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6-2021

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#### Recommended Citation

Knight, George R., "The "Advertising" of Adventist Education: The Avondale Experiment - 1" (2021). *Lake Union Herald*. 988.

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# The “Advertising” of Adventist Education: The Avondale Experiment — 1

*It is written in the prophets: “They will all be taught by God.” Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me. John 6:45 NIV.*



▲ George R. Knight

The first step in the transformation of Adventist schools took place at the Harbor Springs educational institute in the summer 1891. The next one began when Ellen White and her son, W.C. White, sailed for Australia in November 1891. Remaining there until 1900, they would have opportunity to work with some of the most responsive of Adventism’s reform leaders.

One of the most important endeavors of the Adventists in Australia in the 1890s was the founding of the Avondale School for Christian Workers (today known as Avondale College). Australia had the advantage of being beyond the reach of the conservative Adventist leadership in the United States. In addition, it was a new mission field for Seventh-day Adventists. Thus, the fledgling denomination there had no established traditions to contend with. As a result, it piloted several innovations in Australia during the nineties that would have been much more difficult to experiment with in the United States.

► Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW, 27 August 1908.



Ralph Snowball (1849-1925).

The Church forged a new type of Adventist school at Avondale. By the end of the century, Ellen White was so impressed that she referred to Avondale as an “object lesson,” a “sample school,” a “model school,” and a “pattern” (LS 374; CT 349). In 1900, she categorically stated that “the school in Avondale is to be a pattern for other schools which shall be established among our people” (MS 92, 1900).

Milton Hook, the historian of Avondale, concluded that two main goals undergirded the Avondale School. The first was the conversion and character development of its students. “Higher education,” as defined at Avondale, was that which prepared individuals for eternal life.

The second goal was the training of denominational young people for Christian service both in the local community and in worldwide mission outreach. Both goals reflect a distinct move away from the strictly academic orientation of Battle Creek College and the schools that came under its influence.

Here’s a question that we will need to ask: Why do we value Adventist Christian education? The only important answer is that it makes a difference in the lives of our children. Its primary purpose is to introduce them to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. When it does so, Adventist education has a value beyond money. ■

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*George R. Knight is a retired professor of Church History at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. This article is from his book, Lest We Forget, a daily devotional, published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, p. 304. Reprinted with permission.*