

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Lake Union Herald

Lake Union Herald

2-2022

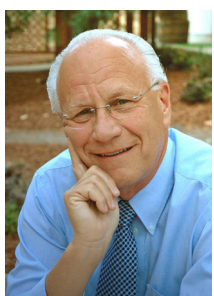
The Rise of Adventist Elementary Schools - 2

George R. Knight

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>

The Rise of Adventist Elementary Schools — 2

I have singled [Abraham] out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just. Gen. 18:19, NLT



▲ George R. Knight

Education for the faith has a long history in the Judeo/Christian realm. In fact, God chose or singled out Abraham, the father of the faithful, because of his willingness to educate his family in the ways and teachings of the Lord.

But old though the command to educate one's children in the faith may have been in the Bible, it was a latecomer in Seventh-day Adventism. The denomination would be more than 50 years past the Great Disappointment of 1844 before it began to develop an elementary education system.

The stimulus, as we saw (last time), came from Ellen White's summons in far-off Australia to form local church schools even if a congregation had but six to attend.

Such individuals in America as Edward Alexander Sutherland and Percy T. Magan, the reform leaders who would move Battle Creek College into the country in 1901, took that admonition to heart. Years later

Sutherland recalled with some exaggeration, "Magan, Miss DeGraw, and myself practically at the end of every week would pick up a teacher and go out and establish three schools before Monday morning."

Exaggeration or not, the statistics on Adventist elementary education shot practically straight up beginning in the second half of the 1890s. Watch the curve: In 1880, the denomination had one elementary school with one teacher and 15 students; in 1885, it had three schools with five teachers and 125 students; in 1890, seven schools with 15 teachers and 350 students; in 1895, 18 schools with 35 teachers and 895 students; and in 1900, 220 schools with 250 teachers and 5,000 students. And the growth didn't stop there. By 1910, the numbers had swollen to 594 schools with 758 teachers and 13,357 students. In 2006, the figures stood at 5,362 schools, 36,880 teachers, and 861,745 students.

The elementary school movement also stimulated expansion in the church's secondary and higher education. In part, that growth came about because of the increased need for Adventist elementary teachers. But, more importantly, the elementary movement gave publicity to the belief that every Adventist young person should have a Christian education.

Thank you, Lord, for our school system. Help me to do my part to help every young person in my congregation to have an education that will fit each for eternity. ■

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, page 309. Reprinted with permission.

BY 1910, THE NUMBERS HAD SWOLLEN TO 594 SCHOOLS WITH 758 TEACHERS AND 13,357 STUDENTS. IN 2006, THE FIGURES STOOD AT 5,362 SCHOOLS, 36,880 TEACHERS, AND 861,745 STUDENTS.