## NEWS

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**New Evangelism Project from Brazil is Engaging Young Adults Internationally:** Internet-savvy youth in the Latin American world are responding well to Adventist-hosted interactive presentations on Bible prophecy. The Internet-youth-evangelism plan is expected to be effective in other languages too....

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between ancient text and Anglo-Saxon translations.....

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**Innovation Conference 2012—Can Young People Help to Create the New Church?:**
Debbonnaire Kovacs tells us that 59 percent of those who grow up as members of a churchgoing family may leave that community of faith. The good news is that at least two-thirds of those who leave will not necessarily lose their faith. This data and much more comes from a recent Innovation Conference in Ohio, in her third report on the event... *(available only to AT subscribers)*

**Horizon Mosaic:** In the poem Horizon Mosaic, author Serge Agafonoff traces the questioning mind of Moses through a process of confusion to recognition of his own identity through the great I AM...*(available to all members now, but soon to be only available to AT subscribers)*
Vindalee Smith, age 38, who attended the New Dimension Seventh-day Adventist Church on Winthrop Street in the Brownsville neighborhood in New York City, was found murdered yesterday morning (October 20) in her apartment, according to the New York Times. She was eight months pregnant and scheduled to get married today. According to policy, the unborn child was also pronounced dead.

As is routine in murder investigations, the police are searching for Smith’s fiancé. Investigators refused to speculate for journalists about what happened.

On Sabbath friends and fellow church members maintained a vigil outside Smith’s town house. “They hugged and prayed,” the Times stated. They sang hymns and talked with reporters. “When she met people on the street, she always told them about the Lord,” Edith Thomas was quoted. The fiancé is evidently not a church member, according to comments of friends. They told reporters that she met the man a year ago and that she has four other children, including two in college.

When the medical examiners removed Smith’s body near sundown, a crowd of 100 sang “Amazing Grace.” Once the official vehicle left the scene, they walked to the church a few blocks away.

New Dimension Church is part of the Northeastern Conference and has about 375 members. Elder Ferron Francis is the pastor.

Update: This story was included in national television news on Sunday evening without identifying the church as Seventh-day Adventist. It was reported that the police had located the fiancé, talked with him and did not consider him a suspect.
Survey Explores How Adventists Will Vote in the 2012 Elections in the United States

Submitted: Oct 24, 2012
By AT News Team

A random sample of faculty and staff at Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in the United States reveals that they are about as divided and confused as the general public. Adventists clearly do not have a well-defined political view, at least on the hot issues of this election year.

About 28 percent of the respondents identify with the Republican Party, 38 percent with the Democratic Party and a third are independents. Asked how they voted in 2008, 59 percent said they voted for Barack Obama, 36 percent for John McCain and five percent for other candidates. Not much different than the overall voting outcome for the nation.

Nine out of ten respondents indicated that they intend to vote in November. Asked about the most important issues that will shape their vote, 71 percent picked health care, 69 percent the economy, 56 percent education, 55 percent jobs, 50 percent the Federal budget deficit and 45 percent taxes. Several other issues were important to smaller numbers.

It should not come as a surprise that a sample of Adventists expresses concern about health or that any group of Americans are concerned right now about the economy and jobs, or that a sampling of educators lists education as a priority. Some of the questions probed more specific views which may give a clearer picture of Adventist opinion.

A total of 77 percent oppose any law that would allow churches to campaign for political candidates and that view reflects a long-standing Adventist position on separation of church and state. Perhaps more surprising, 72 percent oppose the continuation of the tax cuts for the wealthy introduced by George Bush when he was president. And 69 percent oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A majority (55 percent) oppose government funding for social services provided by faith-based organizations, despite the fact that the institutions that employ them all get significant amounts of education funding under similar arrangements.

Of particular interest are attitudes on the historic Adventist positions regarding military service. A slim majority oppose Adventists serving in combatant roles in the military, while 22 percent actually favor it. At the same time nearly two-thirds (64 percent) support significant decreases in military spending by the U.S. government. Ask specifically about the moral justification for war, only eight percent said they think most wars are morally justified, while 68 percent said they are rarely justified and 15 percent said they are never morally justified. It appears that the views of American Adventists have migrated from the peace church (Mennonite) position held at the founding of the denomination, to a position closer to that of the Catholic theology of “just war.”

Health has long been an important focus for Adventists, including advocacy by Ellen G. White in books like The Ministry of Healing for widespread public health measures, which leads logically to the strong majority (59 percent) who favor extending health insurance to all Americans. It may also be related to nearly two thirds (63 percent) favoring government funding for medical research using stem cells. Asked specifically about Obamacare, nearly half (48 percent) support
it, a little more than a third (38 percent) oppose it and 14 percent have not made up their minds.

Asked if it is the responsibility of the Federal government to make sure that all Americans have health coverage, 54 percent answered “Yes” and 38 percent said “No.” In response to a question about the recent Supreme Court decision upholding Obamacare, 56 percent said it was a good thing, 27 percent said it was a bad decision and 17 percent have no opinion.

Abortion is a hot issue among Christians in America and Adventist opinion is clearly influenced by some of the debate they overhear around them. A third believe abortion should be entirely up to the woman’s choice, 52 percent believe it is acceptable in cases of rape and incest or when there is a threat to the mother’s life. Another nine percent oppose abortion under any circumstances and five percent are still not sure what to think on this topic.

Asked about how to reduce the Federal debt, 45 percent favor tax increases, 43 percent are opposed to any tax increases and 12 percent are not sure. Spending cuts are more popular, favored by 82 percent, opposed by only nine percent, with another nine percent unsure.

The respondents to this survey have high levels of civic involvement. In the last year, 60 percent worked on a community project of some kind, 48 percent were members of a service club or other civic organization, and 30 percent contacted a public official about some issue or concern. Three out of four respondents favor Adventists running for office.

The survey had a sample of 617 respondents and included all of the Adventist colleges and universities in the United States. It was designed and conducted by a team of professors from Andrews University and Washington Adventist University chaired by John Gavin, who has an academic appointment at both institutions. A complete report is being published in Spectrum, the largest journal for Adventist academics.
New Evangelism Project from Brazil is Engaging Young Adults Internationally

Submitted: Oct 26, 2012
By AT News Team

A new method of interactive, online evangelism based in Brazil is connecting with young adults worldwide, reports the Adventist News Network (ANN). A live panel discussion was streamed on the denomination’s web sites last month in Spanish and Portuguese. The format encourages viewers to dialog with speaker Luís Gonçalves throughout the series.

The program was called “Countdown” and focused on current events and Bible prophecy. “We are keeping up-to-date on modern media that reaches the youth, but the message we share is prophetic and Biblical, the same message that has always transformed so many lives,” said Areli Barbosa, general program coordinator for the series. He said that the subject of prophecy was selected after a survey of young people indicated they were most interested in learning more about end-time events.

Data from Twitter messages indicate that the project was effective. “We reached almost two thousand tweets per hour at the start of the program,” said Rogéria Ferraz, technical coordinator for the series. An estimated 84,000 viewers watched the Portuguese livestream and some 45,000 watched in Spanish. These numbers are based on a survey of a random sample of Internet users after the series, ANN reports.

The survey also revealed that viewers ranged in age from their late teens to early thirties and watched from as many as fifty countries worldwide. Indeed, viewers from South America to Slovakia sent questions to Gonçalves about the return of Christ, the Millennium and other end-time topics. Organizers are following up with video chats and said they plan to make the online evangelism series an annual event.

Erton Köhler, president of the denomination’s South American Division (SAD), said the “Countdown” series will serve as a model to build upon in the future. “As a church, we have to go where the people are, and if they’re on their computers, we need to go to them, speaking a language they understand,” Köhler said.

“I think that this program has incredible potential, not just for South America, but for other areas, too. Here, we have youth gathered together in their homes with groups of friends to watch Countdown,” said Johnatan Elías Adarme Rodríguez, who watched from Colombia. Viviane Souza Paz, a viewer from Brazil, said the series clarified Scripture for her. “I’ve never understood the Bible as well as I do now,” she said.

A source told Adventist Today that web-based, interactive programming has great potential in developing nations. “It is not as costly as television or smart phones, either for the producers or the consumers.” Young adults can access the web in Internet cafes on university campuses and many other places, even among the poorest populations.
“It is not surprising that young adults in developing countries have an interest in the apocalyptic,” an Adventist theology professor told Adventist Today. “As these areas urbanize and Western culture spreads, their traditional world is literally coming to an end. New generations have always had an interest in the future, and that is really the theme of authentically Adventist faith.”

*Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.*
The executive committee of the Southern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has voted to submit the names of two women employed as pastors for approval by the Pacific Union Conference for ordination. Myriam Salcedo-Gonzales and Janet L. White have both been credentialed as Commissioned Ministers for some time.

The committee arrived at this decision after a long process of Bible study, prayer and reflection. Surveys were conducted of the pastors and lay members of the Region committees to get the views of leadership in the conference. There was considerable discussion over several meetings and recognition of the strong views and opinions held by people on both sides of the topic, including the views of women.

After a union conference constituency meeting voted four to one to end gender discrimination in ordination, the conference executive committee took action along the same lines for its territory. This was voted on October 2.

The Southern California Conference includes about 45,000 members in nearly 150 congregations. The territory of the conference is the Los Angeles metropolitan area with a total population of 11.3 million. It is one of the largest and most diverse and urbanized local conferences in the denomination.
Summary for Chapter 2: Religion’s Usefulness: The Human Refuge

Religion is a disease, but it is a noble disease.  
Heraclitus

This chapter opens with a discussion of alternate perspectives for looking at usefulness. This may include the concerns of clergy, aristocracy and the typical layman. Alternatively one may look at the different aspects of human culture that seem to get support from religion such as exclusivity, hierarchy and nihilism about the everyday world. For our presentation we will however focus on a series of aspects of religious practice/function that seem to be highly valued by many devotees.

Social cohesion: That We May Love and Care for Each Other. The sociologist Emile Durkheim was convinced that the primary explanation for religion was its social function and my own personal observations support this. Our greatest happiness seems to come from our interactions with other people. Our primary evolutionary heritage is probably in the context of small hunter gatherer groups. A religion becomes for many people a safe refuge in the midst of a larger impersonal world—a return to a village home.

Power Satisfaction: That Some Men May Be God. The claim that you know the mind of a God and represent His interests in the world may allow you to act with arrogant disregard for the interests of those who disagree with you—or with a selfless concern for others.

Existential Relief: That Men May Never Die. Most religions promise some form of life beyond existence in this world. This is a great relief for those who fear an eternal dissolution or simply hope for greater accomplishments or reconciliation with the universe in a second or future life.

Meaning Making: That We Might Know Our Importance in the Universe. Most religious people feel that their religion tells them where they came from, why they are here and where they should be going. The Abrahamic religions say all believers are made in God’s image and important to him thus certifying their individual value.

Personal Validation: Our Parental Substitute. Many or even most of us have a lifelong need for parental approval. Religions acting for a “divine parent” are usually eager to fill this
role in exchange for devotion especially gifts to the organization.

*Comfort in Distress: That We May Know That We Are Not Alone.* A significant number of religious people, especially within the Abrahamic religions, trust that there is some divine power in charge of the world and responsive to their needs and hopes. Thus they attempt to relieve their anxieties by putting things in “God’s Hands.”

*Acculturation of the Young: That Our Children May Be Good Like Us.* Almost every religious group seeks to indoctrinate its children in its belief system both within the family and in a formal schooling if possible. It is considered the most important way of teaching the values of the community—often along with claims that other groups or religions are inferior.

*Identification of Cooperators: That We May Avoid Being Cheated.* Religious groups with their social interconnections are often considered by members as relatively safe places to search for non-cheating providers—of everything from dental care to car repairs.

*Prayer, Meditation and Problem Solving.* Reviewing our problems and attempting to clearly explain them to someone else, even to an imaginary interlocutor, may lead us to understand them better and thus to make better decisions.

Religions get power from the illusion of being founded by some divine act or acts reaching the human world. Their continuing success however comes not from supernatural action but from the helpful ways they fill many human needs. Some would say a religion is a way of framing a human life; of giving it context and meaning.
What I Saw in New Zealand

Submitted: Oct 23, 2012
By Chris Barrett

Christine, (my wife) and I have just returned from a 9-day trip to the North Island of New Zealand. We both love nature, and while there did our best to see as much of the area as possible.

We spent a week based in the beautiful, tourist-popular, coastal town of Piahia at the Bay of Isles.

Portland Sandstone

On the way to Piahia we passed by Portland, a locality just south of the coastal city of Whangarei. Outside Portland is a large quarry. Its walls are a cement grey limestone. It is quarried for making cement, but also blocks and rocks for other uses are produced. The limestone is around 100 m thick, with all but the upper 13 m being consistently high grade limestone. All formed from ancient sea floors.

The quarry is quite deep, cutting down into the side of a hill, but even at its lowest point is 63 meters above sea level. There is also coal underneath some of these areas of limestone to the north and west of Whangarei. A mine just 1.5 kilometers (km) north of the quarry had produced in excess of 4 million tons of coal from beneath this limestone level when it finally closed in 1971.

Heading northwards, we found ourselves driving over a landscape built around and over volcanic rock. We passed hills formed by volcano peaks, long since worn down. Much of the flow from volcanoes was spewed on top of the limestone level, which in places was heavily eroded before being overlain with the volcanic flows, which are in turn heavily eroded. If you want a glimpse of how erosion has effected volcanic basalts just Google “wairere boulders northland” and search images.
Kawiti Glow Worms

Some 50 km of winding road later, we passed a sign to the Kawiti glow worm cave. The turn off was about 5 km south of Kawakawa, and only half an hour’s drive from our destination.

We returned to the Glow Worm Cave the next day. The cave is about 200 meters long and runs underneath a layer of limestone. Basically the creek takes a shortcut from one side of a limestone ridge to the other. This is the same layer of limestone as at Portland, 50 km to the south. Again, it is formed from uplifted sea floor. It is not continuous because of either erosion or burial by volcanic activity.

The valleys that form the ridge are caused by erosion. Massive boulders hang from the edge of the creek where the cave exits the ridge; signs that the creek exit was once hundreds of meters farther out, the ridge much wider, and the cave much longer.

Our Maori guide gave us a fascinating commentary as we followed his glow worm-like lamp along the walkway. The worms only inhabit the upper regions of the cave where climbing crickets and floods cannot reach them. They looked like a milky way snaking their way along the pitch of the cave roof. The glow of the worms is effective in attracting flying insects to their doom.

Apparently a 26-year-old Charles Darwin went through the cave on Boxing Day, 1835, when he spent 9 days at the Bay of Isles, Piahia region. Here is a link which provides a fascinating insight into this event: [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10620386](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10620386)

After exiting the far end of the cave we climbed back over the ridge to the entry via an amazing path winding through massive, eroded chunks of limestone. Some boulders were up to 10 meters high, and carved into all kinds of fascinating shapes by the elements. It was this limestone erosion that was leaching down into the cave below and forming massive stalactites. Some are meters in diameter.

Kauri Trees

Much of the North Island was home to the massive, long-lived Kauri trees. Sadly, 90% of New Zealand's forests were destroyed by logging, farming and fire. In the 10% that remains there are just a few dozens of the larger kauri's with a diameter over 2 meters left.

We visited the largest few. Te Matua Ngahere (Father of the Forest) has a diameter over 5 meters, and Tane Mahuta (Lord of the Forest), is 50 meters high with a slightly smaller diameter than Te Matua. Both trees are estimated to be almost 2000 years old. Later, in the Museum at Te Papa, we saw age rings on slightly smaller trees and the rings are clearly discernible in the kauri timber. In the museum we also saw illustrations of the tree trunk sizes of massive Kauris seen and recorded in the forests before logging and fires destroyed them. The largest was the famed The Forest Ghost, which was reportedly measured at 8.54 meters diameter. Tragically The Ghost was consumed by fire in 1890.
Lost Forests of the Past

These Kauri trees are impressive, and standing at the base of a 2000-year-old tree is both humbling and sobering, but it does not stop there. Traveling further northwards, we stopped at the Gum Diggers Park. This is 130 km northwards as the crow flies. Over 100 years ago Kauri gum was a valuable commodity, its resin being used in paints and other products. The gum forms on limbs and injuries on the Kauri. It then either falls to the ground and is buried on the forest floor, or is buried when the tree falls. This gum is typical of many conifers, but is of a superior quality on the kauri. Over 10,000 tons of gum was exported from New Zealand, and the country earned more money from gum than gold, another of its early resources. The kauri gum has the same appearance and qualities as amber. Some has aged significantly and is of amber quality, some is less aged, and is still called “gum” even though it is very hard.

Early pioneers, assisted by the Maori people, discovered that the swamps in the northland of the North Island were host to large amounts of gum from buried kauri forests. Thousands of buried kauri trees lie under farmland and swamps in the region. For reasons unknown, every buried tree found is lying east to west. Some suggest a tsunami.

These trees have been buried quickly and are preserved in peat bogs and swamps at depths of over 2 meters. The Gum Diggers Park has exposed one of these massive logs for tourists to see. Excavated down to about 3 meters with a stairway and decking beside it in the pit, lies a massive kauri log. The log is from a tree of a size indicative to be over 1000 years old. Information on the site suggests the tree was buried over 40,000 years ago.

Standing in the pit, looking back up at the wall extending to the swamp floor, is a journey in time. The swamp floor is not the highest level the land had reached. Protruding down from the current surface are the lower sections of taproots from a massive kauri tree. If you can imagine cutting beneath the roots of a tree about a meter below the base and leaving the roots below that point intact, you may begin to picture the scene. Effectively, high up above the current swamp floor there was a giant kauri tree, now long gone, and the floor has since eroded away to its current level, leaving just the lower section of its massive root system.

The wall of the pit extends down almost 2 meters to the top of the log, and shows a myriad of layers of time. Forest layers, seasons, fires, decomposed trees, and measures of life are compressed down into dense layers of peat, clay and gum: Then there is the log itself, buried in almost 2 meters of more rapidly deposited material. But, that is not the end. We did not see it, but apparently beneath this massive log lies yet another level of forests, occupied by even older logs, buried in an earlier mass destruction of kauri trees. Data on site suggests this older forest reaches ages of 100,000 years and was also destroyed by a large event.

The land at Gum Diggers Park is only meters above sea level, but is apparently geologically similar to the limestone seen elsewhere.

After Gum Diggers Park we went to the very top of the North Island and stood at the tip overlooking the convergence of the Pacific and Tasman seas. Their currents seemed to clash in a
long line of eddies and sandy turbulence, perhaps reminiscent of the forces that have shaped the land of the long white cloud.

This is a selective overview of a fantastic time in NZ, and there is much more I could tell. If you read my wife's diary of the holiday, you would get an entirely different picture. For me, the very breeze blowing through the canopy of towering forest trees spoke of an ancient past, and the musty, earthiness of peat bog logs smelled of deep time.

Of course, I did not get to see the extinct Moa. Nor did we get a chance to see the critically endangered Kakapo, the world’s largest, but flightless, parrot. I did see a stuffed Kiwi in the museum; better luck next time. I cannot see any of these in Australia.

I share these snapshots because they are relevant to the age of this earth and living things upon it. I have drawn no conclusions. Observant readers will quickly see there are significant pointers to geological layers, ages and sequences which may raise challenging questions in light of traditional creation and flood stories.

Below is a map of the geology of the area with locations mentioned above identified, also a legend to match. Source:
http://www.otago.ac.nz/geology/research/general_geology/maps/nzgeolkey.html
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This map created by the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences
Weeping and Consolation

Submitted: Oct 25, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

Thus says the LORD:
Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."
See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame, those with child and
those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
Jeremiah 31:7-9a

I’ve always loved this portion of Jeremiah. There are several chapters clustered here that offer promises of hope, love, and courage. It’s from right here that the beloved promise, “I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for calamity” comes. [29:11]

This particular passage is interesting because the two verses seem to stand in contrast: “Sing and shout,” while begging, “Save your people!” In other words, the praise comes before the deliverance, before even the promise of deliverance in the next few verses.

This Sunday will be the birthday of my late husband and would have been our anniversary as well, so for me, the verse that means the most right now is “With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back.” I am deeply grateful for the consolations of my Abba, including the consolations he offers through the arms and words of human friends. I so long for a straight path in which I won’t stumble.

How about you? Which part of this chapter most appeals? In what ways are you most grateful for God’s deliverance, leading, and consolation?
Love You With All My Liver.

Submitted: Oct 25, 2012
By Jack Hoehn

My last blog (Why do Things Evolve?) suggested that the real conflict between the Bible and Science does not come from the basic facts, but from the interpretation of the facts. The Bible in broad outline seems to agree with much of the broad outline of modern science. It is in the details where we come apart.

Bible students who try to find dates and chronology for creation soon find that their speculations run afoul of observable clocks of various kinds found in the creation. For a recent example see Brian Bull’s article on the Greenland Icefields (Brian Bull Greenland Icefields). While we can date the accession of Nebuchadnezzar fairly accurately we cannot without huge suppositions and presuppositions date creation from Bible stories. There are no dates for creation given in your Bible. It is all a calculation based on speculation to suggest it happened 6,000 or 9,000 years ago.

But even beyond the problem of chronology, is translation of what words mean. None alive speaks the ancient Semitic languages that the Old Testament was written in. No one on earth, even the modern Greeks, speak or write in the Greek used in the New Testament. So all Scriptures has to be translated.

When in Chinyanja I speak of “Pelo yahow” I am speaking of a four chambered vital organ that pumps blood through your body. But the verb “ku pela” means “to live”. So I learned that the four chambered muscle that pumps blood through your body is called “the liver”, in Chinyanja. If I don’t translate it correctly I might treat a patient with a heart attack, for gall stones! If a Chichewa patient told me clearly, “I have pain in my liver”, I need to interpret that into English to understand, “I have pain in my heart”.

Who is to say if the ancient English or the ancient Chewa were not more correct, both these organs, the hepatic “liver” and the cardiac “liver” are vital organs. As the Peanuts cartoon strip once explained, “If you don’t have a liver, you’re a goner!”

When Moses was inspired by God to tell a creation narrative to Hebrew slaves, and he had wanted to tell them not that creation happened in 6 short solar days, but that God created the heavens and the earth in six successive stages or eras, what word would God have inspired Moses to use? What is the ancient Semitic word for era, age, or indefinite period of time?

I don’t know this. But I am told, there isn’t one.

I am told that when this thought (era, age, stage, indefinite time in the past) is required they use the word “yom”. Yom is the Semitic (ancient Hebrew) word for day, as opposed to night, the word for the 12 hours from sunrise till sunset. Yom is also a word which can also be used for 24 hours as “the first day of the week”. Or like in English, yom can mean way back then,
sometime before now, such as “back in Grandpa’s day”. Or as in “the day of the Lord” which
means, at that time, then, and does not necessarily mean 24 hours.

But, but, but… the short-term creationist insists, it says in Genesis there was evening and there
was morning, \textit{yom} one. Surely that settles it on 24 hours?

But, but, but… the long-term creationist insists, it doesn’t say “evening and morning” it says a
word that means “darkening” and then a word that means “lightening”. So you could interpret it
better by saying there was darkness and then after God created there was light, era one. There
was more darkness and then after God created there was more light, era two. There was more
darkness and then after God created there was more light, era three… This progressive creation,
imposing design on chaos is the struggle between darkness and light spoken of in John 1.

So both young earth creationists, and old earth creationists, agree that Creation happened in 6
events. The difference is not “did God create in 6 \textit{yom}” the difference is in how you interpret
the “\textit{yom}”.

12 hours of light? 24 solar hours? Or a stage, era, occurrence in the past, back in the day?

The 4\textsuperscript{th} commandment of Exodus 20 has no difficulty with the Hebrew, no matter what
conclusion you take. It remains true that God created in 6 \textit{yom} and rested on the 7\textsuperscript{th} \textit{yom}, no
matter what interpretation you make of \textit{yom}. Short day or Great Day; very busy suddenly like
magic days, or very long at the speed of nature eras; days as counted from the surface of the
earth, or days as counted from Heaven where one day can be as a thousand years on earth,
according to 2 Peter?

It is not a question of God doing it or of godless evolution. It is a question of translation, of
interpretation. It is a question of God creating nearly instantaneously or God creating at the
speed of nature. It may seem that a 13.7 Billion year old universe is very slow, but if we believe
in God being eternal, and offering to us life in the future that it eternal, then all time is short in
comparison to eternity.

And if Adventist theology is correct, the events of this Great Controversy are not only for this
earth, they are for the universe. Taking Universal Time to solve a Universal Conflict is not
strange, but quite appropriate.

Adventist creationists of all chronologies can agree on the origin and purpose of the weekly
Sabbath no matter what your interpretation of \textit{yom}, and we can take comfort with that right deep
down in our livers.
Innovation Conference 2012—Can Young People Help to Create the New Church?

Submitted: Oct 27, 2012
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This is the third in a series of reports on this year’s 8th annual National Conference on Innovation, sponsored by Seventh-day Adventist Partners in Innovation, Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and others. The conference was held in Columbus, OH, on October 7, 8, and 9, 2012.

On Monday afternoon, David Kinnaman, Director of Barna Group, continued his presentations on young adults and their perceptions of the church. He began this session with an array challenging data:

59% of young people who grow up in the church will drop out at some point.
Of these, 40% didn’t necessarily lose faith; they simply lost faith in institutionalized religion. For the sake of discussion, he labeled these “Nomads.”
Only 10% are actually lost to faith and say they no longer believe in God at all. Kinnaman suggested we could see them as “Prodigals.”
30% can be seen as “Exiles”—they are stuck somewhere between the familiar, comfortable faith of their parents and the faith they believe God is asking them to step into.
(There is overlap, of course, which is why this adds up to more than 59% but less than 100%.)

“The culture that we live in,” said Kinnaman, “is complex and complicated. So many things are in constant flux.” He went on to share just one set of statistics that exemplify the huge changes just within the lifetimes of their boomer parents (which included many if not most of the attendees in the room):

“Launching in life,” measured by having a job, financial independence, home, and family, was usually completed by age 30 in the 1960s. Today it is usually not completed by that age.
In the 60s, just 5% of live births were to unwed mothers. Today the number is 41%.

Traditional church, meanwhile, works best for families with children. Single adults of whatever age often don’t feel they fit in, and this problem is nothing new. What is new is a whole generation of single adults, which translates to a whole new challenge for the church.

There is a concept, Kinnaman said, that leaving church is just something young people do—a phase they go through. Many baby boomers left, too. Kinnaman and other Barna researchers frequently get the response, “Don’t worry about them; they’ll be back when they have kids.” This may often have been true for boomers; in fact, Kinnaman believes the drop-out problem is not even as bad as it was with boomers. But he says the times are so completely different that statistics for how many boomers eventually came back to church don’t translate.

“This generation,” he said, “is not just ‘sort of’ different—our culture is discontinuously different and we are all immersed in it.” Content is moving from passive to interactive and from literacy to “visualcy.” People expect to participate, not just sit and listen. He shared a powerful image on a slide. On the left were images of a telephone, an adding machine, a set of encyclopedias, a map, a record player, camera, etc. In the middle was a large = sign. And on the
right. . . a little cell phone. All this paraphernalia of knowledge and information is now carried around in our hand, and we expect instant and constant access to it, as well as participation in it.

Meanwhile, technology has made it more possible than ever before in human history to live what Kinnaman calls “split souls.” We can divide our lives into different sections—religion and work, for instance, or even create whole new “selves.” Social media can isolate and cause break-down in relationships and society. Yet it can also be a positive tool. Kinnaman offered a simple measuring stick—“If you’re using social media to become more social, you’re using it in the right way.” He added a new item to a traditional list—more than stewarding our time, talent, and treasure, he suggested we steward our technology use, too.

When the “Nomads,” “Prodigals,” and “Exiles” above were asked why they left the churches of their childhoods, they said, “Christianity does not seem to answer complicated questions in a deep, thoughtful or challenging way.”

Kinnaman felt that the best biblical metaphor for today’s church is the Babylonian exile. When the captives were “beside the waters” (Ps. 137), which Kinnaman likened to constant change, flow, and flux, they needed the songs of home. He offered three conclusions:

1 Disciples cannot be mass produced. They must be apprenticed into the art of following Jesus, one life at a time. We have 17 times more churches than McDonalds shops in the US. More content or infrastructure isn’t what we need. In referencing “mega-churches,” Kinnaman asked, “Don’t we pay attention to student/teacher ratios in other parts of life?” Even Jesus couldn’t closely disciple more than a dozen at a time. We need to create relationships, and our technology needs to help with that, not hinder it.

2 Reverse mentoring: Younger Christians can help point the church toward new practices and approaches to faithfulness. We need them! A lot! 54% of 18-34 year olds have or want to start their own businesses. What an opportunity for our churches! How many new ideas could they give us about new ways to do things? Do we want this, or do we love our traditions more than our children?

3. Faithfulness in life’s complexity
This generation wants to hear about complexities from us. Kinnaman used sex as one example. It used to be all about rules, silence, only for procreation. Now our young people are surrounded by the idea that it’s about me, self-expression, gratification. The church could say, it’s about us, it’s humble, relational, conscious of others, its end is interdependence. The choices we make privately have profound effects on our whole community. “They’re ready to hear this.”

The takeaway from this outstanding presentation was We need young prodigals, exiles, and nomads more than they need us. Instead of trying to convince them they need us and what we have to offer, what if we tell them the truth—“Help! We need you!”

And watch and see what they do with that.
Horizon Mosaic

A memory burns ...
another time, another place
forty years ago, or more?

That world, beneath my gold-shod feet
Every thing within my grasp
except to know my own true Self

A slave by birth
untimely drawn out, to become
unlikely learned, in Egypt’s wisdom
uneasily, pharaonically
enthroned

Inexorably
an overwhelming sense of
‘that’s not right!’
explodes
all that was interned ...

Who AM I ?

Have I learned no thing

here, in Midian suspended ?
Can wild-ness and strife teach
where sophistication fails ?

Now sacredly barefoot
I stand
in Horeb’s mountain school
I study
a bush that burns

Unlike my little self
it is not consumed
A far more ancient memory
bursts into Being ...

I AM
Editors note: Dr Agafonoff is a long time Atoday reader and an Australian physician and inventor, interested in true spirituality and hippocratic medicine.