

DISTRIBUTION OF ADVENTISTS AND MORMONS IN MODERN EUROPE

Daniel REEVES

Abstract: *The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints share a number of characteristics (for instance their time and place of origin) making them interesting subjects for geographic comparison. Europe, which has been subject to processes of secularization, since the industrial era, on the one hand, and which can be considered a primary source of American culture during the 19th century, provides an interesting context for such comparisons. This article examines the distribution of Adventists and Mormons in Europe by country and attempts to identify historical factors and organizational characteristics that aid in explaining the respective churches' spatial distributions.*

Keywords: *Adventists, diffusion, Europe, Geography of religion, Mormons*

INTRODUCTION

Since the industrial revolution, the European religious landscape has been subject to significant secularization trends. While these general trends have lent considerable support to secularization theory, a variety of counter movements, especially in recent decades, have caused many social scientists to second guess secularization, as they examine the ongoing influences of religious practices and institutions in modern societies (Henkel 2006). In Europe, these counter movements include an ever-increasing variety of belief systems, from young and vibrant Christian churches to traditional religions from other areas, such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, to various modern or repackaged philosophies.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Adventists) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) represent two dynamic Christian groups that have experienced substantial growth in Europe, since being established in nineteenth-century America. A number of similarities between the two churches, including their emphasis on evangelizing or proselyting, as a means of actively increasing church membership, provide the backdrop for the inter-church comparisons presented here. Moreover, this article's focus on Europe, which can be considered the primary source of cultural heritage – including religious heritage – for the United States during the nineteenth century (the point of origin for Adventism and Mormonism), provides an interesting spatial context for such comparisons.

This research seeks to examine and compare the current distribution of Adventists and Mormons in Europe, at a national level. Specifically, I intend to answer the following questions. 1) How have Adventism and Mormonism, respectively, spread into Europe and how do spatial distributions of Adventists and Mormons in Europe compare? 2) What denominational characteristics and historical developments help in explaining potential differences in the European diffusion of Adventism and Mormonism?

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Literature review

Although often overlooked by social scientists, religion has played and continues to play significant roles in societies throughout the world. As Kong (2001, p 212) states: "In many instances, in the same breath that race, class and gender are invariably invoked and studied as ways by which societies are fractured, religion is forgotten or conflated with race." Religion not only merits inclusion as a criterion for understanding social relations and societies, in general; its omission as an 'axis of identity' along with race, class, nationality and gender is a mistake (Brace, Bailey and Harvey 2006). Kong (2001) goes on to provide a detailed and organized review of geographical research on religion in the 1990s. She frames her review around "politics and poetics in modernity," demonstrating how religion impacts societies and individuals in both secular (political) and spiritual (poetic) ways.

Iannaccone (1997) proposes using rational choice theory as a "framework for the scientific study of religion". He develops the rationale of this framework by perceiving a religious "market", in which various religious organizations and movements present their ideological and spiritual "products" to consumers – the general public. Iannaccone's rational choice framework rests on three distinct assumptions:

- **"Assumption 1:** Individuals act rationally, weighing the costs and benefits of potential actions, and choosing those actions that maximize their net benefits.
- **"Assumption 2:** The ultimate preferences (or 'needs') that individuals use to assess costs and benefits tend not to vary much from person to person or time to time.
- **"Assumption 3:** Social outcomes constitute the equilibria that emerge from the aggregation and interaction of individual actions." (Iannaccone 1997, p 26)

I must admit that, as a religious individual, I struggled initially with the idea of applying economic theory to religion and that I still disagree with the underlying philosophy of such an application, which seems to ignore both the existence and importance of divine truth. Rational choice theory also overlooks or minimizes significant personal influences such as family or societal traditions, reluctance to change and any potential social costs accompanying a change in religious affiliation. However, with these shortcomings in mind, the framework provides a foundation for investigating certain aspects of religious participation. Iannaccone's framework is useful, for instance, in attempting to explain the growth and diffusion of religious movements (i.e. by allowing them to be viewed as products or innovations in a religious market) or in describing the effects of competition among churches for new members (religious consumers). (Iannaccone 1997, see also Iannaccone 1998, Iannaccone and Stark 1997)

Otterstrom has conducted in-depth research on the diffusion of Mormonism throughout the world (1994) as well as on recent developments concerning the Mormon population within the United States of America (2008). He discusses the growth and international development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in great detail with strong theoretical and methodological frameworks. His work on worldwide Mormon diffusion highlights increasing growth in developing areas and among groups in challenging economic circumstances (Otterstrom 1994). Focusing on the USA, Otterstrom (2008) demonstrates that, from 1990 to 2004, more rapid growth of Mormonism occurred in the central and eastern United States than in the American West, where it could be said that the market is more saturated.

While I found many references to Mormons and numerous articles focusing partially or entirely on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (e.g. Dunn 1996, McBride 2007, Iannaccone and Stark 1997, Otterstrom 1994 and 2008), I was not as successful in finding articles focusing entirely or even partially on Adventists or the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with the exception of an article on the Adventists' NEW START Program, which included additional references to articles concerning the health benefits of the Adventist lifestyle (Slaviček et al. 2008).¹ I suspect that this apparent increased availability of social science research on Mormons is due, in part, to the churches' relative sizes in North America, where Mormons outnumber Adventists by more than five to one, and, in part, to the existence of a distinct Mormon culture region in the western United States (see Warf and Winsberg 2008; Zelinsky 2001).

A closer look at Adventists and Mormons

The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exhibit a number of similarities that make comparison of the two organizations both meaningful and interesting. In terms of worldwide membership in 2007 and the place and time of their origin (see table 1), the churches, indeed, appear very similar. As self-proclaimed Christian churches, Adventists and Mormons also share similar views concerning a number of fundamental beliefs and practices, such as baptism by immersion, only after a candidate has reached a recognizable "age of accountability" (8 years old for Mormons, 12 – 15 for Adventists). Both churches place strong emphasis on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and on strengthening marital and family relations, as well as on sharing their beliefs with others through active evangelizing and missionary programs.

In his book *Nová náboženská hnutí a jak jim porozumět* [New religious movements and how to comprehend them], author Zdeněk Vojtíšek (2007), a researcher whose areas of expertise include new religious movements and the Czech religious scene, describes both of these churches as representative of a so-called "Christianity of the last days." This is one of three broad divisions that Vojtíšek makes among newer, Protestant Christian churches (the other two divisions are Pentecostal churches and radical new Christian movements). Churches in this "Christianity of the last days" category are characterized by an independence from previously established churches and a focus on preparing for Jesus Christ's return to the earth, as prophesied in scripture (Vojtíšek 2007).

Table 1: Summary of significant similarities between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint

	Seventh-day Adventist Church	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Place of establishment	New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Michigan, USA	New York, USA
Time of establishment	1831 - 1863	1820 - 1830
Worldwide membership 2007	15,660,347*	13,193,999**

* 145th Annual Statistical Report – 2007.

**Statistical Report: 178th Annual General Conference

1 The NEW START Program outlines Adventist practices concerning physical and spiritual health and, according to this article, can effectively reduce the risks of cardio-vascular disease (Slaviček et al. 2008)

Whether in terms of the Adventist position, advocating a return to thoroughly studying and correctly understanding the Bible as well as their unique role as the “remnant church”, or through Mormon claims of a “divine restoration of truth”, both churches view themselves as the only existing fellowship of *true* followers of Jesus Christ. Over the years, Adventists and Mormons have moderated their positions slightly and both churches are now quick to recognize and respect the good wrought by and the true principles (according to their respective beliefs) taught by other religious groups, particularly other Christian churches (see www.adventist.org and www.lds.org).

A closer look at the doctrinal beliefs of these churches (e.g. Rosten 1963) reveals that both are indeed not only looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ, but also seeking to prepare the world and its inhabitants for this event, by sharing their respective messages and seeking new converts. Understanding the history and development of the missionary efforts – and successes – of Adventists and Mormons as well as the churches’ similar beginnings (in terms of time and place), in nineteenth-century America, is fundamental in evaluating and explaining the distribution of Adventists and Mormons in modern-day Europe. I will continue by chronologically (Mormons first) describing the origins of the two churches in question. Details concerning missionary efforts and successes will appear, later, alongside data on contemporary European distributions of Adventists and Mormons.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

In 1820, religious excitement had reached a fever pitch in rural New York, in an area and time period later described as the “burned-over district,” in reference to the way a surprising variety of religious revivals swept through the area and excited its inhabitants (Cross 1950). Joseph Smith, Jr., 14 years old at the time, described the religious excitement as follows:

“Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, ‘Lo, here!’ and others, ‘Lo, there!’ Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

“My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others (*The Pearl of Great Price*, p. 48).”

Shortly thereafter, Joseph Smith prayed to ask God for direction, concerning which church was the correct one. According to Smith’s story and according to the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, God the Father and Jesus Christ visited Smith, in a forested area near Palmyra, New York, and called him to be a prophet. They instructed Smith, through many additional revelations, on how to organize, or according to

Mormon doctrine: how to restore, the Church of Jesus Christ for a final dispensation that would precede Christ's second coming. Mormons also believe that God instructed Joseph Smith on where to find an ancient record – written on thin metal plates – of a people who lived in the Americas from about 600 B.C. to approximately 400 A.D. These people, who according to Mormon tradition are ancestors both to American Indians and Pacific Islanders, worshipped God in accordance with Jewish traditions before the time of Christ and as Christians afterwards. This record has been published as *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* and Mormons view it as an additional book of scripture, in essence, an equal companion to the *Bible*.

The Book of Mormon was first published in 1827 and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized with six members on 6 April 1830, in Fayette, New York.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Adventist movement has its roots in the 1830s and 1840s, mainly in New Hampshire and upstate New York. Preachers and ministers from several contemporary, Christian churches contributed to the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as we know it today. They rallied around theological ideas, surrounding the imminent return of Jesus Christ ("the literal soon advent of Christ") to the earth and the importance of studying and comprehending the Bible. (http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/history/index.html.en)

One of the central figures in Adventism's "genesis" story is William Miller. Miller, a veteran of the War of 1812, began to study the Bible in depth to put to rest certain concerns he had with what others called contradictions within the Bible itself. Eventually, he resolved all of his concerns and in doing so became very interested in Biblical prophecies, specifically from Old Testament prophet Daniel, concerning Christ's return to the earth. He spent considerable time calculating the date of Jesus Christ's "second coming." His friends became interested in his studies and encouraged him to preach and proclaim this message to others. Miller began preaching in 1831 and with the help of Joshua Himes, a preacher who acted as something of a public relations specialist, he soon generated a following, known as Millerites. The Millerites enthusiastically expected Jesus Christ to return to earth in glory, sometime during 1843. This expected time of arrival was later adjusted to the Spring of 1844 and finally to October 22, 1844. (Vandeman 1986; see also: <http://www.whiteestate.org/pathways/pioneers.asp>)

A "great disappointment" resulted when Jesus Christ did not return to earth and the Millerites along with other Adventists (at this time, a general term for believers from many faiths including Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.) returned to diligently studying the Bible and preparing for Christ's return, without necessarily setting a date for this anticipated event. The preachers and members of several congregations – mainly from various Baptist churches and the Christian Connection Church – continued calling themselves "Adventist" and by 1863, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially organized, it included approximately 3,500 members and 125 churches. (http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/history/index.html.en)

Ellen White, whom Adventists recognize as one who had a prophetic gift, was another important figure in the development of Adventism. White attended William

Miller's sermons and became converted to the principles he advocated. After the great disappointment discussed above, she played a significant leadership role in keeping the Adventist movement alive. In particular, White was a central figure in the decision to worship on Saturday and not Sunday. Similar to Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Ellen White also claimed to receive special communications from God for a larger community of believers. She wrote many books, focusing special attention on health and harmony in life, principles that are fundamental to modern Adventism. (<http://www.whiteestate.org>)

METHODS AND DISCOVERIES

In light of the similar beginnings described above – especially, in terms of time and location – and based on the rational choice theory of economics, as applied to religious organizations (Iannaccone 1998), I propose a null hypothesis:

- All other factors being equal, it is supposed that the current distribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Europe – the result of processes of diffusion of the religious “product” of the respective churches – will be identical.

I realize that such a hypothesis seems more than a little absurd and I intentionally include the words “all other factors being equal”, knowing that such is not the case. The “religious products” of the respective churches differ, as do the personalities, attitudes and preferences both of those sharing these products and any who would potentially receive them. Nonetheless, this null hypothesis provides a basis for further examination of European distributions of Adventists and Mormons. A significant portion of the explanation of the data presented shall focus on the reality that “all other factors” are not equal and that strong personalities, leaders, administrative decisions and societal attitudes, among other factors, have played and continue to play important roles in the diffusion of Adventism and Mormonism.

Using membership data for 2007, provided by the Adventist and Mormon churches themselves, and population estimates for 2007 from the World CIA Factbook, I have prepared cartograms and analyzed spatial patterns in the European distributions of Adventists and Mormons, at a national level². I must point out here that membership data reported by the churches themselves could be subject to certain incompatibilities or even inaccuracies. For instance, the churches will likely have different methods for defining membership, for tracking participation and for removing those, who have died or who otherwise no longer participate or identify themselves with the church in question, from their membership totals. Nonetheless, both the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints keep and publicize detailed annual reports on their membership and, keeping the possible shortcomings mentioned in mind, they enable one to make interesting comparisons at a variety of regional and global scales.

ADVENTISTS IN THE EAST

Figure 1 depicts the spatial distribution of Adventists by country across Europe. The background layer displays Europe's countries, divided into quantiles (meaning that there

2 Due to significant cultural differences, I have not included the Caucasus countries in this research, so Europe, as used in this article, shall not include the Caucasus region.

should be an equal number of countries – approx. eight – in each of the five categories), on the basis of the portion of each country's population which is Adventist. The foreground circles display the absolute number of Adventists in the various countries of Europe. High percentages (expressed here as per mille) and high numbers of Adventists are found, particularly, in Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. Western Europe is home to relatively fewer Adventists and a general east-to-west trend is evident, with higher percentages of Adventists in the East and gradually lower percentages – with exceptions – in the West.

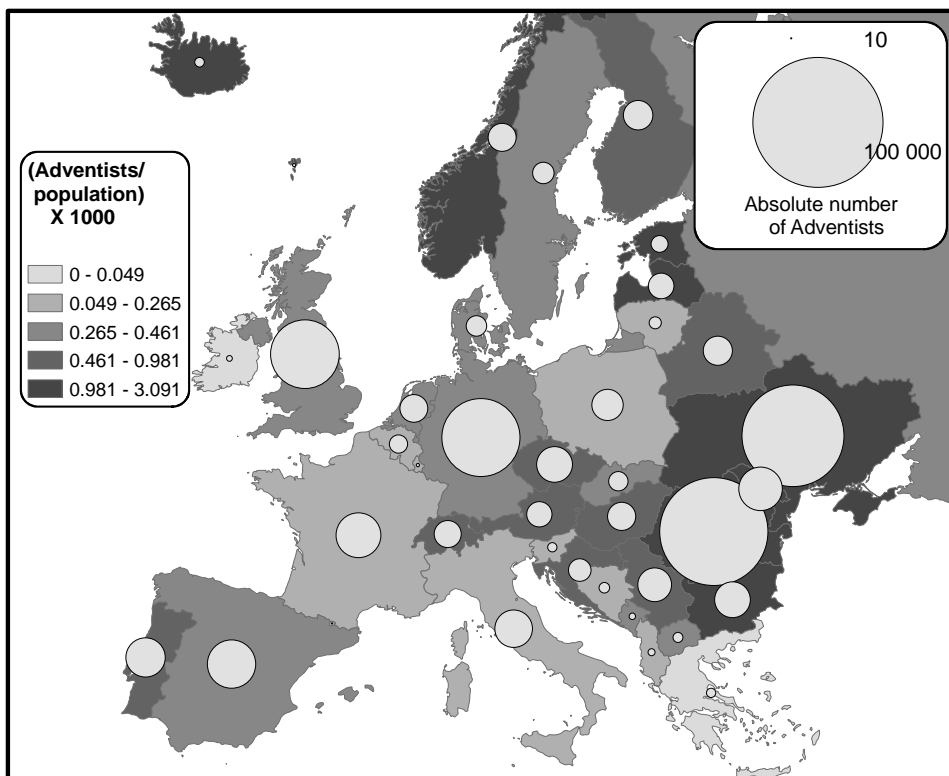


Figure 1: Distribution of Adventists in Europe by country 2007
(source: 145th Annual Statistical report-2007 and the CIA World Factbook)

Table 2 presents basic data concerning the five largest populations of Adventists in European countries. As mentioned, the largest three Adventist populations are located in Eastern Europe and, with the exception of Romania and Ukraine, all of the countries on this list rank among the top five in Europe in terms of overall population (Ukraine ranks sixth in overall population, Romania ninth).

Table 2: Largest national populations of Adventists in Europe 2007

COUNTRY	Adventists	% Adventist [(Adventists/total population) * 1000]	Rank within Europe in terms of total population
Romania	68860	3.091	9 th
Ukraine	61151	1.321	6 th
Russia	51875	0.367	1 st
Germany	35925	0.436	2 nd
United Kingdom	27902	0.459	4 th

Source: 145th Annual Statistical Report – 2007.

The strong presence and activity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine appears to support the idea that Adventist missionary efforts are successful and, consequently, seem to focus on populations and groups that need humanitarian assistance. For 2007, the CIA World Fact Book listed these three countries among the lowest in Europe in terms of GDP per capita. Moldova was the absolute lowest in Europe, ranking 125th in the world, while Ukraine, at 88th in the world, was second lowest (excluding the Caucasus Mountain states) and Romania exhibited Europe's seventh lowest GDP per capita (again, excluding the Caucasus Mountain states) with a world ranking of 71.³

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA, see www.adra.org) is the Seventh-day Adventist Church's flagship organization in providing humanitarian assistance. ADRA is a modern manifestation of the church's history of offering aid and education to diverse populations (see also Reeves 2009). With a simple Google search, I found a number of ADRA projects that focused on Romania and Ukraine, in recent years. An Adventist youth group from Scotland, for example, has made multiple trips to Romania during summer vacations to build houses for impoverished families (<http://www.sdscotland.com/main/>). Another Adventist group, this one from Moravia in Czechia, recently completed a project entitled *Úsměv pro Ukrajinu [A Smile for Ukraine]*. The project focused on the region along the Romania-Ukraine border and included general repairs to a local school and a variety of other acts of service. (<http://www.dcvn.cz/archiv/ukrajina-rumunsko07.htm>)

In addition to its focus on humanitarian service and perhaps more significantly, in terms of the comparisons in this article, the Seventh-day Adventist Church also has a long history in Eastern Europe. Adventist missionaries entered Romania in 1868 and Ukraine in 1886 (Land 2005). In Romania, there were enough Adventists, by 1928, that the Romanian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists received state recognition. At the beginning of World War II, there were about 13,000 Adventists in Romania. This created a strong

3 These values and rankings differ significantly depending on what organization gathered the information. Wikipedia.org has a nice comparison of IMF, World Bank and CIA data on GDP per capita (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_countries_by_GDP_per_capita).

enough base that the church was able to continue its activities – with restrictions – through four decades of communist control, entering the 1990s with a foundation and momentum to support further post-socialist growth. Romania is the clearest example of a larger trend of Adventist missionary success in Eastern Europe.

In fact, the relatively strong presence of Adventists (especially in comparison with Mormons) in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe previous to World War II and subsequent communist revolutions, resulting in the establishment of the Iron Curtain, is quite possibly the single most important factor in explaining the divergent distributions of Adventists and Mormons in modern Europe (see below). The various communist regimes of the Warsaw Pact were all, to varying degrees, against organized religion. They actively prevented the spreading of religious ideas and even outlawed the activities of many religious organizations. This was, perhaps, most clearly evident in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which for a period of four years (1952-1956) banned all activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Drejnar 2008). The primary reason that this ban did not last longer was the realization that Adventists continued to meet in secret and that it was better for the regime to be able to control the church's activities in the context of some official status.

In contrast, the activities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Czechoslovakia were made illegal, in 1950, for the duration of the communist period (until 1990) (Reeves 2004, Mehr 1994). This example is typical of the manner, in which other communist countries dealt with their Mormon populations (which, if such populations existed, were generally very small, i.e. less than 300 in Czechoslovakia) (Mehr 2002). Mormons behind the Iron Curtain enjoyed the best conditions, in terms of government recognition and allowance in East Germany, where the largest Mormon congregations of all Soviet Bloc countries were located (Mehr 2002).

MORMONS IN THE WEST

As I have begun to indicate, the distribution of Mormons in Europe differs significantly from that of Adventists. The United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain stand out in figure 2, which displays relative and absolute numbers of Mormons in European country populations. A general west to east trend of higher to lower population ratios is visible, supporting the idea of a concentric distribution of Mormons centered on the American West (Reeves 2009). The United Kingdom is nearly eclipsed by the circle, representing its more than 180 thousand Mormons. A small circle representing Mormons, living on the Isle of Man, is even visible near the center of this large circle.

Similar to table 1 above, table 3 lists the five largest national Mormon populations in Europe. Spain and Portugal stand out from this list with lower European rankings (seventh and twelfth respectively), in terms of overall population. Portugal and the United Kingdom have very high portions – in a European context – of Mormons in their respective populations. It is clear that Mormons are more firmly established in Western Europe than they are in the East and, as with the Adventists, we can, at least partially, explain this distribution on the basis of historical events, policies and missionary successes.

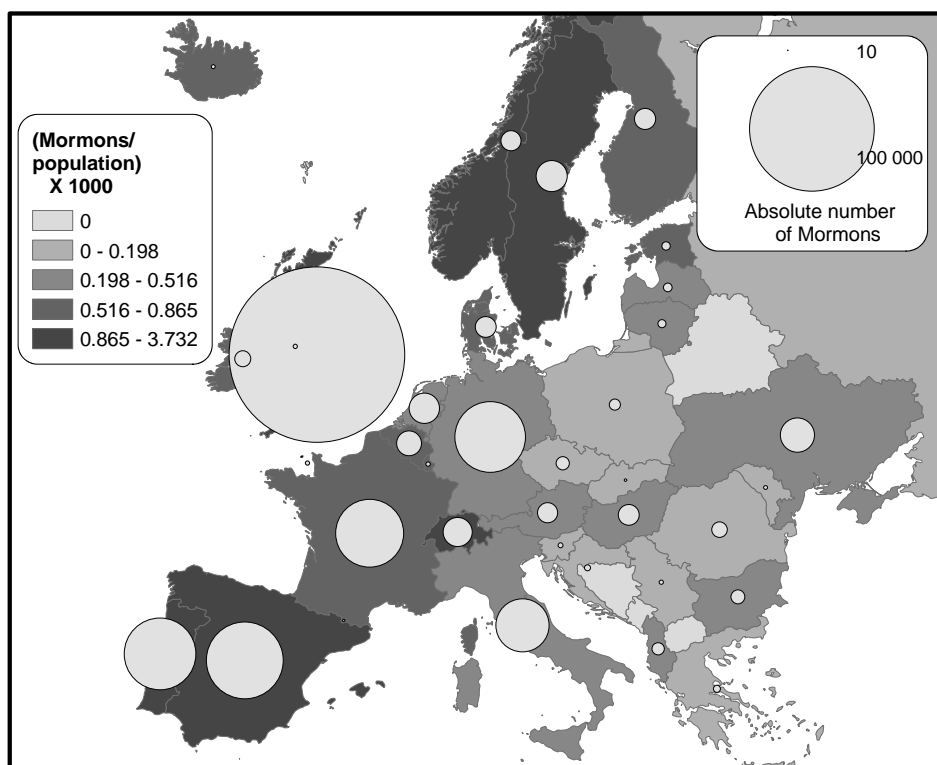


Figure 2: Distribution of Mormons in Europe by country 2007
 (source: www.newsroom.lds.org and the CIA World Factbook)

Table 3: Largest national populations of Mormons in Europe 2007

COUNTRY	Mormons	% Mormon [(Adventists/total population) * 1000]	Rank within Europe in terms of total population
United Kingdom	181756	2.991	4 th
Spain	42873	1.060	7 th
Portugal	38100	3.580	12 th
Germany	37159	0.451	2 nd
France	34638	0.558	3 rd

Source: www.newsroom.lds.org

The earliest missionary efforts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focused on the United States and the British Isles and Mormon missionary work soon expanded into other parts of Europe; however, during these early years the message of Mormonism included a call to “gather to Zion.” With a doctrine-based practice that lends itself to comparison with Jewish Zionism, new converts to the Church of Jesus Christ were encouraged to immigrate to the United States to join with other Mormons in building a “New Jerusalem” on the American Continent (The Articles of Faith, No. 10). This practice, which was officially discontinued in 1911, played a significant role in Mormon history and in the church’s subsequent development and diffusion (*Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 1996).

Mormon missionaries arrived in England in 1837 and by 1850 they had also entered Scandinavia, France and Germany. These missionaries found success, particularly in England, but, for several decades to follow, a large portion of Mormon converts emigrated to join with the Mormons in America (*Our Heritage* 1996). There are estimates that more than 100,000 Mormons emigrated from the United Kingdom to America from 1837 to 1900. In 1870, British immigrants accounted for nearly half of the population of Utah (www.newsroom.lds.org). As noted above, this call to migrate to “Zion” was officially ended in 1911; from that time on, Mormons have been encouraged, in a general sense, to remain where they are and to build up and support their local church communities. As a result, numbers of Mormons in the United Kingdom and elsewhere have increased more consistently, over the last century.

The organizational structure of these two churches constitutes another important factor that can help in explaining the distributions of Adventists and Mormons in Europe. From my own observations, it appears that Adventist congregations in Czechia have relatively more local autonomy (i.e. less centrally applied leadership) than comparable congregations of Mormons in Czechia. This higher degree of local autonomy – expressed primarily through less emphasis on vertical communication and coordination within the organization – could help explain the more globally dispersed and less-concentric distribution of Adventists, in comparison with the distribution of Mormons.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on the other hand, is characterized by a centralized organizational scheme, with a structured hierarchy leading up to the president of the church, who along with his two counselors, comprise the First Presidency. According to Mormon beliefs, the president of the church is a prophet, receiving guidance and inspiration, concerning how to direct the Church of Jesus Christ, from Christ himself. In addition to these three men (the First Presidency), Mormons look to a Quorum of Twelve Apostles – twelve other men, “called” by inspiration to serve as Apostles until they die – for what they view as inspired leadership for the entire world. Moving down the vertical structure, Mormons also receive guidance from five Quorums of “Seventies” – general and regional authorities – and, ultimately, from local leaders.

In addition to this, the Mormon missionary program creates an extensive network for enforcing societal (church-wide) norms and practices. Young Mormons, primarily between the ages of 19 and 25 years of age, are strongly encouraged to serve as full-time missionaries. Interested, eligible individuals fill in a paper application and go through an interview process with local Mormon leaders. Application materials are then sent to church headquarters in Salt Lake City and within a matter of weeks a “mission call” is issued. In

1997, for example, I completed this process and received a “mission call” to serve for two years in the Czech Prague Mission, which includes all of Czechia and Slovakia. Mormon missionaries always work in pairs and wear black nametags. Their primary objective is provide others with an opportunity to learn about the “message of the restoration”, which in essence is based upon Joseph Smith’s role as a “modern prophet”, the Book of Mormon as a book of scripture and the existence of a living prophet today. These missionaries generally serve for eighteen months or two years and pay their own way.

Among other things, this organization means that significant vertical and horizontal relations exist to monitor both compliance with central directives and consistency concerning the doctrines and practices emphasized throughout the global Mormon organization. The church’s missionary program facilitates ongoing exchanges and interactions between lay members and full-time missionaries from diverse parts of the world (especially from areas that are home to many Mormons, i.e. North and South America), further encouraging feelings of cross-cultural unity and consistent group practices and behaviors. It is clear that these two additional characteristics of the Mormon faith – its central organization scheme and its missionary program – contribute to a high degree of acculturation, which can help explain the church’s appeal, i.e. its higher rate of acceptance, in societies that are more culturally similar to the United States.

This can be seen in Europe, especially, in the high numbers of Mormons living in the United Kingdom, to a lesser degree, in Portugal and Spain (linguistic and cultural ties to South America), and more generally in the concentration of European Mormons in the West.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISONS

Direct comparison of Adventists and Mormons in Europe yields additional interesting results. Aggregate data for all of Europe show that there are more Mormons (458,979) in the continent than Adventists (383,114). This difference becomes more significant when the overall numbers are normalized by the churches’ total membership numbers: 3.5% of all Mormons live in Europe compared with 2.4% of all Adventists (145th Annual Statistical report-2007, www.newsroom.lds.org). In light of the cultural similarities between Europe and North America, this statistic supports the notion that Mormonism embodies a stronger cultural component than Adventism.

Figure 3 presents some direct comparisons between Adventists and Mormons in Europe. The vertical bars depict the absolute numbers of Adventists and Mormons by country (countries with less than 100,000 inhabitants are not depicted in this way). The background layer of figure 3 has been computed to show the relative dominance of one or the other of the two churches in question. I first normalized all of the national membership data by the total worldwide membership of the respective churches (in essence 1 Mormon = 1/13,193,999 and 1 Adventist = 1/15,660,347) and then calculated a ratio of the *weighted Mormon population: weighted Adventist population* for each country in Europe. I removed countries with very small total populations, which had representatives from one church and not the other (e.g. Faroe Islands, Isle of Man, etc.). The remaining countries are represented in modified quantiles with significant ratio values at 0.8 or 1.2 and at 0.284 or 3.5. This means that a country falling into the “Adventist” category has between 1.2 and 3.5 times the significance in terms of Adventist population within the Seventh-

day Adventist Church in comparison with the same country's Mormon population within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whereas the Adventist populations of countries labeled "Dominant Adventist" have at least 3.5 times the relative significance of the same countries' Mormon populations.

The composite information presented in figure 3 highlights the East-West gradient of Adventist-Mormon membership more than either of the preceding single church distributions (figures 1 and 2). It appears that the Mormons' slower start in spreading into Eastern Europe, primarily as a result of Mormon Zionism and the church's organizational characteristics (e.g. slower implementation of missionary program from above – vertical structure; distinct Mormon culture and associated processes of acculturation), put the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at a disadvantage, when compared with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In contrast, Adventists, who were quicker and more successful at establishing themselves in Eastern Europe, previous to World War II and subsequent political changes, weathered decades of communist rule and emerged with traditions and a foundation to support continued growth.

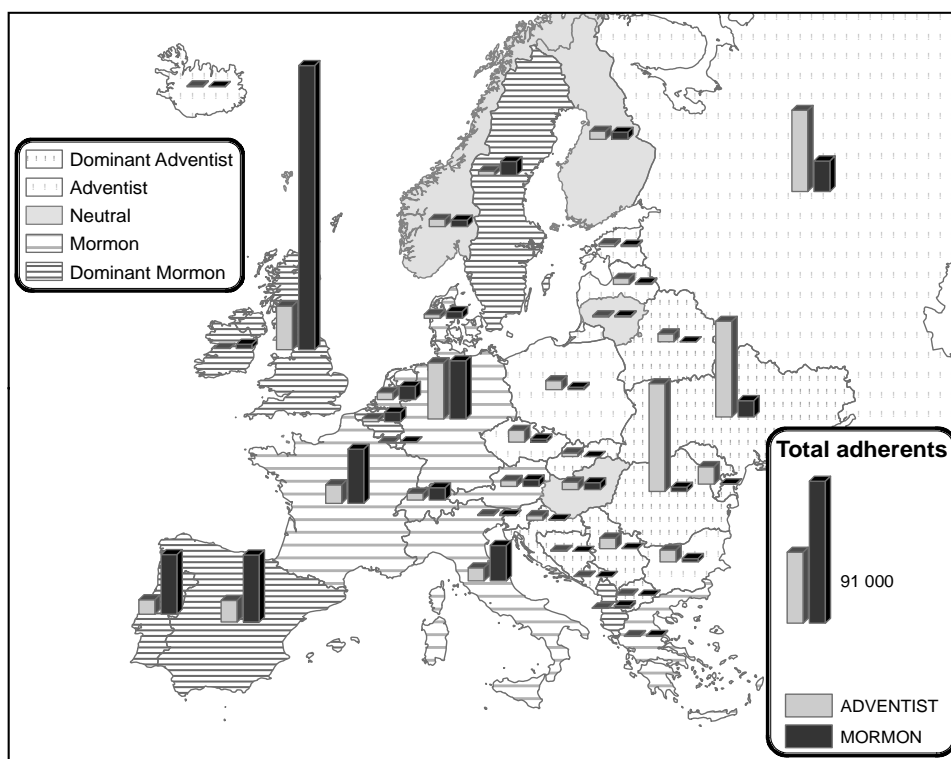


Figure 3: Comparison of Adventist and Mormon presence in Europe in 2007
(source: 145th Annual Statistical report-2007, www.newsroom.lds.org and the CIA World Factbook)

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the simplistic null-hypothesis that I proposed above can be rejected. Significant regional differences exist, both in the distribution of Adventists and Mormons throughout Europe, as well as in the portions of adherents to the two churches in diverse countries and regions. Historic developments, including church policies and the initial entrance of missionaries into various European countries, are helpful in explaining the distributions of the two churches in question and it appears that path dependence – in this case, the length of time that a church has been firmly established in a country – is one of the more significant factors in the diffusion of Adventists and Mormons, respectively. Another important factor is the unique structures of the respective Adventist and Mormon religious organizations. According to my observations, Adventist congregations have more local autonomy than their Mormon counterparts, which are, on the other hand, subject to a stricter enforcement of societal norms, typical of a centrally controlled organization. This translates to the higher degree of acculturation required of converts to Mormonism – again, according to my observations – which could play a role in explaining the relatively denser concentrations of Mormons in countries that are more culturally similar to North America.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that, while these findings are interesting and descriptive in portraying aspects of the geography of religion in Europe, there are many latent factors involved in the diffusion of a “religious product” that lie beyond the scope of this article and, perhaps, beyond the reach of any attempts to describe or measure such factors. The personal circumstances, attitudes and perceived spiritual needs, both of Adventists and Mormons sharing their views on Christianity and any who would potentially embrace such views and join either of the churches, differ significantly from person to person. This study provides a generalized look at the distribution of two dynamically-growing, young, Christian churches in Europe and attempts to explain some of the reasons behind the apparent spatial differences.

Adventists and Mormons are two small groups that are representative of a larger trend of diversified sacralization in post-modern Europe. Secularization processes, which had arguably progressed furthest in Europe, are now being contested, although at a smaller scale, by modern trends of increasing and diversifying religiosity. Current increases in religiosity in Europe are primarily centered on local church communities, including young Christian churches and ancient religions from other world regions (e.g. Havlíček, Hupková 2008). Although these trends are often, and appropriately, linked with migration to Europe from less-developed countries, in many cases they involve native Europeans. In all cases, such sacralization trends impact local European cultures and societies and merit attention from social scientists. Further research into the spatial patterns of religion, including issues of religious identity and cultural practices in daily life, will certainly yield interesting and important results, helping us to better understand the interdependencies of religion, culture and identity in the post-modern era.

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SUMMARY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Adventists) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) represent two dynamic Christian groups that have experienced substantial growth in Europe, since being established in nineteenth-century America. A number of similarities between the two churches, including their emphasis on evangelizing or proselyting, as a means of actively increasing church membership, provide the backdrop for the inter-church comparisons presented here. Moreover, this article's focus on Europe, which can be considered the primary source of cultural heritage – including religious heritage – for the United States during the nineteenth century (the point of origin for Adventism and Mormonism), provides an interesting spatial context for such comparisons.

This research seeks to examine and compare the current distribution of Adventists and Mormons in Europe, at a national level. Specifically, I intend to answer the following questions. 1) How have Adventism and Mormonism, respectively, spread into Europe and how do spatial distributions of Adventists and Mormons in Europe compare? 2) What denominational characteristics and historical developments help in explaining potential differences in the European diffusion of Adventism and Mormonism?

On the basis of a null hypothesis: *All other factors being equal, it is supposed that the current distribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Europe – the result of processes of diffusion of the religious “product” of the respective churches – will be identical*, significant regional differences are confirmed to exist, both in the distribution of Adventists and Mormons throughout Europe, as well as in the portions of adherents to the two churches in diverse countries and regions. Historic developments, including church policies and the initial entrance of missionaries into various European countries, are helpful in explaining the distributions of the two churches in question and it appears that path dependence – in this case, the length of time that a church has been firmly established in a country – is one of the more significant factors in the diffusion of Adventists and Mormons, respectively. Another important factor is the unique structures of the respective Adventist and Mormon religious organizations. According to my observations, Adventist congregations have more local autonomy than their Mormon counterparts, which are, on the other hand, subject to a stricter enforcement of societal norms, typical of a centrally controlled organization. This translates to the higher degree of acculturation required of converts to Mormonism – again, according to my observations – which could play a role in explaining the relatively denser concentrations of Mormons in countries that are more culturally similar to North America.