the general populace, the bulk of whom identify with the practical sentiments of A. B. Patterson's famous poem: 'My Religion'.

Let Romanists all at Confessional kneel,
Let the Jew with disgust turn from it,
Let the mighty Crown Prelate in Church pander zeal,
Let the Musselman worship Mahomet.

From all these I differ - truly wise is my plan,
With my doctrine, perhaps, you'll agree,
To be upright and downright and act like a man,
That's the religion for me.

I will go to no Church and to no house of Prayer,
To see a white shirt on a preacher.
And in no Courthouse on a book will I swear
To injure a poor fellow-creature.

For parsons and preachers are all a mere joke,
Their hands must be greased by a fee;
But with the poor toiler to share your last 'toke',
That's the religion for me.

Let psalm-singing Churchmen and Lutherans sing,
They can't deceive God with their blarney;
They might just as well dance the Highland Fling,
Or sing the fair fame of Kate Kearney.

But let man unto man like brethren act,
My doctrine that suits to a T,
The heart that can feel for the woes of another,
Oh, that's the religion for me.[417]

Perhaps the degree to which Australians actually live out the sentiments of this poem might be a more accurate index of their religiosity than the frequency or infrequency of their church attendance.

Religion in Australia Today

Barry D. Oliver and Stephen J. Currow

Australia may well be the most secularised country on the face of the planet. Most Australians are far more interested in football than they are in church. If you want to see commitment, emotion and a sense of mission, go to a weekend match at any sports arena in any Australian city. Religion cannot hold a candle to the energy and enthusiasm that are generated at those "holy shrines."

But surprisingly, religion is not dead in Australia. Research is pointing out that even people who say that they do not belong to any particular religion are not necessarily saying that

they do not believe in God. Up to 80% of Australians do appear to have a world-view which includes the reality of the supernatural. For many, their conception of the supernatural equates with the traditional Christian image of God. [418] But they do not want the Church.

This chapter will briefly map out the shape of religion in Australia, based on data gathered in the 1996 national census and the 1996 National Church Life Survey (NCLS).[419]

Religious Affiliation in Australia

The total population of Australia in 1996 was 17,892,423. When asked about religious affiliation, the population divided itself into four groups: Roman Catholics (27% of the population), Anglicans (22%), other Christians (22%), and all others (29%). Roman Catholics have now become the largest single group by religious affiliation, taking over from the Anglicans who have suffered a steady decline since 1947 when they comprised 39% of the population.

Under the heading "other Christians," are a number of significant Christian denominations. Their percentage distribution in Australia is listed in the following Table:

Denominations listed as "other Christian" on Australian Census	
Uniting Church	7.5%
Presbyterians	3.8%
Orthodox	2.8%
Baptists	1.7%
Lutherans	1.4%
Pentecostals	1.0%
Churches of Christ	0.4%
Salvation Army	0.4%
Seventh-day Adventists	0.3%
Others	2.5%

Although 70% of the population identified with a Christian denomination, a significant proportion did not. 16.5%, or one person in six, chose to state that he/she had no religious affiliation at all. This has been a steadily growing trend since 1971 when this option to state that the person had no religious affiliation was first given. In that year only 6.7% of the population so identified itself. In 1996 a further 8.7% did not state any religious preference but left the question blank.

A small, but growing group in Australia comprises persons who identify with non-Christian religions. The major religions in this category are Islam (1.1%), Buddhism (1.1%), Judaism (0.5%), and Hinduism (0.4%). The census counted a further 9 non-Christian religions which have a significant presence in Australia.

Church Attendance in Australia

It is exceedingly difficult to make an accurate assessment of church attendance in Australia. Short of doing an actual count on a given weekend, there is no available process that can give precise information. However, sample survey data have provided a picture of trends that have been taking place over the past 40 years since World War II. Those data indicate that during the 50's approximately 40% of the population attended church at least once a month (see Table II). By the 90's that percentage had dropped to 25% – and that is probably optimistic! However, indicators during the past two decades suggest that overall church attendance has stabilised, with some Churches, such as the Pentecostal Churches, growing and counterbalancing the decline especially evident in the mainline Churches.

Church Attendance Since WW II Percentage of all Australians	
1950	44%
1960	41%
1970	36%
1972	30%
1976	29%
1978	28%
1980	25%
1984	25%
1990	25%

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia

According to census data the Seventh-day Adventist Church has maintained its proportion of affiliates in comparison to the population. The Church appears to be growing at about the same rate as the population at large. While that may be true if one considers the growth patterns over the last 80 years, it should be a cause for considerable concern to notice that the 80's saw a dramatic slowing of the growth rate in the Church. Census statistics indicate that the Church grew by less than 1000 adherents in the decade between 1981 and 1991![420]

Seventh-day Adventist Affiliates, Australia 1911-1991. Source: Australian Censuses	
1911	6095
1922	13965
1947	17550
1961	31633
1971	41617
1981	47474
1991	48341
1996	52,655

Research reveals some interesting patterns and characteristics in the constituency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. For example, Seventh-day Adventists have a stronger level of church involvement than the adherents to any other Christian denomination: 71% of the Seventh-day Adventists surveyed indicated in the NCLS that they attended church almost every week or more often. Seventh-day Adventists have a higher proportion of members with post-graduate degrees than any other Christian denomination. The percentage of members who give regularly to their church is highest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (85%). On the other hand, Adventists are less open to change than other denominations and are more likely to meet new initiatives with distrust.[421]

The Shape of the Future?

Social scientists are making some interesting observations about the future shape of the Church in Australia. In concluding this chapter we will simply list a number of those observations and invite the reader to assess their validity in reference to the church family of which you are a part. It would be wise for each of us to test our perceptions against the perceptions of others in order to be better prepared to be proactive in our attitudes to the future rather than being ill prepared and having no alternative other than to be reactive.[422]

- There is an increasing variety of styles of modern church life. This seems to be both a reflection and a response to diversity in society at large. How can the Church respond?
- The local congregation is increasingly being granted primacy at the expense of the denomination. Local issues are given priority over global concerns. How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church respond given its global identity and mission?
- One of the most profound findings of the NCLS is the way that attenders born prior to WWII differ in their attitudes to Church as compared with those born after the war. These generational differences are having considerable impact on the life of the church and that impact will continue to increase, at least in the short term.
- Attitudes to change itself are changing. Congregations are becoming more flexible. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, is less flexible than any other denomination.
- There is a need for congregations to undergo a change of mindset from maintenance to mission—to jettison unwanted baggage for the journey ahead. Seventh-day Adventists have always been motivated by mission, but is there a broad-based consensus of the nature of that mission in the new millennium?

Christianity in the United States

Gilbert M Valentine

First-time visitors to the United States of America are very frequently impressed by just how universally "religious" America is. It quickly becomes clear that religion is one of the most dominant and distinctive features of American society. Observers note that in Australia, the most ubiquitous institution of society is possibly the local pub. The "local" has been the central gathering place for Australian society, and more frequently than not, it is the central architectural feature of towns and cities across Australia. In contrast the most characteristic feature of the skyline in both small and large American towns is the church. White chapels with tall glinting spires distinguish communities across the entire New England landscape, for example, just as the more cavernous structures with their illuminated crosses