

Toward A Sociological Understanding of the Evolution of Adventism: What Had Shaped the Adventism We Knew in the 1960s? How Has It Changed Since? Where Is It Going?

Ronald Lawson

Presentation, QUSDAS Reunion, August 2008

In 1962, my final “honours” year at the University of Queensland, we Adventist students there formed QUSDAS, the Queensland University Seventh-day Adventist Society. We became extremely close as a group, meeting two Friday evenings per month, debating questions concerning our faith and our studies eagerly and persistently, and attending—and in 1964 hosting—an annual national convention of Adventist university students. I was the president of QUSDAS from 1963-65. I can think of no member who stopped attending church while they were involved in QUSDAS. In 2008 several of the members during the period 1962-70 organized a reunion of former QUSDAS members. It was wonderful to see each other again, to catch up. I was fascinated to find that because many of the organizers of the re union who were celebrating the important role QUSDAS had played in their lives were no longer active Adventists. Consequently there was no worship on Sabbath or overtly religious content in the program. What follows is the presentation I made as part of the program. I was in some ways self-consciously filling out for those not aware of them the changes in Adventism during the previous 40 years.

When I was a post-graduate student at the University of Queensland I discovered sociology and took my first sociology classes. One of those introduced me to the sociology of religion and what is called Church-Sect Theory. The meaning would be clearer if it were called Sect-to-Denomination Theory. The core idea is that religious groups often begin as a sect, which is used here with a technical meaning that there is high tension between them and society—that is, they are different, separate, and there is mutual antagonism. With time, that tension usually declines—they are no longer seen as peculiar, they become integrated into society, and the relationship between group and society becomes comfortable and mutually appreciative. As I applied this to Adventism in my mind, it gave me a totally new understanding of the dynamics of my church, and I wanted to do my Ph.D. thesis on it. However, my advisor smiled, and asked me if I wanted a job when I was through; so instead I researched Brisbane in the 1890s. Some 20 years later in New York, having become a tenured Full-professor, and therefore feeling safe academically, I set out at last to study Adventism. That study has taken me to 56 countries, where I have completed about 3,500 interviews.

I will begin with two memories from my youth: vignettes of Adventism as it was back then:

- i. Junior Sabbath School in Toowoomba: after discussing how God took a rib from Adam from which He formed Eve, Mrs Teulon told us that since then men have always had one rib less than women.
- ii. I had been to very few movies in theatres while growing up, but in my fresher year I really wanted to see *The Ten Commandments*, and went with Ian Clarkson. As we lined up to buy tickets outside the Regent Theatre on Queen Street, Brisbane’s main shopping street, someone touched me on the shoulder. Startled, I looked around, and a man said to me very seriously, “Are you sure you should be here?” Somewhat shaken, and wondering if I was ignoring an angel, we proceeded into

the theatre and were soon watching the movie. During the orgiastic scene around the golden calf, the woman sitting the other side of Ian leaned over and touched me on the knee, and said the same words: "Are you sure you should be here?" I was so shaken after that that I did not venture into a movie theatre for another 8 years. Later I realized there was a naturalistic explanation: I was new to Brisbane, and at that point did not know many of the 500 members of the large church I was attending. However, I was the choir director there, so that everyone recognized me. I felt that the man on the street, shop had not entered the theatre, had been voicing his disapproval of seeing me buying tickets there; on the other hand, the woman inside was probably amused to realize she was sitting near to me. Yes, Adventism was diversifying at that time. The fact that by 1962, three years after those incidents, there were over 100 Adventist tertiary students in Brisbane, whereas in 1959 there had been only seven, was further evidence of a changing church.

1. Early Adventism

Early Adventism was marked by high tension with its environment—i.e., it was technically, in sociological terms, a Sect:

- i. Adventist *Beliefs* made Adventism *different*:
 - They expected Christ to return any day (that is, they rejected the American Dream, with its belief in progress, prosperity, freedom);
 - They observed Saturday as the Sabbath—and believed that almost the whole Christian world was keeping the wrong day, and would be judged by God for breaking His law;
 - The judgment was already in process in heaven, and *your* case might be next (this belief conveniently allowed Adventists to continue to embrace William Miller's prophetic time-line that had culminated in 1844—it also created enormous pressure to live a perfect life, and a very legalistic outlook);
 - The dead were asleep, awaiting the Resurrection, and not already in heaven (this made everything hinge on the Second Coming of Christ);
 - The Remnant: Adventists were God's special people, the one and only true church in these last days.
- ii. Their *behavioral norms* separated them from others:
 - they promoted Sabbath observance in a society where Saturday was a work day;
 - diet restrictions made it really difficult for them to socialize with non-Adventists;
 - restrictions on entertainment had the same effect;
 - rules on dress and adornment for women made them look different;
 - they developed a separate system of education, which kept their youth segregated from others.
- iii. They saw the *state* as *antagonistic* to them:

- they expected persecution from America, which was depicted in the book of Revelation as a dragon making war on God's people;
 - although they hated slavery, they refused to serve in the military during the American Civil War, declaring that they were conscientious objectors.
- iv. Their relationships with *other Christian churches* were *mutually antagonistic*:
- Adventists identified the other churches with the Babylon of the book of Revelation, declaring that they were wrong and destined to become the tools of Satan;
 - they embarrassed pastors of other churches in their evangelistic meetings by demanding that they prove Sunday sacredness from the Bible;
 - they set out to steal their sheep;
 - the Adventist claim to be the Biblical Remnant—the one true church—offended others deeply;
 - they expected these churches to take the lead in arranging for the state to persecute them.
- v. The *separation* of Adventism from society *freed them to be radical concerning certain social issues* where prevailing attitudes could hamper their mission:
- Women: At a time when women were treated as second class, their prophet was a woman and they had women evangelists, pastors, and administrators (as they utilized all available resources for their mission);
 - Race: they established integrated churches in the American South in the 1890s;
 - Polygamy: other churches, influenced by the American hatred of Mormon polygamy, refused to baptize polygamously married families in Africa, but Adventists decided to do so, merely prohibiting the adding of more wives.
 - however, they accepted the prevailing conservative norms concerning such issues as divorce and sexuality, not seeing these as affecting their mission.

2. Putting down Roots in Society

After initial wariness, Adventists created an organization in 1863, and set up mechanisms to ordain and license pastors (i.e., to control who could preach). This was an important first step in moving from sect to denomination.

They established a growing array of institutions—a publishing house, sanitariums practicing acceptable medicine (which later accepted designation as hospitals), schools to train their children in the faith, to keep them separate from unbelievers, and to train “workers” as pastors, nurses, teachers, and doctors. (The schools raised educational levels among a flock that was not well educated, although standards were initially fairly low.)

As time passed, Adventists began to postpone the apocalypse: Adventist farmers had been arrested for working on Sunday, and devout Protestants, offended by the drinking and pleasure-making by the urban Irish on Sundays, had introduced legislation designed to foster the sacredness of the day by, e.g., halting public transport then. To Adventists, these happenings seemed sure evidence that the final persecution was about to burst upon them. However, Ellen White instead urged that they “extend the time” by fighting against the legislation, so that more would have an opportunity to hear their message. Adventist evangelists now portrayed America as still “lamb-like”, and not yet in its “dragon” phase after all.

Adventists embraced a global vision, and had expanded their missions to every continent by 1901, when they reshaped their organization to match their new situation. In 1870 the Adventist membership had been a mere 5440, all located in the US. By 1901 it stood at nearly 76,000 on all continents. By 1930 the membership was 314,000, more than half of whom were outside North America. In 1940, the year in which I was born, the total membership passed half a million.

After 1888 the tone of Ellen White’s writings shifted dramatically, from the earlier legalism to a new Christ-centeredness. She and other younger pastors were showing the impact on their thinking of their reading in the writings of the Evangelicals of her day.

3. Gradual Reductions in Tension with Society.

Military service: An excellent measure of the Adventist shift from Sect towards Denomination is changes in responses to military conscription. You will recall that Adventists had chosen to be conscientious objectors during the American Civil War (this was possible because of the earlier struggle of the Quakers). However, Adventism had become an international church, and this had resulted in two differing patterns appearing:

- In Latin America, e.g., there was no understanding of individual conscience in such a matter—governments expected to be obeyed. The choice was between serving as a regular soldier or imprisonment and mistreatment there. Adventists there chose to serve as regular soldiers, but tried to get Sabbath privileges—which was a difficult goal to achieve. In Germany, Adventists compromised totally when WWI broke out—they served as regular soldiers without Sabbath privileges.
- In the English-speaking democracies and some countries in Western Europe conscience was respected in this issue. However, by this time Adventists were eager to demonstrate their patriotism, so, instead of declaring that they were conscientious objectors, they chose to serve without arms. Since it was seen as lawful to do good on the Sabbath, they regarded medical roles as the best solution, for this allowed them to avoid breaking the Commandments against killing and breaking the Sabbath. In the US the church arranged for young men who were likely to be conscripted to receive training as medical orderlies in the hope that they would be placed in medical positions in the military.

Relations with governments:

USA: The decision to shift to a 5-day work week between the wars made things much easier for Adventists there.

However, they faced difficult situations in many countries. There, Adventists often faced severe obstacles when they wanted to keep the Sabbath holy, and they found that states would expropriate their institutions. Their bottom line became to somehow survive.

USSR: in 1928 Stalin forced Adventists to endorse regular military service and to agree to abandon attempts to proselytize others in order to survive.

Nazi Germany: Adventists were afraid that their Sabbath observance would link them to Jews. They poured adulation on Hitler, who, as a vegetarian non-drinker and non-smoker, they saw as “almost an Adventist.” Even though they had the option of declaring themselves conscientious objectors or non-combatants, they chose to show their patriotism by serving as regular soldiers and not asking for Sabbath privileges in either the military or when working in munitions factories.

In the USA, Church leaders arranged a sophisticated medical training program before World War II broke out in Europe. The training was done on Adventist campuses by military officers. An editorial in the *Review and Herald* declared that “Adventists are conscientious cooperators, not conscientious objectors.”

- During the Korean War Adventist chaplains were appointed in the American military for the first time.
- Operation Whitecoat—more than 3,000 Adventists served as guinea-pigs in biological weapons research between 1955 and 1973.
- In Korea, conscripted Adventists tried to follow the example of their American brothers, but often endured severe problems, including imprisonment and death, as a result.
- Adventists toadied to Communist and military governments in Eastern Europe, the USSR, Latin America, and some Asian countries during the decades after WWII. For example, they became known as “the friends of General Pinochet” in Chile.

Other churches:

After the death of Ellen White in 1915, Adventists became more conservative theologically. They were strongly influenced by the debate over Fundamentalism in the 1920s, adopting a more conservative view of Scripture, and the Adventist amateur geologist, George McCready Price, became one of the key pro-Creationists in the period surrounding the Scopes trial. However, mutual suspicions did not allow these shifts to bring Adventism closer to the other denominations.

Adventism also remained aloof from the various ecumenical organizations such as the Federal Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches.

Education:

Until the second decade of the 20th century, Adventists operated their private schools in the US without any external interference. However, as the medical profession became more organized it set out to control both the quality of medical schools and to establish rules concerning the academic background of students admitted to them. This raised the issue of accreditation of the Adventist medical school and also its colleges because they fed students to the medical school. Other professions, such as nursing and teaching, also sought to accredit schools and programs. Although church leaders were initially afraid that such changes would cause it to lose control of its own schools, it eventually acquiesced. The medical school gained full accreditation by 1922, and the American colleges between 1932 and 1945.

These changes forced the Adventist colleges to arrange for faculty members to earn doctorates. They initially tried to minimize the impact of this new exposure by sending senior faculty members part-time for their advanced studies.

The changes also had only limited impact in terms of fostering upward social mobility among church members during their first decades of operation because many of the graduates were employed by church institutions where salaries were kept low.

Other Churches:

The Evangelical Conferences: During the 1950s Walter Martin, a young Evangelical who had made it his business to expose what he regarded as marginally-Christian “cults”, and who had already published scathing analyses of the Mormons and the Witnesses, approached the General Conference. Since he was about to write a book assessing Adventism, he wanted certain information. Church leaders chose to treat him seriously, and asked three of their most experienced scholars to work with him. Their meetings lasted for many months. Eventually an article in *Eternity*, the Evangelical magazine which at that time had the largest circulation in America, and then Martin’s book, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (1960), proclaimed that Adventists were not a cult, but “brethren” of the Christian Evangelicals. However, when Adventists published *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, which contained the answers that they had provided to Martin, it became clear that they had given ground on three doctrines that had been widely held among them but were offensive to Evangelicals. All three were relevant to the specialness of Adventism and its end-time message: that Christ was born with a sinful nature (this change disowned the bulwark of last-generation perfectionism), that the writings of Ellen White were free of error and equal to the Scriptures, and that Adventists alone comprised the biblical Remnant.

Norms:

Up to this point there had not yet been many changes in Adventist standards and behavior. However, the argument used to dissuade Adventists from attending movies was typically that the place and the company there were dangerous (we were told we left our guardian angels outside if we entered). Since that argument implied that any entertainment in the home was wholesome and safe, the church provided no guidance concerning what to watch once TV was introduced. This anomaly later became the root of change.

Social Issues:

As Adventists lowered tension with society they became increasingly less willing to be radical on social issues. After Ellen White died the number of women serving as pastors, evangelists, and in administrative and departmental posts declined. This process was hastened by the contraction in church employment that accompanied the Great Depression, for it was the employees who had not been ordained who were terminated—and women had never been ordained. By the 1940s women were employed only as secretaries and Bible Workers, low status positions without authority.

- **Race:** when the racially integrated churches in the American South attracted hostility, Ellen White allowed segregated congregations as a “temporary” solution. Black pastors were mostly trained at Oakwood College, for many of the Adventist colleges were segregated. When these pastors eventually became discontented because they had no hope of promotion within conference administrations, and demanded such opportunities, the church administration replied that it was impossible to place them in positions where they would have authority over white pastors. In 1944 the church leadership created a system of racially segregated conferences with overlapping territories. Black pastors could be elected to leadership positions in the black conferences. After Apartheid was established in South Africa, Adventists bought into it, and developed separate administrations controlling racially segregated conferences. These rarely had reason to communicate with one another.
- **Polygamy:** when the mainline churches in Africa criticized Adventists for accepting polygamous families into membership, they stopped doing so, and accepted the system that was current among those churches. This forced a polygamously married man to divorce all but one of his wives in order to be baptized. This typically separated mothers from their children and left them without support, forcing some into prostitution in order to survive.

4. Australia

Accreditation of Adventist colleges was more difficult to achieve outside the US, so that it took longer for Adventism to gain an educated membership there. Avondale students were not awarded degrees until the 1970s, and then they were actually awarded by Pacific Union College in the US. Prior to that, any Australian Adventist seeking training in a profession had to pursue a degree at a university. However, few did that before the late-1950s. I can think of only three Adventist doctors in Brisbane in the early 1960s, and few other professionals.

In most Australian Adventist churches at that time the pastor was the best educated person—and he had only a certificate from Avondale! This gave him considerable authority. Churches tended to be suspicious of any educated members. For example, Dr. Cyril Evans and his wife Beryl, who was also a graduate, were never offered leadership positions at Central Church. They were the only members of the congregation with university degrees when I arrived there in 1959.

In 1958, the year before I came to university, there were only three Adventist students at the University of Queensland—studying medicine, dentistry, and Arts. However, the introduction of the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme by the Federal Government transformed the situation: in 1959 there were 4 freshmen

(3 in medicine plus me in history), and by 1962, when QUSDAS was founded, the total number of Adventist tertiary students (i.e., university, teachers college, and technical institute students) had grown to over 100.

We were influenced by the spirit of the 1960s, and asked lots of questions, struggling to sort out the tensions between what we had been taught at church and what we were studying in our classes. Our questions often made the poorly educated leaders of our congregations uneasy.

By the late 1960s, when QUSDAS had its second generation of students, the influence of the Jesus People was being felt in society, and, within the church, scholar-preachers like Edward Heppenstahl at the Adventist Seminary and Desmond Ford in Australia were teaching and preaching a grace-filled message that seemed very new and liberating to those who had lived in fear that their names could come up at any time in the Investigative Judgment.

QUSDAS members enjoyed our freedom and fellowship so much that we did not yet worry about how we would fit into the still conservative Adventist congregations once we had graduated and had moved on from QUSDAS. Perhaps we gained our first inkling of potential problems when the leaders at Central Church suddenly closed down the flourishing Youth Sabbath School, where Paul Truscott was then the Superintendent, and allocated the members of the classes there two by two around the classes in the senior Sabbath School. They almost completely emptied the church of its youth in one stroke.

5. Changes in Adventism since we Graduated from QUSDAS

The demand for education from young Adventists grew rapidly in the US in the 1960s. The Church and its colleges eventually responded by, for the first time, recruiting bright students and sending them to study for doctorates full-time at the best American universities. There they found one another, just as we had found each other a few years earlier, and met together in what came to be called Forums. These joined together in the Association of Adventist Forums, which published a journal, *Spectrum*. This soon gained considerable influence as an academically-oriented Adventist journal which was free from church control.

Several of the early *Spectrum* articles reported research on the sources used by Ellen White in her books, presenting evidence that she had made liberal use of the books in her extensive library without attribution. Other issues that garnered major attention included Science and the Bible—at a time when mounting evidence concerning the age of life on earth was finally forcing Adventist scientists to take the theory of evolution seriously – and questions concerning Biblical hermeneutics.

Adventist leaders at that time were not yet well educated or well-read, and they responded fearfully to the new openness. When Desmond Ford spoke at what was supposed to be a private Forum meeting at Pacific Union College on how the doctrine of the investigative judgment caused Adventists to live in fear that their lives were not perfect enough to survive the scrutiny, unauthorized tapes of the address were mailed in large numbers to Adventists and their leaders. This created such a flap among the leaders that it destroyed Ford's career.

Since that time the leadership of the church has become much better educated. Jan Paulson, a Norwegian who has been the President of the General Conference since 1999, has a doctorate; several other leaders have PhDs, including the President of the South Pacific Division. Though still too sensitive to the possibility of disunity in the ranks, the leaders are much more open than used to be the case. For example, it is now widely recognized that Ellen White was a plagiarist.

The 1980s brought huge Adventist growth in the Developing World—in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia (especially the Philippines, China, and, most recently, India), and Papua-New Guinea. In 2006, when the world membership topped 15 million, only 6% of members lived in the US, with 90% in the Developing World. But that is not all: Adventist immigrants from many parts of the Developing World have poured into the US and Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. These have, in turn, been so successful in reaching out to fellow-immigrants that new immigrants have achieved majority status among Adventists in many cities and several countries. The face of Adventism in the world, including much of the Developed World, has changed dramatically.

This change of racial balance among the membership has already brought many new faces among the personnel at the General Conference—for example, a Ghanaian has held the position of Secretary, the #2 position there, since the year 2000. It is inevitable that the top position will also go to someone from the Developed World. When this change occurs—and it could happen as early as the General Conference Session in 2010—it will have an impact on Adventism that will be the equivalent of the College of Cardinals electing a Nigerian or Brazilian as Pope (which is also on the cards). To give you just one example of a candidate who is being talked about as perhaps the next President of the General Conference: he is an African who has a Ph.D., is currently a Vice-president of the General Conference, and was previously President of the East Africa Division.

Church and State: During the Vietnam War American Adventists became divided about military service. Some young men who were conscripted registered as non-combatants, the most usual Adventist position in the US since World War I; others, influenced by the anti-war movement, chose to register as conscientious objectors, who were required to do community service instead of military service. The latter greatly offended the extreme patriots, who favored participation as regular, armed, soldiers. Eventually the General Conference voted to make an individual's position on military service a private issue, and it abandoned the traditional stance. When the war ended, conscription in America did also: the military had to rely on recruitment. Since Adventist colleges had long accepted federal funding, they had no way of preventing military recruiters from coming to campuses. Since this was supposedly a time of peace, many Adventists, especially racial minorities from poorer families, volunteered for the military in order to receive the benefits. In doing so they lost the right to insist on not being armed and they also lost Sabbath privileges.

Meanwhile, several Adventist military Chaplains rose to the top in their service. One of these, Rear Admiral Barry Black, who had become Chief of Naval Chaplains, was voted to the prominent post of Chaplain of the US Senate in 2003. He was not only the first Adventist in the position, but also the first member of a non-Mainline church, and the first African-American. His election was an indication of how far the tension

between Adventism and society had declined in recent decades. Adventism is well on its way to becoming a denomination.

As Adventism grew rapidly in the Developing World, Adventists became politically active in democracies, and in some where their numbers had grown substantial they became successful to an extent that church leaders in the US, where the membership is small and politically impotent, had never imagined. Perhaps the greatest impact has been had in Papua-New Guinea. When I was last there in 1999, Adventists occupied the posts of Governor-General, Deputy-Prime Minister, several Cabinet positions, and three of the judgeships on the High Court—and that is just a beginning. And yet, because this was so unexpected by Church leaders, they had done almost nothing to raise the consciousness of the members concerning such issues as pursuing social justice. I have asked Adventist politicians in several countries what impact their Adventism has had on the policies they pursue. They have almost always looked at me in confusion, and talked about not drinking or campaigning on the Sabbath, or helping the church obtain land it needed. When I was in Jamaica there were four Adventists in cabinet, and the Prime Minister had been raised as an Adventist. When I asked the Minister for Social Services what policies his Adventism led him to introduce, he looked at me blankly and then muttered that he had adopted 14 children. That may have been a wonderful personal contribution to those 14 lives, but it had nothing to do with government policy.

Relations with other churches: The break-through with the American Evangelicals in the 1950s encouraged Adventists to reach out to other Christian denominations: pastors often became involved in local ministerial organizations, and from the 1970s onwards the General Conference became involved in dialogue with various denominations and organizations. Adventists became increasingly concerned with religious liberty as a principle, rather than merely as self-protection, and began to sponsor large international conferences where representatives of many religions participated.

In the 1990s, when American hospitals increasingly fell into financial trouble and Adventists lost some of their hospitals, hospital mergers became common. The most surprising was the merger of the Adventist and Catholic (Sisters of Charity) systems in the state of Colorado. During the negotiations the Adventists were quoted as saying that the Catholics were the best merger partner for them because the two had so much in common in terms of mission.

Norms: The rules concerning Sabbath observance have relaxed considerably in recent decades. It is now common in the US, for example, for Adventists to go to restaurants after church. (When I was a child, if an Adventist visited a church and no one invited them home for a meal, then they often went hungry until after sunset.) Adventist hospitals no longer limit themselves to emergency surgery on the Sabbath because health insurance companies insist that the facilities get full use. Patients are discharged on the Sabbath and then pay their bills. Sabbath observance is now widely regarded as a good idea rather than the focus of the Judgment.

It seems that almost all young Adventists go to the movies—indeed, they are not even aware that this was once something that Adventists did not do. There are now courses on fiction, theatre, and films in Adventist colleges—all activities that were once on the proscribed list. Similarly, it is no longer likely that one will meet a woman and guess, from her dress and lack of jewelry and make-up, that she is an

Adventist. Indeed, I have come to see expensive cars as the new Adventist jewelry. It seems that the norm that is currently generating most heat is music—especially what music is acceptable in church services.

The biggest embarrassment: is that Christ has still not returned. In 1994, Adventists celebrated the 150th anniversary of October 22, 1844, the day of the “Great Disappointment”, when the Millerite expectation that Christ would return proved false. It seemed strange to be celebrating such an anniversary. It has now been almost 164 years. Thanks to her Adventist faith, my Mother expected never to face death; however, she died in 1990—in the faith, but disappointed. I am sure that many of you know similar examples. And indeed, the doctrine of the state of the dead leaves Adventists without the comfort that such loved ones are in heaven. The nearness of the Return is now generally preached with much less urgency in the Developed World than used to be the case. There are jokes around suggesting that God must have a slow computer since the Investigative Judgment has taken so long. There is a sense that Christ will come in His good time. If Adventists, and indeed early Christians long before them, were wrong and He never returns, then Adventists are in a particularly tough spot. Studies in the US have shown that vegetarian Adventists live, on the average, seven extra healthy years. That is a reward, but it is not what Adventists were led to expect.

6. What have our Personal Trajectories been?

What happened to us after we, who had been exposed to such mental and spiritual stimulation and such an intense level of fellowship, graduated from university and from QUSDAS? Did we become active in the local SDA churches where we were stationed in our new careers? The church hoped that we would marry one another and become pillars of local churches. I am eager to know to what extent this has been so. I will be surprised if this scenario proves to have been typical. Even in the USA, I have heard of lots of 25 and 30 year “homecomings” at Adventist academies where many of those present are ostentatiously ex-Adventist (smoking, drinking, clothes, adornment, diet) and where it turns out that about only 25% are still involved in the church. Moreover, the US is a country where Adventist graduates are more familiar than they were in Australia in the 1960-1970s. I would not be surprised if several of us, maybe even many of us, felt a terrible let-down after graduating, finding the churches we attempted to attend boring and not very welcoming, perhaps even suspicious of us. It would be very enlightening to hear your stories.

When I was in Sydney on a research trip in the late 1980s I was invited to a party attended by some of the brightest lights at Avondale from our time. The experience totally blew my mind! For a start, the party, a brunch, began at 11.00 – church time – on a Saturday morning. There was a lot of alcohol, I was surprised that so many there were smoking cigarettes and/or pot, and the featured food seemed to be ham and prawns and such like! Those attending the party seemed very proud that they were no longer Adventists, but it was also abundantly evident they could not get away from Adventism – they had merely turned Adventism as they knew it on its head! This is a repeat of the pattern of the academy homecomings in the USA – ostentatious rebellion against the rules, against all the memories of being chastised with a “Mrs White said...” phrase. We did not go to Adventist boarding schools, or to Avondale, so we have fewer of those kinds of memories to rebel against, depending on what it was like growing up in each of our families. So what has happened to QUSDAS members? What have been our trajectories?