanaians were more easily invited to express ‘diversity’ by singing in colourful robes than to express ‘diversity’ by preaching. The Ghanaians were warmly welcomed, but within the limitations of the unity in diversity model. In other words, the diversity emphasis was meant to give them space (e.g. to sing a song in Twi), but also to educate them to give space to others (e.g. to accept that other Adventists wear jewellery). Ghanaian features that harmoniously added to the diversity package were enthusiastically received, but features that could undermine unity were not publicly staged.

7.3 Responses of other ethnic groups: non-Western SDA’s sustained

In addition to diversifying the Dutch SDA landscape, the Ghanaian church, being the only African SDA congregation in the Netherlands, was a haven for non-Western Adventist immigrants in the country. The church had regular SDA attendees that came from African countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Zambia, as well as the Netherlands Antilles/Aruba and Suriname. Some of them had to travel long distances to get to the church. Also, some were strongly integrated in the church, such as the Antillean lady who sang in the church choir (in Twi!), the Nigerian man who recorded his popular music DVD’s together with church members, and another Antillean woman who visited Ghana, wore *Kente* dress, and helped out with food preparation for church purposes.

What attracted these non-Ghanaian non-Western Adventists to come to the Ghanaian SDA church, even though it was not always the most practical choice? To many, the attraction had a bodily component and was expressed in bodily language. This was well-illustrated by a Rwandese SDA girl, who had recently come to the Netherlands and attended churches in the middle of the country. She confessed that she felt as though she was slowly losing her faith in the Netherlands, because the style of church seemed foreign and cold to her. She expressed the desire to regularly visit the Ghanaian church so that she could ‘feel’ her religion again. Other attendees described similar sentiments. A frequently visiting Surinamese SDA woman said that she attended the Ghanaian church because she did not feel ‘empty’ after the service like she did elsewhere. An Antillean church leader said that Ansah appealed to Antilleans because he was more ‘emotional’. In general, pastor Ansah’s preaching was very popular. His style struck a chord with

³⁰⁰ The Ghanaians enjoyed this sense of acceptance in the wider church. They were happy to share their talents and important cultural items such as their dress, language, and food.

Adventists from a variety of non-Western countries, from South Africa to the Moluccas, who often exclaimed how ‘amazing’ and ‘wonderful’ he was³⁰¹.

Secondly, the Ghanaian SDA church appealed to non-Western Adventists in the Netherlands because of its conservative theology. Thus, unlike many Dutch Adventists, non-Western Adventists were drawn to *both* the ‘body’ and ‘mind’ aspects of this congregation. In the Christmas season, a Zambian man, member of a multi-ethnic SDA church in the Western part of the Netherlands, took his family to the Ghanaian church to avoid the Christmas programme that was held in his own church that day. His behaviour demonstrated his differing view on Christmas, which he rejected because of its pagan origins. Moreover, it showed that he knew that the Ghanaian church shared his view and that his daughters would not have to be exposed to pagan rituals there.

Non-Western Adventists were also drawn to the language and culture in the Ghanaian church. Two SDA students from Rwanda and Zambia attended a Dutch-speaking SDA church in Amsterdam when they arrived in the Netherlands. The Rwandese student explained that she was really sad that she could not understand any Dutch. When she came to the Ghanaian church however, she felt ‘so at home’ and ‘like I was in Africa’, thus revealing not only the importance of language, but also a pan-African sense of belonging.

The appeal of the Ghanaian SDA church to non-Western Adventists in the Netherlands was not self-evident. In the UK, Ghanaian Adventists have a complex relationship and history with their African Caribbean brothers and sisters, as much marked by mutual antagonism and conflict as by collaboration (Ackah 2008). In the British context, African Caribbean members were in the majority and, after some struggle, had become powerful in terms of leadership positions. In local churches, Ghanaian members often were not voted into positions of leadership. The Dutch SDA context was different because white Dutch people were still dominant in terms of membership and leadership in the church. Though the Antilleans/Arubans were the largest non-Western immigrant group, they were an ethnic minority like the Ghanaians. Both the Antilleans/Arubans and Ghanaians functioned in the unity in diversity model and had the space to establish their own churches and develop leaders for the wider church. Hence, their relationship was not primarily experienced in terms of power, but in terms of commonalities in church experience and theology³⁰².

Did the church appeal to non-Western *non-Adventists*? This was very limited. The pews were usually filled with Ghanaian Adventists, Ghanaian non-Adventists, and non-Ghanaian Adventists – few attendees were neither Ghanaian nor Adventist. In the rare

³⁰¹ The popularity of Ansah’s preaching seemed to be located in features such as his interactive style (‘Am I talking to somebody?’, ‘Can I ask you a question?’), appeal to emotions (‘I love you so much and really mean it!’), ‘Is someone here hearing the voice of God?’), vigorous way of motivating (‘You can get baptised on November 24. I’m not giving you another date!’), ‘You have to come back to our programme tomorrow or else you’ll miss it all!’), moralising (‘You will face judgment after death. Stop what you’re doing’), repetition of words (‘We will live forever and ever and ever and ever and ever’), and relatively high volume of speech, as well as in lengthy, hierarchy-affirming introductions of the pastor that stressed his impressive CV, titles and talents.

³⁰² There was however not only harmony. The inter-ethnic organisation of one pastor Ansah’s campaigns in The Hague led to some frictions. An Antillean leader was bothered by the fact that the main speaker often came late for the programme. The Ghanaians on their part felt like nobody was in charge and that things were disorganised. They were frustrated about not being able to do everything their way and missed a lively atmosphere, a strong focus on prayer, and having the time to welcome and pray for visitors.

case that a non-Ghanaian non-Western person without a SDA background was baptised, they quickly dropped out of the church³⁰³. A marked exception to this overall pattern was the fact that pastor Ansah baptised various non-SDA Antilleans after he held a series of lectures in the Antillean/Aruban-majority SDA church, which he additionally pastored since 2009. This again underscores the importance of the denominational factor in inter-ethnic outreach.

Summing up, we see that the appeal of the Ghanaian SDA church to non-Ghanaian non-Western ethnic groups was very strong within the confines of the SDA church. The fact that these groups found a real haven in the Ghanaian SDA church after experiencing ‘cold’ religion, ‘pagan’ rituals and incomprehensible language in other SDA churches in the Netherlands, shows that the Ghanaian Adventists played a significant role in sustaining the faith of non-Western Adventists in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the Ghanaian Adventists rarely made an impact on non-Adventists that were non-Ghanaian non-Western, with the exception of those that they reached through their denominational positioning.

7.4 In conclusion

In this chapter I examined the responses to the mission of the Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam. The central question of this chapter was: *How do the audiences of the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam construct boundaries in regard to conversion?*

Social ties informed how boundaries were constructed in regard to conversion. For Ghanaian converts, this was demonstrated by the crucial role of pre-existing affiliations with church members and the pastor. Converting was a choice for belonging, or, more precisely, for an alteration of loci of belonging. For Dutch people, the paths to social identification were evidently scarce. They rarely were married to Ghanaian Adventists, were not depended on them to be introduced in the wider society, and had a different appreciation of the pastor. The lack of social ties and the difficulty experienced in building them was an important reason why the spontaneously baptised Dutch woman did not stay in the church.

Further, there was the negotiation of knowledge and experience. Interestingly, for the double minority Ghanaian SDA church, the responses of the majorities they were part of mirrored each other. Ghanaian converts, many of whom had a Pentecostal or charismatic background, were attracted to the ‘knowing’ aspects of the church: its biblical beliefs and educational emphasis. Their theological convictions gave way to a ‘sacrificial spirituality’, foregoing important socio-economic goods like jobs and jewellery. At the same time, converts had to come to terms with missing out on experiences that they were accustomed to (but at times also fed up with): explicit pneumatic phenomena such as speaking in tongues and publicly staged miracles. This trade-off between ‘knowing’ and ‘experiencing’ was accounted for by a reinterpretation of pneumatic phenomena, stressing that they can be present in implicit forms or that they are actually unbiblical.

³⁰³ Examples were a lady from Ivory Coast who was baptised because she was in love with one of the church members, and a Roman Catholic Surinamese woman who was baptised after she had a specific dream.

For Dutch Adventists and other Dutch people, the response was reversed. They expressed a great appreciation of their *experience* in the Ghanaian SDA church. They were moved by its joy, liveliness, warmth, and music. In addition, pastor Ansah was invited to deal with cases of exorcism and spiritual healing, cases that Dutch SDA pastors were little equipped for. Thus, whilst Ghanaian Pentecostals ‘lost’ some of the Spirit when becoming SDA, Dutch Adventists and other Dutch people ‘gained’ the Spirit when connecting to the Ghanaian Adventists³⁰⁴. On the other hand, to many Dutch Adventists the ‘knowledge’ of the Ghanaians in the form of their moral and theological views was far from a factor of appeal, and relegated to the past. Where converted Ghanaians with a charismatic background felt that they had moved *forward* by adopting SDA theology, some Dutch Adventists felt that the adoption of Ghanaian SDA theology would be a way *backwards* – a loss of enlightened views that had been gained by deconstructing old-fashioned theological positions.

For Adventists from other ethnic groups, in particular other Africans, Antilleans/Arubans, and Surinamese, the Ghanaian SDA church was often a haven of *both* truthful theology and fulfilling experience. The Ghanaian SDA church was an important resource for non-Western Adventist immigrants to sustain their faith while living in the Netherlands.

Finally, negotiations of language and culture informed how boundaries were constructed. For Ghanaian converts, the theological shift to Adventism was attractively combined with the maintenance of familiar languages and cultural features. However, cultural-linguistic aspects of the Ghanaian SDA church were also appealing to non-Ghanaians. The English and Twi languages and the ‘African’ styles of worship were attractive to a Dutch woman that was internationally oriented, non-Western Adventist immigrants that were looking for a home away from home, and Dutch Adventist leaders that sought to promote cultural diversity and manage theological divisions in the national SDA church.

In the next chapter, we will explore conversion in very different contexts by examining the responses to the mission of the 14 other immigrant churches.

³⁰⁴ In this sense, it does not take an African Pentecostal to affect “the recovery of the pneumatic resources of the gospel” (Kalu 2008: 288) in Western communities. In fact, non-charismatic African Christians may be more suited for this task, since the Spirit practice of African Pentecostals usually is too much of a clash with that of European Protestants (see for example the illustrative case of collision depicted by Währisch-Oblau 2009: 301-303).

8 Negotiating the (un)familiar: responses to immigrant churches

In this chapter, I will discuss the responses to the 14 other immigrant churches, as compared to the Ghanaian SDA case³⁰⁵. The central question of this chapter is: *How do the audiences of immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in regard to conversion?*

8.1 Responses of fellow ethnics

8.1.1 Church growth, events visited and affiliations changed

As in the Ghanaian SDA case, those who responded affirmingly to the mission of the other immigrant churches were mostly fellow ethnics. One form of response was that fellow ethnic Christians joined the churches. The success of the churches in terms of such growth widely differed. Some experienced great increase over the years, such as the Amsterdam branch of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, which grew from 30 to 300 attendees in 15 years. The Serbian Orthodox parish also saw a significant rise in numbers, growing from 50 to 150 regular attendees in about 5 years. The Korean Reformed Church in Rotterdam grew from 50 attendees at its inception in 1994, to 200 at the time of fieldwork. Other churches hardly saw their membership growing. The Rotterdam branch of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, for example, only grew from 18 to 40 members in 10 years. The Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish did not grow in the five years preceding the fieldwork: the ones coming in equalled the ones going out. In some cases, church growth was directly related to migration patterns. The Korean Reformed church's recent plant in Eindhoven (see 2.2) began with 10 people and quickly grew to 60-70 people, in large part because of the influx of Korean immigrants, who worked for a local IT company. In other cases, the added churchgoers were more established immigrants in the Netherlands, who had hitherto been attending other churches or no churches at all. This was well-illustrated by the six Chaldean Catholic centres in the country, which all experienced significant growth from such groups.

Whilst such ('backslidden') Christians became regular attendees of the churches, other Christians as well as non-Christians especially visited specific events. Many flocked to Christmas and Easter celebrations. To these feasts, the Russian and Serbian Orthodox, Chaldean and Spanish-speaking Catholic, and Cape Verdean Nazarene churches drew up to hundreds of extra attendees³⁰⁶ - who have been referred to as 'feast Christians' (in Dutch: 'feestchristenen'; Ferrier 2002: 81 in quoting an Ethiopian Orthodox respondent). Some churches organised special events around Christmas, which attracted outsiders. The Japanese and Koreans held annual Christmas concerts that respectively drew about 100 Japanese and 150 Koreans. A Christmas service organised by the ICF Chinese ministry together with a local Chinese church attracted about 200 Chinese people. Some of their non-Christian attendees were interested to learn more about Christianity. Other appealing

³⁰⁵ Due to the socio-political sensitivities concerning the conversion of Muslims, data on this topic has been omitted or anonymised depending on the permission given by respective church leaders and members.

³⁰⁶ For the Spanish-speaking Catholics, Palm Sunday was the greatest highlight of the year, drawing up to 400 attendees.

events were specific to particular churches and ministries. On average, the Kurdish mission parties were visited by about 100 Kurds, mostly Muslims. The patchwork classes and parenting courses of the Japanese Protestant church attracted a number of non-Christian Japanese. The multicultural evangelical MCTC had non-Christians participating in its child raising seminars. Muslims joined its outdoors fitness training, which included prayer and singing Christian songs.

In terms of changed religious affiliations, most churches reported numbers that were relatively small. The ICF Chinese ministry won about five non-Christians each year. On average, the Ethiopian evangelical church baptised ten persons a year. The leader of the ICF Turkish ministry reported that there were four persons who came to believe in Jesus in his year of leadership, but he only knew of one that still actively practiced his faith. The three gatherings of the Japanese Protestant church together baptised seven Japanese people in the Netherlands in three and a half years. In addition, two Japanese individuals became Christian and were baptised in Japan after re-migration. The pastor, a former missionary in Japan, considered these numbers to be remarkably high for 'Japanese standards'. In some cases, the number of people who changed religious affiliation was a bit higher. The greatest figures were reported by the ICF Kurdish ministry. In the six years after its start in 2002, the leader claimed to have won about 100 Kurds to faith in Jesus, with about ten being baptised in the ICF in Rotterdam.

New believers had various backgrounds. There was 'tradition transition' (Rambo 1993: 14). In seven of the churches and ministries, there were Muslims who had moved to Christianity in the Netherlands. Buddhists had become Christians in the Netherlands in the ICF Chinese ministry and the Japanese church. The Pakistani pastor baptised a Hindu in his Rotterdam branch. A Kurdish family with a Yezidi background converted to Christianity in the Netherlands. Also, there was 'institutional transition' (ibid. p. 13-14). A large portion of the attendees of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB was Roman Catholic. In the Cape Verdean Nazarene church, there also was a group of Roman Catholics. Nearly all converts in the Ethiopian evangelical church had been born in the Coptic Orthodox faith. In the next section, we will look at the ways by which some of these changed religious affiliations came about.

8.1.2 Paths and patterns of conversion: the migration factor

To draw attention to some of the factors that played a role in the conversion of immigrants from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, I will briefly depict a couple of conversion stories before discussing more general patterns.

Yoichi

Yoichi and his wife Maiko migrated from Japan to Rome for purposes of work. Maiko had been raised in a Christian home. Yoichi had little interest in Christianity. In Rome, Maiko gave a Japanese Bible to Yoichi, because he desired to understand the Christian sculptures and paintings in the city. When Yoichi started reading the Bible, he began to connect the art works to the Bible stories he read. This experience sparked Yoichi's interest in Christianity. At the same time, Maiko experienced a revival in her own faith as she attended a local, English-speaking Pentecostal church. The couple then moved from Rome to Amsterdam. Yoichi started working in a stressful position with a demanding boss. In addition, the couple came into contact with the pastor of the Japanese Protestant church. Yoichi was impressed by the pastor's humility. He started reading his Bible more

frequently, and while attending one of the annual retreats of the Japanese Protestant church, he told the pastor that he believed in Jesus. Together with a Dutch man (see below), he was the first to be baptised by this pastor in the Netherlands. At the time of fieldwork, he was leading out in church services.

Yunxu

Yunxu came from China to the Netherlands for his studies. He shared an apartment with a man from Cameroon, a classmate. This man attended the ICF and took Yunxu, who had no background in Christianity, along to church. In the ICF, the then leader of the Chinese ministry gave Yunxu a Bible and invited him to join their weekly Bible studies. The two established a close relationship. They visited each other frequently, prayed together and studied the Bible. Yunxu was impressed by the biblical book of Daniel, especially with how European history seemed to fit the prophecies in that book. Yunxu also researched other parts of the Bible and became convinced that Christianity was 'real'. He became a Christian in his first year in the Netherlands. At the time of fieldwork, he was the leader of the ICF Chinese ministry.

What patterns can be discerned in the conversion of immigrants in the Netherlands to Christianity? Conversion was often linked to particularities of the migration context. We have seen that the migration context produced 'backsliding' believers (see 3.1.2 and 4.1.2) and created all kinds of complexities in the mission endeavour (see 5.1.5 and 6.1.5). However, there was also a strong linkage between migration and conversion. The first linking pin was the quest of immigrants for a *familiar cultural-linguistic context*. As discussed in 1.4.1, in some cases, immigrants go to 'ethnic' local religious institutions to experience cultural familiarity in the country of immigration. I came across this phenomenon in several cases. The high number of non-Christian Kurds who frequented Kurdish mission parties was related to the enjoyment of Kurdish music and dance. The Japanese Protestant church functioned as a place to meet fellow Japanese, which was particularly important to both Christian and non-Christian females, who felt lonely overseas. For this reason, the number of church attendees frequently exceeded the number of church members³⁰⁷. There was a similar dynamic in the Korean community. Both Christian and non-Christian Korean immigrants longed for a community where they could meet other Koreans, speak Korean, share information and experiences, and eat Korean food. Since the Korean Reformed church offered this (see 6.1.2), there were non-Christians who attended church, some of whom in the course of time converted to Christianity³⁰⁸.

In other cases, immigrants, who were Christian already, changed denominations as they sought both cultural-linguistic and theological familiarity in their choice of a church. In the previous chapter, we saw that a Ghanaian man, who attended a charismatic Sabbath-keeping church in Ghana that was absent in the Netherlands, joined the Ghanaian SDA church in Amsterdam, both because of its Sabbath practice and its

³⁰⁷ The importance of meeting with fellow Japanese was underscored by the fact that two Catholic Japanese couples attended the Japanese Protestant church. The couples frequented a Dutch Catholic parish on Sunday mornings, but went to the Japanese Protestant church on Sunday afternoons. (There *was* a Japanese Catholic mass, held in Amstelveen by a Japanese priest from Belgium, but this happened only once every three months.)

³⁰⁸ This socio-cultural path to conversion has been observed for Korean immigrants more widely (see for example Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 39 about Korean immigrants in the US).

Ghanaian identity. In a similar way, an Angolan woman and her daughter attended the Cape Verdean Nazarene church. They had been Methodists in Angola, but when they could not find a Methodist church in the Rotterdam area, they moved to the Portuguese-speaking Nazarenes, which they experienced as theologically similar.

Conversion and migration were further linked through *religious minority-majority shifts*. In contrast to the Ghanaian Adventists and other African Christians, who were often frustrated by the difficulties of doing evangelism in the apparently secularised country of the Netherlands, immigrants from countries where Christianity was a minority noted that the Western context actually made conversion easier³⁰⁹. The Japanese were strongest in this position. The above story of Yoichi illustrated how his interest in Christianity developed from his exposure to Christian art in Rome - a public presence of Christianity uncommon in Japan. Also, the pastor of the Japanese church observed that, where conversion to Christianity was hard to achieve in Japan because of prevailing family objections, Japanese in Europe had ways to circumvent this pressure (e.g. sometimes they did not tell their family back home about their new religious identity). It was not only the Japanese that found Europe a conducive context for conversion. In the churches I met a couple of men from two different countries, who both grew up as Muslims. Both of them had a tumultuous background of engagement with nationalist politics in their countries of origin and had turned their back on religion. In the Netherlands, they were exposed to Christianity through mission-minded churchgoers in a variety of ways that were new to them. Through a complex process, this encounter turned around their perspectives and led them to become Christians. Whereas Christian evangelism was forbidden by law in these men's countries of origin, they had quickly run into it in the Netherlands. Finally, some church leaders felt that not only conversion, but also evangelism was facilitated on Dutch soil. The leaders of the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses and the ICF Chinese ministry observed, for example, that to work together with Dutch Christians was helpful in reaching out to fellow ethnics: Dutch people were 'more trustworthy' to some Iranians, and 'an interesting aspect' to some Chinese.

We thus see that for immigrants from countries where Christianity is a numerical and/or socio-politically oppressed minority, the Netherlands was considered a favourable mission field. Whereas African Christians generally felt shocked and hindered by the secular condition of the Netherlands/Europe, to immigrants from countries like Iran, Japan and China, the Christian roots of the Netherlands/Europe were conspicuous and facilitative³¹⁰.

It is of interest that the contrast sketched here is particularly Dutch or Western European. Ebaugh and Chafetz show that it applies differently to the US. Given the generally greater adherence to Christianity in this country and looking at both Christian and non-Christian immigrant religions, they discuss minority-majority shifts in terms of Christians coming to the US from countries where Christianity is a minority, and majority-minority shifts in terms of non-Christians coming to the US from countries

³⁰⁹ I here deliberately say 'easier', rather than 'easy'. Churches and converts did report that they had to deal with negative, threatening, and even violent reactions from family members and other fellow ethnics in response to evangelism and conversions in the Netherlands.

³¹⁰ Likewise, Währisch-Oblau points out a case of a Nepali evangelist in Germany, to whom evangelising Nepalese people in Germany fulfilled his old but, due to the Nepali political situation, hitherto unfulfilled vision of evangelising Nepal (2009: 152-158).

where a non-Christian religion is a majority (2000: 31-41). In their view, therefore, all Christian immigrants in the US (except the Orthodox, p. 31) join the majority, and all non-Christians, the minority. However, as we have seen, in the more secular Dutch/European case it depends on the status of Christianity in the country of origin whether the move of a Christian immigrant to this part of the world entails a minority-majority or a majority-minority shift.

Some cases of conversion were only indirectly produced by the migration context. There was the tendency to maintain and build ties with fellow ethnics, which was a fertile soil for conversions. Illustrative were the cases of a Kurdish young man who became a Christian through a Kurdish friend, a Hindu Surinamese customer of the Pakistani pastor's wife who started praying to Jesus through the wife's intervention³¹¹, and the Iraqi Muslims in the Chaldean parish who were to marry parishioners. The case of Yungxu narrated above similarly illustrated the importance of fellow ethnic connections. His story however showed that mediating networks were not ethnically homogeneous, as his first connection to the ICF was his roommate from Cameroon. In some cases, the maintenance of networks in the country of origin undergirded the conversion of fellow ethnics in the Netherlands³¹². The former leader of the ICF Chinese ministry, for example, was now a missionary in China and still in contact with the Rotterdam ministry. He informed the ministry about the arrival of a non-Christian Chinese woman, who was about to come to the Netherlands temporarily, which led to a close relationship between the lady and the ministry and eventually to her conversion to Christianity.

We have seen that in many cases the migration context played a crucial role in the conversion of immigrants. We will now move to discuss paths and patterns of conversion among the Dutch.

8.2 Conversions of the white Dutch

In line with observations from studies in other European contexts (see 1.1.2), the Dutch were not a dominant 'catch' for the immigrant churches. The 'reversed mission' discourse in many cases therefore really seemed "a discourse in search of reality" (questioningly phrased in the title of Freston 2010). Some church leaders hinted at the general disinterest of Dutch people, expressing observations such as:

When you ring a Dutch man's doorbell, he will tell you: 'What do I have to do with you?' (leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry)

³¹¹ Their speech (Hindi and Urdu) was mutually intelligible.

³¹² Such networks also helped new immigrants, who were already Christian, to find a spiritual home (and thus helped to prevent the common phenomenon of 'backsliding' in the migration context). The pastor of the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, for example, mentioned that there were a few cases in which the GKPB in Indonesia, or Indonesian Christians living in the Netherlands, had informed him about (especially female) church members in Indonesia who were to migrate to the Netherlands, so that he could take care of their spiritual needs.

When you talk to a Dutch person about the gospel, he will look at you like: 'What's all this about? Are you from Mars? Leave, and take your message with you!' (mission leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church; original in Dutch)

Some leaders experienced more than mere disinterest and ran into some level of hostility when attempting to evangelise Dutch people. The Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses used to ring doorbells of Dutch families, but often were received with cussing and doors slammed in their faces. A member of the Ethiopian evangelical church in Rotterdam narrated that some Dutch people responded aggressively when he talked to them about the gospel. Others noted that the Dutch had negative prejudices against them, which limited their Christian out-reach. A few people in the Serbian Orthodox parish for example expressed that the Serbs have a bad reputation in the West, being portrayed as 'bloodsuckers' or 'apes with knives'. A leader of the Antillean/Aruban SDA church felt that Antilleans/Arubans were negatively depicted in Dutch media, which, in his view, stressed their aggression and lack of respect for authority. The pastor of Urdu Church Holland and his wife observed that the Dutch constructed Pakistani as 'Taliban terrorists', and assumed that all Pakistani are Muslim (their 'proximal host', see 1.4.2)³¹³.

Although Dutch converts were few, churches without any Dutch members were also few. The Dutch presence was obvious when I participated in church services. In the Korean Reformed church, I saw three Dutch men partaking in the Sunday worship. In the Celestial Church of Christ, a Dutch lady sat in the back of the church holding her mixed-race baby. In the Serbian Orthodox parish, I observed a Dutch man, reading along in a book, who sought to partake in and comprehend all the liturgical rites. In the Russian Orthodox parish, the Dutch formed nearly a third of the attendees. Moreover, oftentimes, the Dutch people that attended immigrant churches were converts. Some had re-embraced their Christian roots, others had shifted to a different kind of Christianity, again others had moved from a non-Christian worldview to a Christian one. In the following, I will analyse why the Dutch converted and joined these churches.

8.2.1 Love and care: spouses, community and lower class Dutch

The most widespread reason for Dutch people to join specific immigrant churches was that they had a spouse who attended such a church. This took different forms. In some cases, marriage to a Christian immigrant led Dutch non-Christians or non-churchgoers to attend church services. In the Japanese church, no less than a third of the members had a Dutch spouse. These spouses occasionally accompanied their Japanese mates to church. One of the Japanese female members, for example, took her Dutch Buddhist partner along to church (an interesting case in terms of 'role reversal!'). Similarly, the Dutch men I met in the Korean Reformed church were the husbands of Korean female members. One of them expressed that he was not usually a churchgoer, but he had joined his wife this time. In the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, there was a case of a female parishioner who was dependent on her Dutch husband to drive her to church. Over time, the husband started coming inside the church together with her.

³¹³ One of the central aims of their European Pakistani Christian conference in the Netherlands (entitled 'Seeds of love'), was to correct this view by placing Pakistan in a positive light and showing the Dutch that not all Pakistani are Muslims.

In other cases, Dutch people were revived in their Christian identity by their immigrant spouse. In the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, I met a Dutch man who had a Colombian wife. Raised a Catholic, he had always felt connected to the church, but had stopped churchgoing for a while. He told me that his wife had ‘saved’ him from a full preoccupation with work and studies. He was now the only active Catholic left in his family.

Some Dutch spouses went a step further by actually undergoing Christian initiation rites. In the Japanese church, the first person who was converted under the leadership of the Dutch pastor was a Dutch man who was married to a Japanese Christian woman. In the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, a Dutch lady, who was learning Spanish, fell in love with one of the parishioners. They ended up marrying, and the lady, Protestant in background, received the sacrament of confirmation. She held an administrative position in the parish at the time of fieldwork. The Dutch husband of a Latin American member in the same parish was given the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and received his First Communion together with the couple’s little daughter. In the Russian Orthodox parish, there was the case of a Dutch man who was married to a Belarusian woman. She was Orthodox, he was raised a Catholic. Having a small child, they considered it impractical to maintain two different faiths in the family. Since he was not a very devout Catholic, the issue was soon resolved: they decided to be Orthodox together and he was baptised in the Orthodox faith³¹⁴.

Though some Dutch people converted through other social ties, the marital tie was by far the most significant. The widely supported assertion that “reaffiliation and conversion will be more prevalent (...) at marriage” (Stark and Finke 2000: 119) in this case proved to apply across ethnic boundaries, and manifested itself as a modality of ‘reversed mission’. At the same time, there was a gender imbalance in this modality: most of the Dutch converts-by-marriage were men. This suggests that churches with an especially high percentage of female membership may be more effective in reversed mission - as indeed can be seen by the cases of the Japanese church and Sagrada Familia, which both have 70% women in their membership (see 2.2) and saw a number of Dutch spouses show interest in Christianity.

A second source of attraction for Dutch people was the experience of community in immigrant churches. Dutch converts, overall, were impressed by the warmth and sense of community in these churches. This was well-illustrated by the fact that some claimed to feel completely at home and accepted, even though they were ethnic minorities there. One of the Dutch members in the Indonesian evangelical GKPB had felt ignored in his previous, Dutch-majority church, but felt very warmly received by the Indonesians. Dutch attendees of the Russian Orthodox parish likewise expressed that its warmth appealed to them. In the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish, a Dutch man expressed that he appreciated the experience of brotherhood and sisterhood in the parish, especially as compared to the sense of isolation in the wider society. The pastor of the Japanese Protestant church observed that the Dutch spouses of his members were drawn to the church because of its hospitality. In her study of Korean missionaries in America, Kim (2010) similarly found that Americans were attracted to the group-oriented spirit of

³¹⁴ Similar stories were found in the Indonesian evangelical GKPB, the Serbian Orthodox parish, the Celestial Church of Christ, and the multicultural evangelical MCTC.

Koreans. The importance of the experience of community in the conversion of Westerners to Orthodoxy in particular is corroborated by Frykholm's finding in the US that "converts find in Orthodoxy an antidote to American Christianity's individualism and commercialism" (2004: 18).

A specific aspect of the experience of community in immigrant churches was care: meeting practical and emotional needs. As noted in chapter 2, many of the immigrant churches were active in meeting such needs, from running food banks to visiting prisons to organising training in child rearing. Although such activities mostly reached immigrant communities, they also affected lower class Dutch people. This was illustrated by the lonely and unemployed Dutch man who the pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church befriended and practically supported (see 6.2.2). The man did not adopt a Christian identity, but he became very close to the pastor and church. We find another illustrative case in the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish. After one of the female parishioners passed away, her Dutch husband became depressed, unemployed, and homeless. Parishioners actively comforted him and helped him to get a house. The man became a frequent visitor of the parish, stated that he felt safe there, and expressed that the parishioners were his family. These cases suggest that the socio-economic projects of immigrant churches may be a way to reach 'natives'. This idea is affirmed by Adogame's analysis of the white-majority church of the Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja in the Ukraine (2008a: 320):

The core of his Kiev ministry is preaching, healing and providing desperately needed services in a society that is, at best, inept at coping with rampant alcoholism, widespread poverty and several strains on families. The socio-economic climate of the former Soviet Union following the collapse of the Iron Curtain provided a 'breathing ground' for the Embassy church and probably explains why the church has attracted a huge following from the host context. In a relative sense, poverty, social pneumonia and economic uncertainty seem to assume common denominators between Africans and Ukrainians and thus provided public appeal to new Pentecostal churches such as the Embassy.

Adelaja himself (quoted in Wanner 2007: 220) has pointed out that the way to the heart of Ukrainian natives was blocked by race, but opened by class:

The mentality here is that there is no way a black man will ever teach me. There is no way. I am not that limited to allow a black man to teach me. Then God gave me the key. Don't expect normal people to come to your church. Go and look for the down and out. They are already out. They are already down, already outcasts. The drug addicts, the bums, the alcoholics, they are blind to color. They just want somebody to love them. That's what became the key for this church.

Clearly the socio-economic situation in the Netherlands cannot be compared to that in the Ukraine. However, the cases suggest that the expertise of immigrant churches to deal with socio-economic problems has the potential to attract lower class ‘natives’³¹⁵.

8.2.2 The appeal of Orthodoxy: a niche in the Dutch religious market

A significant aspect of Dutch responses to immigrant churches was the appeal of Orthodoxy. As noted above, nearly a third of the attendees of the Russian Orthodox parish consisted of Dutch people. The Serbian Orthodox parish also had a number of Dutch attendees. To understand this appeal, I will start with a brief conversion story of a Dutch woman who attends the Serbian Orthodox parish.

Martha

Martha was raised in a Roman Catholic family. Growing up, she left Catholicism and explored various worldviews, including Judaism, Buddhism, and anthroposophy. When she was 16 years old, she experienced an Orthodox liturgy at school and was very impressed by it. Years later, she became fascinated by icons, was profoundly moved by Orthodox music, and saw a video of the sarcophagus of Saint Anastasia, which stirred deep emotions in her. She decided to go on a pilgrimage to see the sarcophagus. She spent time in different monasteries in the Balkans, had opportunity to ask the questions that were important to her, and had various deeply moving experiences in regard to things she saw, smelled, and heard. Eventually, she was baptised in Montenegro. The Orthodox faith felt like coming home to her. She had never found its qualities of surrender, warmth, and engaging the emotions anywhere else. Orthodoxy was like a warm blanket to her. She made a deep commitment to it. Because of her special experience with the sarcophagus of Saint Anastasia, who died in what today is Serbia, she felt specifically destined to be part of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but she believed in Orthodoxy in general. She chose to attend the Serbian Orthodox parish in Rotterdam.

The case of Martha illustrates a key aspect of the appeal of Orthodoxy: the senses. Martha’s ‘coming home’ in the Orthodox faith emerged from a journey in which vivid emotions in response to sights, smells, and sounds had been prominent. Dutch converts in the Russian Orthodox parish mentioned likewise that they were attracted to the intensive, participative experience in and the beauty and reverence of Orthodox liturgy. Sight played a role: the iconostasis (wall of icons) had deeply moved one of the female converts when she first visited an Orthodox parish. Sounds were also appealing³¹⁶. The liturgical language, for example, was an appreciated ‘sound’. The Dutch husband of the Belarusian lady said that what he loved most in the services was the Church Slavonic language. He did not comprehend this tongue at all, and this created an interesting sense of mystery. Music was another fascinating sound. The wife of the Russian Orthodox

³¹⁵ It may be that as the socio-economic status of certain immigrant groups in the Netherlands becomes higher over the generations, this modality of ‘reversed mission’ will begin to take on greater forms. An illustrative case in the UK was an African Caribbean majority SDA church, which consisted of both established middle class and more recently arrived working class immigrants. The church ran a breakfast project for the homeless in which the vast majority of attendees were white British (Ackah, personal communication).

³¹⁶ Non-Orthodox immigrant churches also appealed to the Dutch through sounds: the Japanese and Korean congregations attracted Dutch people to their yearly Christmas concerts.

archpriest led a choir that sang Russian Orthodox music, but was independent of the parish³¹⁷. This choir consisted almost entirely of Dutch people, who generally joined without religious motives. Over time some of these choristers moved to the parish choir, which, led by the same conductor, had an important role in the Orthodox services. The participation in this choir was a channel by which some Dutch people eventually converted to Orthodoxy³¹⁸.

The rich sensory experience in the Orthodox liturgy seemed to outweigh a feature that typically was an obstacle for Dutch people in regard to immigrant churches: the long services. In contrast to Europeans complaining about the hour long services in African churches (e.g. Adogame 2000a: 42; Obinna 2010), the Dutch converts in the Russian Orthodox parish had no problem with the lengthy liturgy. When discussing the beauty of the Easter services, one Dutch convert claimed that she had never once checked her watch during an Orthodox service. This was even more striking considering the fact that in the Orthodox context, the hours are not only long, but also spent standing up.

Dutch people were further attracted to Orthodoxy because they experienced this faith tradition as ‘authentic’ and ‘deep’. One of the Serbian Orthodox priests observed that the Dutch attendees in his parish were disappointed about the ‘superficial’ religiosity of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. They were attracted to the depth of Orthodox spirituality, which, for example, included numerous periods of fasting. Frykholm (2004) found similar motives for converts to Orthodoxy in the US. ‘Emotion’ and ‘experience’ were also common themes for converts. The Russian Orthodox archpriest observed that the Dutch people in his parish were attracted to the Orthodox faith because of its emphasis on the ‘heart’ rather than rationality³¹⁹.

The attraction of Orthodoxy was in its ‘unfamiliar’ features. Orthodoxy functioned as a religious alternative to the ‘mainstream’ faiths of Protestantism and Catholicism, which were the traditions that many converts came from³²⁰. Paradoxically, the unique popularity of the Russian Orthodox parish in Amsterdam was at the same time due to its familiarity: its ‘Dutchness’. As described in 2.2, a Dutch Orthodox man had co-founded the Russian Orthodox parish. He was the first priest of the parish, and, at the time of fieldwork, the archpriest was his son-in-law. Because of this Dutch heritage, Dutch

³¹⁷ See (in Dutch): <http://www.oktoich.nl>.

³¹⁸ A couple of articles in the newsletters of the Russian Orthodox parish underscored the appeal of Orthodox sounds to Dutch people. In a newsletter from 2007, onlookers, including the Dutch author and politician Anja Meulenbelt who lived close to the parish, were depicted as deeply impressed by the Easter procession. They saw parishioners walking the streets after dark, holding candles and softly singing songs. Meulenbelt was quoted as saying: “Fairytale-like, those voices in the night!” (my translation). In a newsletter from 2010, the Dutch journalist Hubert Smeets, who used to be a correspondent in Moscow, was described as recalling an Easter procession that coincided with Queen’s Night, the festive night preceding the Dutch national holiday of Queen’s Day. He observed that the partying people naturally turned down the volume of their music when they saw the Easter procession.

³¹⁹ The aspects of Orthodoxy that appealed to Dutch people, including sensory experience, authenticity, depth, and ‘the heart’, often emerge as themes in alternative forms of spirituality as well. It is somewhat ironic that whereas especially African immigrant ministers wanted to provide native Europeans with a substitute for alternative forms of spirituality, such as New Age, witchcraft and ‘the Harry Potter craze’ (Asaju 2008: 291), the immigrant church that was most successful among the Dutch seemed, generally speaking, most akin to such spirituality.

³²⁰ To illustrate, during an Easter service in the Russian Orthodox parish, I sat next to two Dutch men whom I overheard chatting. One of the men said: ‘I am a Catholic, but I am just so totally through with that!’, to which the other responded: ‘Me too, and I am just so totally through with that too!’.

members had been present in the parish from the start. Until 1989, even the majority of attendees were Dutch. Also, from the beginning, services were held in both Church Slavonic and Dutch. At the time of fieldwork, one of the priests was a Dutch man. In a parish newsletter from 2007, I found a notice that two important Orthodox books were to be published in the Dutch language. These various aspects of ‘Dutchness’ had a direct influence on the conversion process of some Dutch people. One of the male converts appreciated that the services were partly held in the Dutch language, so that he could understand more (which was in direct contrast to the other Dutch man, who loved the mystery of Church Slavonic!). Another male convert had been interested in the Russian Orthodox faith, but had the idea that it was primarily for Russians. Still, he looked up a couple of Russian Orthodox parishes in the phonebook and visited them. The first one he attended was nostalgic in character, with a focus on Russia. The second one was the parish discussed here. The presence of Dutch people made this parish feel more familiar and liberal to the man. He felt at home rather quickly, and he became Orthodox. Thus, the presence of Dutch people had helped him to move beyond the idea that Russian Orthodoxy was primarily for Russians.

Two reasons seem to emerge, then, for the appeal of the Russian Orthodox parish to the Dutch people: its unfamiliar spirituality, and its familiar ‘sociality’ (culture and language). Could this combination be the key to actual ‘reversed mission’? Other cases confirm that a lack of familiar ‘sociality’ keeps white Europeans away. ‘Blackness’, in general, seems to be a form of unappealing unfamiliarity. As the pastor of the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church observed, black preachers keep white Dutch people away³²¹. In that sense, the white European response to black missionaries has not changed much since the latter’s evangelistic attempts as early as the 1930s (Kalu 2008: 277). For black churches, cultural adaptations such as lining up with Western music preferences or adopting Western time management (as suggested by Asaju in discussing Nigerian immigrant churches, 2008: 286), are not likely to help much: such attempts are overruled by the boundary of race³²². Next to race, cultural unfamiliarity was often alienating, too. Although there was an element of fascination with cultural difference³²³, it was a significant obstacle. The leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry noted that the Dutch were generally absent in the African programmes, apparently put off by unappealing unfamiliarities because:

Maybe they think that the Africans usually stay too long in their programmes, or maybe they think the Africans are praying harder than they do, or maybe they think... that their programmes are specifically meant for African ministry members only. (leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry)

³²¹ This may also apply to black Orthodox parishes, in spite of the general appeal of Orthodox spirituality. This is suggested by an overview of immigrant churches in Rotterdam (Calvert 2007), where the three ‘white’ (Russian, Serbian, Greek) Orthodox parishes are reported to include Dutch and other ethnic attendees, whereas the two ‘black’ (Ethiopian, Eritrean) Orthodox parishes only had fellow ethnic attendees.

³²² Unappealing racial unfamiliarity does not only apply to black churches: Kim (2010) observed that Americans were repelled by Korean missionaries because of racism, as well as cultural issues and the connotation of ‘the Moonies’ (the informal name used for adherents of the Unification Church, a controversial Korean new religious movement).

³²³ The wife of the elder of the Persian-speaking Jehovah’s Witnesses for example noted that Dutch people were prone to listen to them, because they found their Iranian and Muslim background interesting.

Likewise, Währisch-Oblau points out that the few Germans in Pentecostal/charismatic immigrant churches in Germany often left in frustration. After they actively joined the church for a while, they ended up leaving because the church “did not become ‘home’ but remained too foreign in worship and leadership style” (2009: 330).

It was thus helpful that the Russian Orthodox parish was relatively ‘Dutch’ and in this sense familiar. However, this was only part of the picture. Churches with colonial links such as the Antillean and Indonesian congregations often used the Dutch language. Other churches like the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church intentionally sought to be relevant to Westerners by employing the native tongue or adopting ‘white’ cultural items such as casual dress and drinking coffee (see 6.2.1). Although these churches thus had some familiar features, they only had a handful of Dutch attendees. The work of Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) on Christian as well as non-Christian religious immigrants is helpful here. Drawing upon market logic, they find that native-born Americans are attracted to those immigrant religions that have a minority rather than majority status in the US. This means that, for example, Muslim and Buddhist immigrants have a greater chance of converting natives than do Christian immigrants, as “native-born Americans have a huge variety of Christian churches from which to choose and therefore rarely will be attracted to those which are overwhelmingly comprised of immigrants” (p. 36). The success of the Russian Orthodox parish among the Dutch, in spite of its general lack of evangelistic efforts, fits this pattern. Orthodoxy was a minority religion in the Netherlands, and it was therefore attractive to Dutch people who were seeking an alternative to majority faiths³²⁴.

This explanation reveals the importance of the market motif, which has been completely overlooked in studies of ‘reversed mission’ in Europe. It further suggests that the popularity of an immigrant church among natives may be attributed to its ability to provide a ‘medium tension’ (Stark 2003) with the larger society: it must be distinct, yet recognisable. From this point of view, immigrant churches that successfully attract native Europeans are likely to combine appealing familiarity and appealing unfamiliarity.

³²⁴ This market dynamic was confirmed by another case, which is reminiscent of the role of the Ghanaian Adventists in the Dutch SDA church. The ICF English-speaking African ministry filled a niche within the ‘market’ *inside* the Christian context of the ICF and the broader Christian Reformed church, by the ‘All Night’ prayers they initiated and their expertise in dealing with cases of demon possession. Their ‘All Night’ prayers were enthusiastically announced and reported about in ICF newsletters, and visited by both Dutch and Chinese ICF members. Further, Dutch ICF members joined African-initiated prayer meetings in order to learn how to deal with cases of demon possession. The leader of the ICF English-speaking African ministry shared the learning effect this had on the Dutch: ‘So the Dutch just have to watch, and learn (...). It makes people see that their faith is not anything abstract, but is something that has to be applied. The Dutch can learn and participate. If they don’t want to participate in case they do not have enough faith, they can watch. One Dutch is now actively involved. I go out with him whenever I have to encounter such situations, and he has learned very well. He is very confident now that he can recognise these things’. Also, the pastor of another Christian Reformed church called up ICF because he had heard that the African ministry had experience in and knowledge of spirit matters. He asked the leader of the African ministry for help in a case of possession, which, according to this leader, led to the result that ‘this family is now delivered’. The leader commented on this case by saying: ‘I wouldn’t say our knowledge is perfect, but on some level, we have a little more understanding’.

8.3 Responses of other ethnic groups: choosing congregations

As became clear in 2.2, many of the immigrant churches attracted Christians from ethnic groups that they did not primarily represent. The Orthodox parishes were again a special case. Orthodox immigrants seemed less prone to ‘backsliding’ or theological switching when the ‘ethnic version’ of their faith was not (yet) locally available. Whereas many Christian immigrants prioritised ethnic over theological identity in their choice of a church, Orthodox believers were flexible in attending another form of Orthodoxy. For example, Eritrean Orthodox women in the Amsterdam area lived far away from the only Eritrean Orthodox parish in the Netherlands (located in Rotterdam), so some of them attended the Russian Orthodox parish in Amsterdam³²⁵. Also, the Serbian Orthodox student priest told me that, when the Serbian priest left the country in the summer, he just went to the local Russian Orthodox parish. The elder of the Ethiopian evangelical church recalled that Ethiopian Orthodox immigrants in the Netherlands went to Egyptian or Greek Orthodox parishes before a local Ethiopian Orthodox parish was established. The ease by which Orthodox believers crossed ethnic boundaries cannot simply be attributed to their embedding in a denomination, because this ease was less strong among adherents of other denominations such as Roman Catholics and Adventists. It may more particularly be due to the Orthodox focus on liturgical rituals, in which the use of a comprehensible language is not necessarily considered vital³²⁶. Various Orthodox parishes and monasteries in the Netherlands used liturgical languages that were little understood by attendees, such as Church Slavonic or classical Syrian. That Eritreans did not speak Russian, or Ethiopians did not speak Greek, was thus not much of a hindrance. This phenomenon mirrored ‘ethnicity-maintaining/theology-shifting’ moves, such as Spanish-speaking Adventist immigrants joining a group of Spanish-speaking Jehovah’s Witnesses (see 4.1.2).

Non-Orthodox churches also attracted Christians from other ethnic groups. Marriage, which repeatedly appeared as a source of all sorts of boundary crossing, sometimes undergirded this: the regular Korean visitor in the small Japanese Protestant church was the wife of one of the members. Pragmatic considerations played a role: the Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic parish had a French member who lived very close to the parish. Also, black identity was connective. There were black Surinamese in the African-majority Pentecost Revival Church, multicultural evangelical MCTC, and ICF French-speaking ministry³²⁷. Thus, the Orthodox tradition, marriage, pragmatics, and black identity seemed conducive for Christian immigrants to cross ethnic boundaries in *choosing congregations*. However, I never encountered cases where individuals who were neither fellow ethnics nor Dutch actually *converted* in response to the immigrant churches. This refreshingly proposes that among those audiences of immigrant churches that were

³²⁵ This was not a straightforward exchange, but an act of ecumenical hospitality, since the Eritrean Orthodox Church, being non-Chalcedonian, is officially not in communion with Eastern Orthodox churches like the Russian Orthodox Church.

³²⁶ Though the ritual focus is usually quite strong in Catholicism as well, a comprehensible language was still important to Catholic immigrants: an extensive research on Catholic immigrants in the Netherlands showed that to experience one’s faith in one’s own language and culture was a highly important incentive to join a specific parish (Castillo Guerra, Wijsen, and Steggerda 2006: 29).

³²⁷ One of the leaders of the ICF French-speaking African ministry invoked black identity to explain the faithful presence of a non-French-speaking Surinamese woman in their midst.

not fellow ethnics, *the Dutch* were the ones that converted most often in response to immigrant churches/Christians.

8.4 In conclusion

The central question of this chapter was: *How do the audiences of immigrant churches in the Netherlands construct boundaries in regard to conversion?*

In this chapter, we have seen that most churches primarily had fellow ethnic converts, though most also had at least a few Dutch, and the Russian Orthodox parish even had many. A central theme in the responses of both immigrants and the Dutch was the negotiation of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Cultural-linguistic familiarity was an important factor for both immigrants and the Dutch. Both were attracted to a church where they could recognise the language used and meet fellow ethnics. However, whereas to some non-Christian immigrants, the very kernel of conversion (and thus the move to what was religiously unfamiliar) was the quest for cultural-linguistic familiarity, for the Dutch, this familiarity was desired but insufficient for conversion.

Whereas Christian immigrants sought after those churches that were theologically most familiar within the ‘culturally familiar’ religious market (their range of church options was narrowed by migration), Dutch converts rather sought after those churches that were theologically most unfamiliar in that market (their range of church options was widened by migration). We thus saw an Angolan Methodist family join the Cape Verdean Nazarene church, which struck the best balance in the familiarity of both its linguistic and theological features among locally available options. Then we saw Dutch Protestants and Catholics join the Russian Orthodox parish, which struck the best balance in cultural-linguistic familiarity on the one hand, and theological unfamiliarity on the other hand. Theologically, immigrants were drawn by resemblance to something old, whilst Dutch people were attracted by introduction to something new.

Other familiar/unfamiliar negotiations were linked to social ties. Fellow ethnics were more likely to convert, because immigrant church members maintained and build social ties primarily along ethnic lines. However, we saw that for both immigrants and the Dutch, the warm tie of marriage was strong enough to incite one to cross the boundary to unfamiliar religions, denominations, and cultures. In addition, we saw that the sense of community and practical care in immigrant churches, which is widely observed to fulfil immigrants’ needs, appealed to Dutch people, too. Especially for the lower class Dutch and Dutch people who were fed up with Western individualism, care and community made the unfamiliar surprisingly familiar.

In the next and final chapter, we will draw the conclusions of the empirical chapters together and come to answer the main question of this thesis.

9 Conclusion: the power of ethnic mission

This study has both substantiated and moved beyond previous empirical studies of immigrant mission. It has substantiated the conclusion that immigrant churches tend to engage primarily in ‘internal mission’ (or ethnic mission), which is focused on specific immigrant groups (Jongeneel 2003). Even though reaching indigenous Dutch people was often part of the mission agenda, immigrant churches engaged in few evangelistic attempts towards the Dutch and generally won few native converts. As noted in 1.1.2, the gap between ‘reversed mission’ discourse and practices/results has been underexplained. Mostly, scholars have sought to account for the gap by pointing to the marginal position of immigrants (e.g. Adogame 2008b, Catto 2008b, Freston 2010). This explanation was corroborated in this study. We have seen that the ethnic mission focus of the churches was related to challenges associated with poor language skills, skin colour, low socio-economic status and a variety of other group-specific prejudices. Only in a few cases such constraints were battled (e.g. through cultural education, spiritual means, or equipping the second generation).

However, this study has also drawn attention to a number of other factors that are relevant in accounting for the dominance of ethnic mission and that help to paint a more balanced picture. These issues emerged because of two critical choices in the research design. First, whereas many studies in immigrant mission have focused on African Pentecostalism, I selected a sample of churches that were mostly non-Pentecostal. Second, whereas other studies in immigrant mission have focused primarily on ‘reversed mission’, I concentrated on ‘constructing boundaries’ in mission and conversion in an unspecified sense. In other words, I was attentive to forms of mission that were directed to a variety of ethnic and religious groups and not only to the secularised native Dutch.

The emphasis on the marginal position of immigrant Christians to account for the failure of ‘reversed mission’ seems to imply that ethnic mission is expressive of a lack of power, being segregated, and being limited by forces greater than oneself. However, this study has gathered data that points to a perspective which sees precisely the opposite: that ethnic mission actually enhanced the position of these churches in various domains.

Ethnic mission was important in establishing the church on a local level. The local context in which immigrant mission operates has rarely been highlighted. In studies of reversed mission, scholars have primarily drawn attention to the transnational level. Adogame notes that reversed mission can best be analysed as “an evolving dimension of the transnational process” (2008: 330). Pasura (forthcoming) sees reversed mission as a special type of religious transnationalism. Catto (2008) introduces the ‘contact zone’ metaphor to illustrate the postcolonial dimension³²⁸. Clearly, transnational ties shape and are shaped by immigrant mission, as has been demonstrated throughout the thesis. However, this perspective, perhaps guilty of the ‘methodological fluidism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 326) that has become commonplace in the social sciences and the study of migration, has diverted the attention away from local factors. This is no small

³²⁸ With the ‘contact zone’, Catto refers to Pratt (1992) to capture the complex negotiations for power at play in the mission encounter between those who were previously coloniser and colonised. In the ‘contact zone’ of reversed mission, there is a continuous negotiation of inverted core-periphery relations and perpetuated colonial power structures (2008: 81-83).

limitation: I found that the local field of players (audiences and competitors) was a key context in which immigrant mission was developed.

A number of local factors were conducive to the reproduction of ethnic mission. First, churches were operating in a local religious market where immigrants were primarily looking for a place of cultural and linguistic familiarity. To most immigrants, religious affiliation came second. Some converted to Christianity or to a different type of Christianity so that they could be with fellow ethnics. This specific demand for a familiar home, coupled with the fact that immigrant churches were uniquely equipped with the cultural, linguistic, and social resources to create such a home, made ethnic mission the most rewarding focus for immigrant churches. The strong interaction between what the churches had to offer and what specific immigrant groups desired, helped the churches become established. From a market perspective, focusing on immigrant groups was capitalising on a niche.

Second, the churches operated in a local field of immigrant religion that was marked by competition and inequality. In a context where members moved easily from one church to another, immigrant churches that shared specific ethnic audiences competed by evangelising each other's members or obstructing each other's evangelistic work. The competition was fuelled by theological distinctions or emerged from the sheer wish for the expansion of membership. In some cases, it was about winning back 'stolen' members. Further, many immigrant churches were minorities within minorities, with their members belonging to ethnic groups where a non-Christian religion or another type of Christianity was in the majority. In comparison to the country of origin, such groups often moved from a single to a double minority status. The focus on ethnic mission promoted the position of the churches in this competitive and unequal field in two ways. On the one hand, it had a protective function. We have seen that evangelising fellow ethnics blended well with and was often indistinguishable from meeting the social and spiritual needs of church members. Whilst a focus on reaching the Dutch would risk alienating immigrant church members that could easily switch to another church to fulfil their needs, an emphasis on reaching fellow ethnics helped to keep church members happy where they were. On the other hand, ethnic mission empowered immigrant churches that were religious minorities within the ethnic communities they represented. Evangelism was a symbolic and social attempt to transform minority-majority proportions.

Next to empowering the churches on a local level and in relation to other immigrant groups, ethnic mission was, paradoxically, in some cases a way to attract the native Dutch. On the one hand, practices of evangelising fellow ethnics were an obstacle in reaching Dutch people because they were located in specific places (e.g. a black neighbourhood) and came in specific forms (e.g. non-Dutch languages). On the other hand, immigrant churches had social and religious resources that were appealing to Dutch people because they filled specific niches or were simply novel and refreshing in the Dutch religious landscape. Dutch people were attracted to the love and care they found in immigrant churches in the form of community life and socio-economic support. Further, Dutch people were attracted to religious items that were new to them, such as Orthodox liturgy and 'Ghanaian' knowledge of spirits and healing. These dynamics of appeal challenge the idea that ethnic mission rules out reversed mission. The idea of mutual exclusivity has for example been suggested by Pasura (forthcoming), in his understanding that reversed mission "excludes Christian migrants' intermittent participation in religious activities for

their individual spiritual needs”. I propose, rather, that the ways in which immigrant churches appealed to Dutch people revealed that it is possible for ethnic mission to function as reversed mission. In other words, ‘ethnic’ forms of church life and mission could meet the needs and desires of Dutch people and in this way actually strengthened the position of immigrant churches over against the Dutch.

Finally, engaging in ethnic mission promoted the importance of immigrant Christians within worldwide denominations. This is a dynamic that has been particularly overlooked due to the lack of studies on denominational immigrant churches. Global denominations established in the Netherlands often encouraged the emergence of ethnically oriented churches and ethnic evangelism. In this way, from a denominational point of view, immigrant churches targeted the specific segment in a multi-ethnic mission field that they were uniquely equipped for. Immigrants had a special role to reach groups that others in the denomination could hardly reach. At the same time, the global and national denominational structures ensured that ethnic mission did not undermine the immigrant churches’ ability to be connected with other ethnic groups and the wider world. In fact, participation in a denomination strengthened those linkages. Immigrant Christians in denominations were also linked indirectly to evangelising other ethnic groups because they could assume that fellow believers from different ethnic backgrounds were involved in that. For immigrant churches that were positioned in denominations, therefore, evangelising fellow ethnics fulfilled a need in a global system that supported the ethnic division of mission labour and was expressive of their special gift in a multi-ethnic mission field.

In conclusion, these findings show that the lack of attempts and success in ‘reversed mission’ was not the straightforward result of the marginalised position of immigrant churches in Dutch society. Rather, by engaging in ethnic mission, these churches capitalised on niches, combated competition and minority status, and promoted their importance. More than signaling a lack of resources, engaging in ethnic mission was a way to promote and empower.

Epilogue: religious influences on a Dutch young woman

By way of epilogue I would like to reveal a little about how this research has spiritually influenced me. During fieldwork, I regularly took distance from the various churches by withdrawing into my home and office to have space and time to reflect. However, considering the understanding that can be obtained through deep immersion in the field, it was insightful to allow myself to be moved by the churches' religious expressions. In these final pages, I will draw out some of my experiences in order to open up a reflexive window into immigrant churches' potential to meaningfully influence white Westerners.

First, I was moved on the level of the bodily senses. Though the musical performances in some churches were far from appealing to me, most sensory experiences were very positive. Frequenting the Ghanaian SDA church was powerful in this regard. Most important was physical touch, in the form of continuous hugs, cuddling children, sharing food from the same plate, and accidental touching (which seemed much less avoided than I'm used to and needed no apologies). There was occasional dancing, and sound in the form of beautiful a cappella traditional songs and harmonising choirs and singing groups. Humour was pervasive - the jokes and teasing I overheard (even if in Twi and not understood) and was subject of, made me smile and laugh abundantly. On train rides home, after a full-day church service, I felt released and happy. In the Russian Orthodox parish, I was deeply moved by another set of senses. In one of the Easter services, I experienced such deep awe, beauty, and restfulness that I cancelled other plans and came back the next day for another service in the Easter series. I wrote in my field diary: 'It is so impressive, a subtle invitation, with a total absence of elements of persuasion from their side. There is a heavenly moment when all lights are out, candles are in every hand and a group of people face the iconostasis, a lady in the middle has her headscarf dropping beautifully on her back, as if we all await the second coming of Jesus right here and now. I do not experience one moment of boredom though I feared to get bored in the three hour, standing-up service. But it is just rest, meditation, joyful watching around, blowing out candles and lighting them back on, listening to music that strikes me as heavenly. It is a timeless experience, I don't long to go anywhere although I'm quite exhausted from the day. At times I even fear it may end, not yet being saturated'.

I was also influenced on the emotional level. In meetings of the ICF Kurdish ministry, I was moved by the dramatic sounds of their singers and musicians, which embodied a depth of devotion I have rarely encountered elsewhere. In the Ghanaian Adventist church, I sometimes cried during the sermons of the pastor. Sometimes I even forgot to take fieldwork notes, as I seemed to be put under some kind of spell, being totally lost in the sermon. However, next to these emotional states, which I considered positive and which attracted me to the churches, I also had negative emotional experiences. In some churches, preachers came across to me as pushy and manipulative, which made me feel uncomfortable and want to leave.

Beyond senses and emotions, the churches influenced me cognitively and theologically. Attending the Ghanaian Adventist church coalesced with my first years of being a Christian again after five years of deconstructionist agnosticism. In the church, my shaky first steps back into Christianity were stabilised by witnessing church members' steadfast and lived-through faith in God (and Satan) as 'really real'. My Ghanaian brothers and sisters did not have the constant urge to deconstruct, yet were also not dogmatic, but

life-based in their persuasions. Considering alternatives such as liberal (relativising) or conservative (unexistential) churches in the Dutch context, it would have been hard to find a more fertile soil for my vulnerable new faith to bloom. Also, being exposed to the theology of this church and other African churches has helped me draw closer to an appreciation of the unbreakable unity of doctrines, morals, and social justice - categories which I separated and juxtaposed in the beginning of my research. Further, in the Russian Orthodox parish, my highly Protestant suspicion of the authenticity of religious material was challenged by the sincerity I felt in the same Easter service referred to above. I wrote: 'During the procession outside, the choir sings softly, and many of us, including me, sing along with the repetitive melody. It is so impressive, the priest in the front closes his eyes in absorption while holding a cross and candle - melting away all my prejudice about material religion being not inward or authentic and priests being power-driven. The participation in a march in the dark with candle-holding, softly singing people, who kindly help lit again each other's candles when blown out by wind or rain, after so much silencing in the enduring service, is just overwhelmingly beautiful and I don't feel like I am a foreigner at all.' Also, discussions with the Persian-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses shifted some of my thinking. With their persuasive arguments, they enhanced my awareness of the beauty and importance of addressing God with the name He revealed himself to have, and not only generally as 'God'. Thus, the immigrant churches I visited influenced my theological thinking. On the other hand, however, I did not find direct answers to or even some basic identification with the specific theological questions that were most significant to me at the time of fieldwork. In fact, the longer I attended the Ghanaian SDA church, the more I realised that I could only find *part* of my spiritual identity there.

Lastly, participating in the churches influenced my sense of morality, daily actions, and my life as a whole. Though the sometimes forceful methods to motivate people to moral actions did not usually appeal to me, the ideas about good behaviour and attitudes often did. One of my close friends from the Ghanaian SDA church for example regularly scolded me for being too negative in my use of words and expectations of life. 'You don't know the God you serve!', was his common remark. I came to recognise that he was right, that my faith was secular in the sense that I felt that my own rationality and actions determined most of my life. Moreover, he taught me by his personal example that it is possible to have faith in God's goodness and power even in the most adverse of circumstances. Furthermore, the Ghanaians equipped me with a higher sense of the need for prayer in both mundane activities (like biking to the train station) as well as grave hardships (like terminal illness). They also re-introduced me to the practice of fasting that has become marginal in many Western Protestant churches. Finally, after years of spiritual searching and a year after the official fieldwork period, I was baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North Sea by my father in the Autumn of 2009. The Ghanaian SDA church had played an important role in my ability to come to this decision. I was covered not only by water, but also by the sounds of Ghanaian singers and a *Kente*-garnished baptismal cloth. The dream of Akosua came true.

Nederlandse samenvatting

De grootste christelijke gemeenschappen van vandaag zijn te vinden in Afrika, Latijns-Amerika en Azië. Hiermee ‘verkleurt’ niet alleen het christendom, maar ook de christelijke zending. Volgens sommige missiologen (e.g. Keyes 1983) zijn we in een fase van de zendingsgeschiedenis beland waarin het centrum van zending in de niet-westerse wereld ligt. Niet-westerse zendelingen zijn actief in hun eigen land en overschrijden nationale grenzen om elders in de wereld het evangelie te verkondigen. In dit onderzoek heb ik in het bijzonder gekeken naar niet-westerse zending die plaatsvindt in het Westen. Dit type van zending wordt ook wel aangeduid met de (niet onbetwiste) term ‘omgekeerde zending’ (reversed mission), om aan te geven dat er historisch gezien sprake is van een omkering van de rollen van zender en ontvanger.

‘Omgekeerde zending’ wordt sinds kort steeds vaker een onderwerp van onderzoek. In de nog relatief schaarse hoeveelheid empirische studies zijn enkele gedeelde conclusies te ontwaren. Ten eerste wordt geconstateerd dat onder niet-westerse christenen die in het Westen wonen, inderdaad de wens bestaat om westerlingen, die het geloof zijn kwijtgeraakt, te evangeliseren. Daarnaast is de algemene bevinding dat deze wens uiteindelijk geen werkelijkheid wordt. Met andere woorden, het lukt niet om de kerken vol te krijgen met autochtone Europeanen of Amerikanen.

Dit proefschrift, dat als titel draagt “Het importeren van God: De missie van de Ghanese Adventkerk en andere migrantenkerken in Nederland”, heeft gestalte gekregen tegen de achtergrond van deze conclusies en de achterliggende studies. Generaliserend gesproken, kunnen deze studies worden gekarakteriseerd door een drietal punten. Ten eerste kijken zij voornamelijk naar (Afrikaanse) pinksterkerken. Daarnaast letten zij meer op ‘omgekeerde zending’ dan op zending onder migranten. Tot slot wordt er weinig systematische aandacht geschonken aan het verklaren van het gebrek aan ‘succes’ in het bereiken van westerlingen, buiten dat dit vaak in verband wordt gebracht met de marginale sociaal-economische status van niet-westerse (migranten)zendelingen. Om het zicht op de zending van niet-westerse zendelingen in het westen te vergroten, heb ik in dit onderzoek daarom vooral gekeken naar andere kerken dan pinksterkerken, gelet op zowel ‘omgekeerde zending’ als zending onder migranten en gestreefd naar het vinden van verklaringen.

De casus van mijn studie bestaat uit migrantenkerken in Nederland. Er zijn naar schatting meer dan een half miljoen niet-westerse migrantenchristenen in Nederland (Stoffels 2008: 15), ongeveer 900 migrantenkerken en 200 kerken die diensten aanbieden in een andere taal dan het Nederlands (Van den Broek 2004). Deze kerken zijn zeer divers qua etnische en theologische achtergrond - een diversiteit die ik tot uiting heb willen laten komen in het selecteren van specifieke gemeenschappen voor dit onderzoek. Mijn voornaamste case study is de kerk van de Ghanese zevende-dags adventisten in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Daarnaast heb ik 14 andere migrantenkerken bestudeerd.

In mijn onderzoek ben ik ervan uitgegaan dat zending kan worden opgevat als een dynamiek van in- en uitsluiting. Ik heb daarom het begrip van ‘grenzen’ (boundaries) gehanteerd om inzicht te krijgen in de manieren waarop zending in verschillende contexten vorm krijgt. Grenzen spelen een rol wanneer wordt gesproken over wie wel en wie niet behoort te worden bekeerd, maar ook in de lokalisering van zendingsactiviteiten en in het proces en de vormen van bekering of het uitblijven daarvan in reactie op zending. Zowel zender als ontvanger bedenken en handelen in zich steeds ontwikkelende

afbakeningen van grenzen, waardoor de zendingsdynamiek een kruispunt wordt van in- en uitsluiting.

Het empirische deel van dit proefschrift bestaat uit vier onderdelen: een introductie in de onderzochte migrantenkerken (hoofdstuk 2), een studie van zendingsdiscours (hoofdstuk 3 en 4), zendingspraktijk (hoofdstuk 5 en 6) en bekering (hoofdstuk 7 en 8). In de hoofdstukken over zendingsdiscours werd bevonden dat de meeste migrantenkerken hun zendingsagenda niet primair richtten op autochtone Nederlanders, maar definieerden binnen de etnische en/of taalkundige grenzen van groepen die zij zelf vertegenwoordigden. In veel gevallen had dit te maken met machtsrelaties binnen de eigen etnische en/of taalkundige groep. Voor de Ghanese adventisten in Amsterdam Zuidoost waren Ghanезen in Nederland de belangrijkste doelgroep. Zij trokken duidelijke symbolische grenzen bij het beschrijven van niet-adventistische Ghanese christenen qua spirituele, morele en dogmatische verschillen. Dit discours ontstond in de context van het feit dat de Ghanese adventisten een minderheid vormden temidden van een overwegend Pentecostale/charismatische Ghanese migrantengemeenschap. Er was competitie. Leaders van Ghanese pinksterkerken werden afgeschilderd als zijnde bang voor de 'waarheid' van de adventisten. Deze zogenoemd geldbeluste leaders zouden daarom doelbewust de evangelisatie-activiteiten van de Ghanese adventisten blokkeren en hun volgelingen afhouden van het bezoeken van de Adventkerk. Bovendien stonden ook de Ghanese adventisten bloot aan het alomtegenwoordige 'pinkstergevaar' en moest hen bijvoorbeeld geleerd worden dat zij niet in tongen moesten bidden en niet naar pinksterdominees moesten gaan voor gebed. Kortom, de kerkelijke minderheidspositie van de Ghanese adventisten in de Ghanese gemeenschap produceerde de nadruk op het bereiken van juist die gemeenschap: evangelisatie was een vorm van verdediging en verovering. Deze dynamiek bleek geen unicum te zijn. Het belang van de verhoudingen tussen religieuze minderheden en meerderheden binnen de etnische groep en de etniserende effecten daarvan op de zendingsagenda was een terugkerend patroon. Zo richtte de Ethiopische evangelicale kerk zich op de veelal Koptisch Orthodoxe Ethiopiërs, de Turkse ministry zich op de overwegend islamitische Turkse gemeenschap, en de Japanse protestantse kerk zich op de voornamelijk boeddhistische/seculiere mede-Japanners in Nederland. De religieuze samenstelling van de etnische groep en de daarmee gepaard gaande machtsrelaties was een belangrijk gegeven in de ontwikkeling van de zendingsdoelen van migrantenkerken.

Een hieraan gerelateerde factor die mede ten grondslag lag aan de zendingsfocus op de eigen etnische groep, was het feit dat migrantenchristenen vaak van kerk wisselden of helemaal niet meer naar de kerk gingen. Soms had dit een economische oorzaak. In het geval van de Ghanese adventisten was de voor hen centrale religieuze praktijk van het onderhouden van de sabbat vaak lastig vol te houden, met name voor ongedocumenteerden die weinig macht hadden om hun werkuren te bepalen. Leaders van andere kerken noemden ook het gegeven van het drukke werkleven van migranten als verklaring van hun afwezigheid in de kerk. Een ander vaak genoemd punt was dat migrantenchristenen kerken opzochten waar ze in hun eigen taal en cultuur God konden aanbidden. In sommige gevallen behelste dit een wisseling van kerk. Zo zijn er heel wat Ghanese adventisten in Ghanese pinksterkerken terechtgekomen toen er nog geen Ghanese Adventkerk was. Kerkleiders benadrukten ook de invloed van de secularisering in Nederland en diverse logistieke problemen als oorzaak van de vele 'drop-outs'. Vanuit een sterke verbondenheid met hun voormalige kerkgenoten, richtten verschillende

kerkleiders zich met name op deze, binnen de eigen etnische gemeenschap behorende groep.

Een derde factor die belangrijk was in de ontwikkeling van een etnisch georiënteerde zendingsdrang was het deelhebben aan een wereldwijde, gevestigde denominatie. Diverse migrantenkerken maakten deel uit van een dergelijke structuur en het bleek dat deze kerken veelal ontstaan waren op initiatief van of in samenspraak met de hogere bestuursniveaus van hun denominatie. Dit gold bijvoorbeeld voor de Perzisch-sprekende Jehova's Getuigen, de Kaapverdiaanse gemeente van de Kerk van de Nazarener en de Chaldeeuwse en Spaans-sprekende katholieken. Nationaal en internationaal leiderschap van de respectievelijke denominaties had deze kerken laten ontstaan om specifieke etnische migrantengroepen te bedienen. De migrantenkerken kregen deze specifieke rol toebedeeld binnen de bredere, wereldwijde kerkgemeenschap waar zij deel van uitmaakten. Deze dynamiek verklaarde ook waarom de Ghanese adventisten zo'n etnische en lokale zendingsagenda (d.w.z. Ghanezen in Nederland) hadden in tegenstelling tot de vaak sterk internationaal georiënteerde Ghanese pinksterkerken. Deelname aan een wereldwijde denominatie maakte dat de Ghanese adventisten ondanks hun lokale, etnische focus toch allerlei transnationale relaties onderhielden. Daarnaast verwierven zij juist door die focus een betekenisvolle rol in het geheel. Door 'etnisch' te zijn, werden zij 'mondiaal'.

In veel kerken was er ook sprake van een aanvullend gedachtengoed, namelijk dat het bereiken van autochtone Nederlanders als de tweede zendingsopdracht werd gezien. Kerken die deel uitmaakten van in Nederland gevestigde denominaties onderscheidden zich in diverse opzichten van hun meer liberale Nederlandse broeders en zusters. De verschillen werden vaak toegeschreven aan de negatieve invloed van de Nederlandse 'cultuur' op Nederlandse christenen. Daarnaast was er aandacht voor de seculiere Nederlandse samenleving en werd het daarin als verwaterd bevonden christendom vooral verklaard vanuit de Nederlandse welvaart. Tegelijkertijd was er in de meeste gevallen een ambivalentie in dit zendingsideaal: Nederlanders hadden duidelijk evangelisten nodig, maar de leiders van de migrantenkerken betwijfelden of zij hier wel toe geroepen waren. Zij verwezen hierbij naar sociale grenzen gemarkeerd door huidskleur, taalvaardigheid, klasse en tal van groep-specifieke vooroordelen. Sommigen projecteerden hun missionaire idealen op hun kinderen, die als tweede-generatie migranten met een hogere sociaal-economische status meer kans van slagen zouden hebben in het bereiken van autochtone Nederlanders.

In de hoofdstukken over de zendingspraktijk werd geconcludeerd dat ook het missionaire handelen met name gestalte kreeg binnen de grenzen van migrantengroepen. Enerzijds was dit het gevolg van reeds besproken intenties en kwam dit tot uiting in creatieve manieren om specifieke etnische groepen aan te spreken in een multi-etnisch publiek domein en in de eigen kerk. Anderzijds was het een niet direct intentioneel gevolg van de als zeer sterk bevonden relatie tussen evangelisatie aan de ene kant en het vormgeven van het alledaagse (kerk)leven aan de andere kant. Eén aspect hiervan was de dynamiek die ik noem: 'twee keer het kerkelijk werk benutten'. Kerkelijke activiteiten waren veelal niet duidelijk gemarkeerd als ófwel bedoeld voor buitenstaanders (zending), ófwel bedoeld voor de eigen leden. Deze twee doeleinden liepen door elkaar heen, wat te verklaren is vanuit het efficiënt moeten omgaan met schaarse bronnen. Vanwege het etnische karakter van de meeste migrantenkerken gaf de dubbele functie van kerkelijke activiteiten een etnische kleur aan zendingswerk, bijvoorbeeld met betrekking tot taalgebruik, culturele

items en thematiek. Een ander aspect van de sterke relatie tussen evangelisatie en de productie van het dagelijkse leven waren sociale netwerken. Kerkleden onderhielden en vormden sociale contacten met name binnen de eigen etnische groep, zowel op lokaal als transnationaal niveau, om culturele identiteiten en sociaal-economische zekerheden te (re)produceren. Tegelijkertijd verliep evangelisatie in hoge mate door netwerken heen en werd zij daarmee 'ge-etniseerd'. Dit speelde ook op het niveau van de kerkelijke gemeentes, die door andere partijen binnen de etnische gemeenschap werden gevraagd om in bepaalde activiteiten te participeren. Zo werd het Ghanese adventistische koor door andere Ghanese kerken uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan lokale concerten en werden de Servisch-orthodoxe priesters door weinig actieve Orthodoxe Serviërs gevraagd om een zegen uit te spreken bij bepaalde gebeurtenissen.

In contrast hiermee was het evangeliseren van autochtone Nederlanders geen verlengstuk van de bestaande praktijken van kerken en kerkleden. Sommige migrantenkerken investeerden in het bouwen van bruggen om autochtonen te bereiken, door bijvoorbeeld onderwijs te geven in de Nederlandse cultuur of samen te werken met Nederlandse christenen. Daarnaast maakten ze gebruik van spirituele technieken zoals bidden en vasten, als ook van spontane ontmoetingen in het openbare leven. Het stond echter buiten kijf dat de sociale grenzen van vooral taal en huidskleur de totstandkoming van het evangeliseren van Nederlanders sterk belemmerde. Daarnaast zaten sommige kerkleiders gevangen tussen het willen bedienen van een specifieke migrantengemeenschap enerzijds en het willen bereiken van autochtone Nederlanders anderzijds: tussen het kiezen van een zwarte of een blanke gastspreker, bijvoorbeeld, of tussen het vestigen van de kerk in Amsterdam Zuidoost of in een 'blanker' deel van Amsterdam. De efficiënte dynamiek van 'twee keer het kerkelijk werk benutten' werkte juist niet als het ging om het bereiken van Nederlanders.

In de hoofdstukken over bekering werd opnieuw zichtbaar dat vooral mensen uit specifieke migrantengroepen zich bekeerden tot bepaalde typen of aspecten van het christendom in reactie op het bestaan en de activiteiten van de migrantenkerken. In veel gevallen had dit te maken met het willen (re)produceren van etnische identiteit (zoals de niet-christelijke Koreanen die zich aanvankelijk om 'culturele' redenen bij de Koreaanse gereformeerde kerk aansloten) en sociaal-economische zekerheid (zoals nieuwe Ghanese migranten die zich bij de Ghanese adventisten aansloten omdat zij daar andere, reeds meer gevestigde, migranten kenden). De overwegingen waren echter ook direct religieus van aard: binnen hun etnische of taalkundige groep zochten migranten over het algemeen naar een kerk die zo dicht mogelijk bij hun theologische overtuigingen stond. In sommige gevallen ging de keuze voor een kerk zelfs tegen sociaal-economische zekerheid in, zoals bij de Ghanese adventisten, die niet zelden werk en sociale status opgaven om deel te zijn van de kerk die 'ware kennis' had.

De migratiecontext maakte evangelisatie en bekering enerzijds lastig vanwege een veelheid aan factoren (visa-problemen, tijd- en ruimtegebrek, het Nederlandse weer, de mobiliteit en verspreiding van migranten, het hierboven genoemde probleem van 'drop-outs', enz.). Anderzijds bevorderde deze context juist dat migranten zich bekeerden. Dit werd al geïllustreerd door de hierboven genoemde culturele en sociaal-economische redenen. Een ander aspect was dat voor migranten die uit landen kwamen waar het christendom een (onderdrukte) minderheid is, Nederland juist als 'christelijk' werd ervaren en het gemakkelijker werd bevonden om in dit land christen te worden. Terwijl bekend is dat vooral Afrikaanse christenmigrantengroepen zich verbazen over en belemmerd

voelen door het gebrek aan christelijkheid in Europa, lijkt het erop dat migranten uit minder christelijke contreien zich juist eerder bekeren in een historisch gezien christelijk land als Nederland.

Zoals te verwachten vanuit bestaande studies, kwam bekering van autochtone Nederlanders over het algemeen niet vaak voor. Echter, er waren weinig kerken waar helemaal geen Nederlanders te vinden waren en vaak betrof het hier bekeerlingen die christen waren geworden of een andere vorm van christendom hadden aangenomen (bijvoorbeeld protestanten die rooms-katholiek, of rooms-katholieken die orthodox waren geworden). Er lagen twee grote dynamieken ten grondslag aan de bekering van Nederlanders. De eerste bestond uit verschillende vormen van 'liefde en zorg': huwelijksrelaties met migrantenchristenen, het ervaren van een warme gemeenschap in een migrantenkerk en sociaal-economische steun (met name relevant voor Nederlanders uit lagere sociale klassen). De tweede dynamiek was dat migrantenkerken met name aantrekkelijk bleken te zijn voor Nederlanders wanneer zij iets 'nieuws' boden op de religieuze markten. Zo werden bij de Ghanese adventisten specifieke lichamelijke praktijken gewaardeerd door Nederlanders en Nederlandse adventisten in het bijzonder, zoals muziek en dans, gebedsgenezing en geestenuitdrijving. Een bijzondere casus was de Russisch-orthodoxe kerk, waar een derde van de bezoekers autochtone Nederlander was, ondanks dat de kerk nauwelijks op evangelisatie gericht was. Ook hier bleek dat Nederlanders zich tot een migrantenkerk aangetrokken voelden omdat zij iets nieuws bracht op het gebied van spirituele ervaring (aandacht voor de zintuigen, 'authenticiteit', 'diepgang', 'emotie', enz.). Daarnaast illustreerde deze casus dat een migrantenkerk die een beklivende invloed wil uitoefenen op autochtonen, niet alleen iets onbekends moet aanbieden, maar dit moet combineren met het bekende, zoals de Nederlandse taal of de aanwezigheid van andere autochtone Nederlanders.

Op basis van de empirische hoofdstukken concludeer ik in het laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift het volgende. Enerzijds bevestigt deze studie bestaande werken die handelen over 'omgekeerde zending'. Evangelisatie was met name gericht op mede-migranten en niet op autochtone Nederlanders. Zoals anderen hebben voorgesteld, had dit ten dele te maken met de marginale positie van migranten, die zich belemmerd wisten door vormen van sociale en symbolische uitsluiting en hun beperkte beheersing van de Nederlandse taal. Anderzijds verlegt deze studie het begrip van de zending van migranten door de aandacht te vestigen op een aantal andere factoren, die een meer gebalanceerd beeld laten ontstaan. Deze factoren tonen dat de nadruk op het evangeliseren van migranten de positie van migrantenkerken versterkte. Het evangeliseren van migranten hielp de kerken om zich te vestigen op lokaal niveau. Hiermee kapitaliseerden de kerken hun kracht om een cultureel thuis te bieden aan migranten, die juist hiernaar op zoek waren. Bovendien konden migrantenkerken zich door het evangeliseren van migranten het beste positioneren in de interkerkelijke en interreligieuze competitie binnen de etnische groepen die zij vertegenwoordigden. Ten tweede bleek dat juist het 'etnische' karakter van de zending van migrantenkerken in sommige opzichten aantrekkelijk was voor autochtone Nederlanders. Dit werd duidelijk uit de waardering van autochtone Nederlanders voor de gemeenschapsvormen en vernieuwende religieuze praktijken van migrantenkerken. Ten derde verworven migrantenkerken zich een betekenisvolle plek in wereldwijde denominaties, juist door zich te richten op het evangeliseren van groepen die hun broeders en zusters moeilijk konden bereiken. Dit complexe beeld beziend besluit ik met de conclusie dat de nadruk op het evangeliseren van migranten niet slechts het gevolg was

van de marginale status van migrantenzendingen, maar juist een weg was om hun positie in verschillende sociale domeinen te versterken.

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- 2008 Voorganger Jan van der Meulen van Ghanese gemeente: 'We moeten niet zomaar alles van elkaar overnemen'. November 28.

Zending Nú

- 2007 Special issue 'Klimaatverandering in de wereldkerk'. September.

Internet resources

(all sites checked latest March 13, 2011)

Immigrant churches and Christian immigrant organisations in the Netherlands

<http://rccgnetherlands.org>
<http://www.waalsekerk-amsterdam.nl>
<http://www.armeensekerk.org>
<http://www.armeensekerk.nl>
<http://www.amsterdamghanasda.com>
<http://www.methodistchurch.nl/index.php/Amsterdam-Society>
<http://www.afrikahuis.com>
<http://www.blessedtrinity.nl>
<http://ichk.nl>
<http://www.jcfn.nl>
<http://www.skinkerken.nl>
<http://www.orthodox.nl>
<http://www.orthodoxen.nl>
<http://www.pentecostrevival.nl>
<http://www.pentecostrevivalchoir.com>
<http://www.pcoc.nl>
<http://mctc.nl>
<http://www.abacademy.nl>
<http://www.gkpb.nl>
<http://jvc.gkpb.nl>
<http://www.gkin.org/gkinweb>
<http://www.svetatrojica.nl>
<http://www.pravoslavlje.nl>
<http://www.eecun.nl>
<http://www.nazarene.nl/rotterdamemmaus>
<http://igresia.demosworld.nl>
<http://www.ucholland.org>
<http://www.krcr.org>
<http://www.sagradafamilia.nl>
<http://www.icfrotterdam.nl>
<http://www.zvk.nl/kerkdienst.aspx?IntEntityId=828>
<http://www.homeforkurds.nl>
<http://www.antilleanministry.org>

Christian churches and organisations around the world

<http://www.gate-mission.org>
<http://rccg.org>
<http://www.godembassy.org>
<http://jcfn.org>
<http://www.archiepiskopia.be>
<http://www.incommunion.org>
<http://fraternite.orthodoxe.free.fr>
<http://thecophq.org>
<http://www.icfm.org>
<http://www.gkpb.net>

Dutch churches and Dutch Christian organisations

<http://www.pkn.nl/4/info.aspx?page=7235>
<http://www.eo.nl/algemeen/nederlandkleurrijk/page/-/galleries/video.esp?imagegallery=11156863>
<http://www.vpe.nl>
<http://www.icpnetwork.nl>
<http://www.gave.nl>

Seventh-day Adventist Church

<http://www.adventist.org/world-church/facts-and-figures/index.html>
<http://www.adra.org>
<http://www.adventiststatistics.org>
<http://gcsecretariat.org/Bediako.htm>
<http://www.drpipim.org>
<http://www.adventist.nl/?q=node/78>

Ghana

<http://www.modernghana.com>
<http://www.soulhouronline.com>

Diverse

<http://statline.cbs.nl>
<http://www.os.amsterdam.nl>
<http://www.lifeinternational.nl>
<http://www.houseofhope.nl>
<http://www.wadata.nl>
<http://www.oktoich.nl>