<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Adventist Hospitals in Northeast U.S. Will End Denominational Affiliation:</strong> At a time when the General Conference says it plans to vastly expand its Adventist medical outreach to the cities, why are the Church’s last hospitals in the Northeast apparently leaving the Adventist fold?...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach Worker Claims He Was Fired by Adventist Hospital for Anti-Tobacco Activism:</strong> An Adventist Health employee in California says he lost his job because of an anti-smoking stance he took in a local newspaper Letters column....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35,000 Children from Poor Families in Eastern Europe Aided by Christmas Campaign:</strong> Christmas came a little late (by Western standards) this year in parts of Eastern Europe, often in the form of thousands of packaged gifts from ADRA for low-income families....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oakwood University Students Help Children from Alabama See the Inauguration:</strong> Comparatively few Americans ever get to watch a presidential inauguration in person, let alone children living in southern Alabama. Several Oakwood University students did something about the problem last week....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>But the Snake Told the Truth!</strong>: The story of Eve and the snake in the garden can literally be dangerous to your faith, says Blogger Andy Hanson....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If You Only Knew</strong>: When young men grab guns and slaughter little children in their classrooms, is there still room for Christian compassion toward the killers? Blogger Mark...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gutman believes "if we only knew"....

**More Texts for SS "Origins" Lesson 4:** If we hold the stories of Creation in Genesis to be real and relevant, must we also accept the traditional young-earth/short-week chronology? Blogger Jack Hoehn asks us to pause and consider....

**Joy=Strength:** Do we find strength in the Joy of the Lord as we celebrate the sacred festivals and remembrances of our faith? Devotional writer Debonnaire Kovacs employs the story of Nehemiah to help us focus on joy lost—and powerfully rekindled....

**SUBSCRIBERS' BONUS FEATURE**

**Andrews Seminary Student Places High in Academy of Preachers 2012 Preachapalooza:** Adventist ministers are known for many good things, though rarely seem to break into the uppermost ranks of general oratorical achievement. Young preaching phenom Laurent Grosvenor, however, may be one to watch....

* A Weekly Newsletter from [www.atoday.org](http://www.atoday.org)

This message was sent to [ahc@andrews.edu](mailto:ahc@andrews.edu) from Adventist Today, Post Office Box 1135, Sandy, OR 97055-1135.
[Edit profile / unsubscribe](mailto:) [Forward to a friend](mailto:)]
Last Adventist Hospitals in Northeast U.S. Will End Denominational Affiliation

Submitted: Jan 23, 2013  
By AT News Team

At a time when the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is promoting expanded health outreach in New York City, the two remaining Adventist hospitals in the northeast sector of the United States are both taking steps to end their affiliation with the denomination. An application has been filed with state authorities in Maine to transfer control of Parkview Adventist Medical Center in Brunswick to Central Maine Healthcare, and Hackettstown Regional Medical Center (HRMC) in New Jersey has three bids from health care organizations, according to Becker’s Hospital Review.

The situation in New Jersey is less clear than the one in Maine. It is also closer to New York City, situated in an outer suburb where a significant number of residents commute into the city by train, bus or Interstate 80. Adventist HealthCare, a nonprofit affiliated with the Columbia Union Conference which controls HRMC, has announced that it is considering “strategic affiliations” but has not filed any legal applications for change of status as yet.

Parkview is waiting for approval from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and there has been local opposition to the proposed change. This has come primarily from Mid-Coast Hospital, a competitor of Parkview’s in the Portland metro area. Adventist Today was also told that a “third option” had been put forward by an Adventist group, although no confirmation of this could be found.

“For more than a decade, we have had a strong working relationship with Central Maine Healthcare that has supported our mission to help people get well and stay well,” Mike Ortel, chairman of the hospital board and president of the Northern New England Conference, said in a statement published in the Bangor Daily News. “We want to continue that relationship because we care about our patients and our communities.” A number of local residents have told Adventist Today that if Mid-Coast Hospital took over Parkview it would likely close down the Brunswick facility at some point. Local news media have also hinted at this outcome.

If the control of Parkview is transferred to Central Main Healthcare, little will change other than the name of the institution. The consortium has made this clear in the legal undertakings in its application to the state. The current administrator—Randy Reynolds, an Adventist—will retain his job as will the other current employees. Peter Chalke, the president of Central Maine Healthcare, is on record as stating that “we believe in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s core values and mission [and] we intend to continue those faith-based values” at Parkview hospital, although the General Conference attorneys have advised that the word “Adventist” must be removed from its name if the local conference turns over organizational control.

Although no public conflict has erupted as it did in Maine newspapers, three New Jersey health care organizations have submitted bids for the Hackettstown hospital. It currently has an alliance with Hackensack University Medical Center which that institution is proposing to maintain and strengthen. Atlantic Health System in Morristown and Ascension Healthcare based in St. Louis,
Missouri, have also sent proposals to Adventist HealthCare, according to Becker’s Hospital Review.

Adventist HealthCare’s management and board will make the decision about the future status of Hackettstown hospital. It also operates four hospitals and a number of nursing centers in suburbs of Washington DC. It is one of the largest employers in the state of Maryland. The nonprofit agency got its start in 1907 with the Washington Sanitarium, today’s Washington Adventist Hospital. Ellen G. White donated the royalties from her book The Ministry of Healing to start the institution. It shares a campus with Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park about two miles from where the General Conference office complex was located until 1989, when it moved six miles further out into the suburbs.

If both the Parkview and Hackettstown hospitals end their affiliation with the Adventist Church, there will be no Adventist hospital north of the historic Mason-Dixon Line and east of Dayton, Ohio, in the Midwest. At one time there were several more, including New England Memorial Hospital in the suburbs of Boston and Reading Rehabilitation Hospital in eastern Pennsylvania.

There are three Adventist churches in Hackettstown and nearby Tranquility, where the New Jersey Conference maintains a retreat center on a campus that once housed a boarding academy. The largest has fewer than 150 members and the other two are smaller congregations. The Brunswick church, long known as the “hospital church,” has more than 400 members and three miles away is a congregation of about 125 in historic Topsham, Maine, the hometown of Ellen White.

“The changes taking place in the way health care is organized in America means that it is becoming impossible for smaller, independent hospitals to survive,” a health care executive told Adventist Today. “There is little that can be done to avoid this kind of development.” The other Adventist hospitals across the country all belong to systems that are affiliated with the denomination, but these two hospitals are “just too far away,” another health care executive told Adventist Today.

“Starting in the first decade of the 20th century, Ellen White urged the denomination to develop a strong urban mission program in ‘the cities of the east,’ but it has never been seriously pursued or invested in,” says Monte Sahlin, an urban ministry specialist who has written about this history in his book Mission in Metropolis: The Adventist Movement in an Urban World. “We simply have not displayed the organizational will to build sustainable institutions to serve the general public in these cities. In many ways, the Northeast has never been an easy place for Adventists to feel at home, so it remains one of the major unreached sections of the globe. We are losing ground more than we are gaining it, both here and in many places in Europe.”
Outreach Worker Claims He Was Fired by Adventist Hospital for Anti-Tobacco Activism

Submitted: Jan 24, 2013
By AT News Team

Steven Gallegos has filed a lawsuit against Glendale Adventist Medical Center claiming that the hospital fired him because of pressure from local politicians after he spoke out against the loosening of an anti-smoking ordinance. “My heart was broken,” Gallegos told the Los Angeles Times and the Glendale News Press. “The local and national reputation that I have was tossed out the window. I really feel that politics got in the way of public health.”

The hospital provides regular programs to help patients stop smoking, and Gallegos was employed as an outreach worker for these programs. He told reporters that in May 2012 he received a hand-written note from the medical center’s chief executive, Kevin Roberts, affirming his work and in September he was given a three percent merit increase in wages.

Gallegos has been an advocate for anti-smoking legislation for more than a decade and says that he has written letters to the editor before without any negative comments from the hospital administration. In October the Glendale city council discussed amendments to an ordinance adopted in 2008, which limits smoking in the outdoor seating areas of restaurants and the common spaces of apartment houses. Gallegos spoke against it, and the council decided not to amend the ordinance, but at the next meeting, without anti-tobacco advocates present, three council members voted a new ordinance that weakened the restrictions.

The three Council members—Ara Najarian, Laura Friedman and Rafi Manoukian—were criticized for their actions in a letter that Gallegos wrote to the Glendale News Press. He says that he was fired for that letter because the elected official pressured the hospital administration to get rid of him. A hospital official did write a letter to the same newspaper not long after it published Gallegos’ letter, chiding Gallegos for his comments. Another hospital employee who did the same thing was also chided in the same letter, but has not been fired.

The politicians claim they had nothing to do with any action against Gallegos. A hospital representative told the newspapers that the hospital would not respond to questions about the case because it does not disclose personnel issues and had not received a copy of the lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, asks for $5 million each from the hospital, three top administrators and the three politicians. The suit is for “wrongful termination.” Adventist Today has asked a number of sources and discovered that Gallegos is evidently not a member of the Adventist Church, although he is clearly aligned with Adventist values on the issue of tobacco and public health.

“We only have one side of the story,” an Adventist management professional pointed out. “Who knows what else is involved here. It is not fair to jump to conclusions.”

“Adventist institutions are just as susceptible to political pressures as any other organization,” an Adventist theologian told Adventist Today. “Someone does need to ask the question of what
kind of witness are we providing in this situation. This is an issue that has deep roots in Adventist heritage as well as important implications today.”
The Adventist Develop and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Germany organized a campaign last fall that resulted in the delivery of Christmas packages to 35,000 children in low-income communities in Belarus, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia. The boxes contained toys and food, as well as other items.

Christmas was celebrated January 6 and 7 in many of these areas where the Eastern Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar. Churches, schools and youth groups throughout Germany collected in-kind gifts as well as cash donations for the project. The campaign is called Children Helping Children.

ADRA trucked the gift boxes into the communities and worked with local non-governmental organizations to distribute them to needy families. Collaborating volunteer groups in Germany organized flea markets and bake sales to help fund the trucking expense.

One particularly creative effort this year was organized by Friendly Service, a volunteer group in Munich. On November 23 student volunteers recruited by the group gave five hours to wrapping Christmas gifts for customers at a shopping center. The tips donated by the people they helped went to help fund the campaign.

“The project puts a new spin on an old tradition among Christian churches,” an American pastor commented upon hearing about the program. “Church members and their friends in the community seem to want to do something for the poor at Christmas and ADRA Germany has channeled this into an effective project. I wonder what could happen if ADRA in the United States were to do something like this with one million Adventists?”

Information was provided by the APD Adventist News Agency in Switzerland.
Oakwood University Students Help Children from Alabama See the Inauguration

Submitted: Jan 21, 2013
By AT News Team

Five student volunteers from Oakwood University are spending today helping escort a group of 14 children from a low-income community in southern Alabama as they observe the inauguration in Washington DC. The children are nine through 14 years of age and live in Foley, Alabama, according to the Huntsville Times.

An after-school children’s program at the John McClure Snook Youth Club in Foley organized the trip. Kishawn Knight, a 12-year-old sixth grader from Foley Intermediate School, “said he has never been that far away from home before,” the newspaper reported. “Most of the club’s participants live within an eight- to 10-block radius in Foley.”

The parents of the children raised the money for the trip, organizing fish fries and bake sales, as well as getting some funding from two local churches, civic groups and businesses. “None of the children could afford this,” said Deborah Ferguson, program director. The youth center is a local nonprofit that was formed after the Boys and Girls Clubs of South Alabama closed down operations in Baldwin County in 2008.

In addition to the volunteers from Oakwood University, which is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, another educational institution also helped make the trip possible. Lodging for the children and their chaperones was provided by Trinity Washington University, a Catholic school that began in 1897.

“It is a great way for our young adults to demonstrate what it means to be an Adventist,” a youth pastor told Adventist Today. “Take children to see an historic event that helps shape their values and rub shoulders with Christians of other faiths; it is the kind of activity that young adult ministry is all about.”
But The Snake Told The Truth!

Submitted: Jan 23, 2013
By Andy Hanson

The story of The Fall has been and always will be the bane of biblical literalists. I have never heard a sermon preached that dealt with the entire story. It’s as if Genesis 3:22 & 23 doesn’t exist! Consider the facts as reported in the NIV.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it...

And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

What is to be learned from this story if taken as literal truth?

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate or even touched fruit from the tree, they would die, but they didn’t!

The Snake said, “When you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”. It happened.

According to the story, even after The Fall, Adam and Eve could have lived forever as long as they had access to the tree of life. However, God didn’t want these two, disobedient, newly minted “gods” to live forever, so He kicked them out of the Garden, and made their lives, the lives of their descendants, and the lives of all other flora and fauna on the earth so difficult that they would have to ceaselessly recycle their immortal genetic material.

If taken literally, the story suggests that Adam and Eve were simply higher order animals before The Fall. Their disobedience made them “gods.” If the story is taken literally, Eve’s disobedience happened because God created a wife that was endowed with more curiosity, daring, and desire for wisdom than her husband had previously exhibited. If the story is taken literally, Eve’s disobedience was a crucial evolutionary step in the creation of not only human beings but free will, i.e. “knowing good and evil.”
And what about the Snake? If the story is taken literally, it was a talking animal innately devious and hateful enough to create unimaginable disaster. Why would God create such an animal?

He didn’t, of course.
Kenneth Parks lived in Toronto, Canada, with his wife and a five-month-old daughter. He had a “close” relationship with his in-laws, although he had marital problems. In the early hours of May 23, 1987, twenty-three-year-old Kenneth got out of bed and drove 14 miles to his in-laws’ home. He broke in, stabbed his mother-in-law to death, and tried to kill his father-in-law, who was able to fight him off. Then Parks drove to the police station and, looking at his bloody hands, told the police that he thought he had killed some people. He had to be rushed to a hospital to have an operation done on his tendons.

Obvious case of murder, right? The jury didn’t see it that way. They acquitted him on May 25, 1988. You’re kidding! Look up “homicidal sleepwalking” and you’ll find his case (among others) described. His EEG proved that Parks didn’t know what he was doing (although other evidence also helped the defense case). Sleepwalkers have a brain disorder that results in behavior that they do not consciously choose.

Sleepwalking is just one of many types of brain disorder. The mass killing at a Connecticut school in December brought the subject of brain disorder into public focus again - briefly. That killer and the killers in an Aurora theater and a Columbine school and Virginia Tech all apparently had some kind of brain disorder. In other words, their brains had some kind of abnormal activity going on that doesn’t occur in the brains or normal people.

After the Newtown tragedy I was struck by the number of comments online fuming about psychiatric drugs. While it seems that some people are indeed taking such drugs unnecessarily, many comments revealed an ignorance of the need for psychiatric drugs. The complaints that people are using such drugs without needing them overlook the fact that society is better off because numerous people use such medication to control a brain disorder. One of our well-known Adventist evangelists was attacked by his son when the son’s psychiatric medication was being changed because of an illness. Another evangelist took his own life apparently because of refusing to take such medication that was needed.

Millions of people suffer from brain disorders that could be helped with information and, usually, medication. Folks with autism, Aspergers syndrome, ADHD, and bipolar disorder all have a harder time just carrying out everyday activities than folks who have no such disorders. Their brains don’t work properly. Problems with neurotransmitters keep countless human beings from thinking and acting efficiently or appropriately in certain ways, costing the beleaguered sufferers friends, jobs, and money. Many of them who are undiagnosed could describe their condition by using Paul’s words in Romans 7:15: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (NRSV). They are often relieved to have their...
problem diagnosed and learn how to deal with it. Before their diagnosis, though, they feel not only their own frustration with themselves but realize that others are bewildered because they seem to get in their own way.

People rightly dislike some behavior of people with brain disorders. Negative sanctions often drive people to find help. Casting about for a problem they seem powerless to deal with, brain disordered people often find diagnosis and treatment. But would we feel more sympathy for someone with a disorder if we knew that she had the disorder? We don’t expect children to act like adults; we don’t expect normal adult behavior from people who have an IQ of 60. But sometimes we are unknowingly dealing with people who struggle, often unknowingly, with a brain problem. Do we have to find out that they have a brain disorder before we can give them a break?

“Every association of life calls for the exercise of self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. . . . The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light are to another most difficult and perplexing.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 483.

How about if we lighten up on some of our judgments of other people? We don’t have to put up with bad behavior, but we can try to remember that we have no idea what is going on in the brains of people whose actions we despise. We need to show them the same sympathy that we want from others when we misbehave.

Albert Ellis emphasizes that you’ll be happier if you learn to accept imperfect people, both yourself and others, because everyone is imperfect: “It is almost certain that all people are fallible and that, among humans, infallibility and always acting well – not to mention perfectly well – do not seem to exist. Therefore, it is quite understandable that you and the people you encounter will frequently act poorly and make a good many mistakes and errors – even when they know the right thing to do and make an honest effort to do it.” Feeling Better, Getting Better, Staying Better, p. 201. Now add some disabled neurotransmitters to Ellis’s description, and you have a person doing even worse, who needs our sympathy even more.

I may think you are ignorant, rebellious, mean, or lazy, but I need to keep in mind that you may not be able to help the way you’re acting. Even if I think I need to help change your behavior or way of thinking, I can be kind, assuring you of my friendship or support, remembering that you just might have an untreated brain disorder that is beyond your ability to cope with right now. While I may not like your actions, I can be more sympathetic when I assume your motives are as praiseworthy as mine. If I give you as much time to explain your actions as I use to defend mine, I’ll discover that you’re not as off base as I thought.

In a book about compassion, Karen Armstrong talks about our limited understanding: “All too often people impose their own experience and beliefs on acquaintances and events, making hurtful, inaccurate, and dismissive snap judgments, not only about individuals but about whole cultures. It often becomes clear, when questioned more closely, that their actual knowledge of the topic under discussion could comfortably be contained on a small postcard.” (Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life, p. 117)
It’s hard to feel sympathetic for a mass shooter, or even for a Kenneth Parks, especially when we think of their victims and the pain that will be felt by so many for years. But if we show more sympathy and support for the struggling people we are dealing with, we may reduce the pain and anger that lead such people to extreme acts. They may or may not have recognized brain disorders, but they still need the same compassion we crave, even if we never learn reasons for their dislikable behavior. “Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32, Message).
More Texts for SS « Origins » Lesson 4

Submitted: Jan 23, 2013
By Jack Hoehn

These comments continue a weekly discussion on the current Sabbath School lessons on Origins Lesson 4. They attempt to open the conversation to a broader understanding of Creation than simply young-earth, short-week Creationism.

In general I find Lesson 4 very useful, showing additional creation stories throughout the Bible, which add breadth and context to the Genesis 1,2 stories. It is clear that Jesus and the Bible writers take creation literally. They all accept that God created time and sky and earth, and everything in it. It is not clear that they had any particular chronology in mind.

The disconnect comes when the author/editor insists that if you accept that the creation stories are real, this means you have to accept their Young Earth Chronology of events including a short few thousand year history of life on earth and an even shorter understanding of the Creation Days as a common 7 x 24 hour day week, 144 hours of which were supposedly used for the creation of everything on earth.

We know many good Christians have believed this, including our 19th century prophetess. But it is becoming impossible for 21st century Christians to accept the 17th century chronology of Ussher and the creation days as 24-hour days.

There is much good evidence to the contrary, available to all of who want to know. The universe has grown much larger than our spiritual leaders in the past could know. And the history of the creation of life on earth is much more complex than they could have known. God of course knows, but it is clear that on scientific questions God does not use revelation to replace what he expects us to learn on our own. Neither Moses nor Jesus gave scientific revelations. The task of science has been delegated to us. It is our job to figure things out. Just as it’s our task to feed ourselves the best diet, our task to build our own houses and furnish them, our task to care for the needs of animals, widows, orphans and aliens.

We know church leaders have been wrong before on the shut door, on the use of tobacco and pork, on which day to worship, and on the date Jesus would return to earth in the clouds of heaven. Adventists from the beginning are a movement which has had to change our emphasis and our teachings. We had to move from legalism to righteousness by faith.

This seems to be another time for correction of our teachings, to align more perfectly with the truth as God has revealed it to us in the best scientific discoveries. Just because Satan has tried to use science to promote atheism, does not mean we should not use science to promote faith in the Creator God. We just have to stop promoting an impossible and extra-biblical chronology on creation.

The problem is that the lessons only give you two choices, Young Earth Creationism or godless evolution. And they lump Christian evolutionists in the same black pot, plus refusing to consider
the other varieties of creationists as Old Earth Creationists (OEC), who are not evolutionists, and
the Intelligent Design (ID) movement whose Christian proponents find even Christian evolution
inadequate for either the scientific or the biblical evidence.

Alternative views of creation tend to be concordist, that is they try to have the Bible and the
evidence from nature agree. OEC and ID movements challenge the naturalistic, godless
interpretations of nature and the whole premise that science must not consider the possibility of
divine interventions. But they do not deny the evidence of the age of the universe and of life on
earth.

I believe that authentic Adventist Theology has something very important to offer these
movements in the Great Controversy understanding of life. I will write on this another place and
another time. For this week’s Sabbath School Lesson, however, let’s consider some of the many
Bible texts which help us consider a longer chronology of creation than simply 144 magical
hours, 6,000 very short years ago.

**Bible texts on creation found outside of Genesis 1, 2.**

What hints might these Bible texts give of an older earth and a more complex creation than 144
hours in 6 earth days?

Theologian and Astronomer Hugh Ross has listed many of the Bible texts supporting the
concordance or agreement of the Bible with the best of Science. Here are a few of them.

God created the beginning of time when he created the Universe:

*2 Timothy 1:9* “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of
time.”

God and Jesus existed before the creation of the Universe:

*John 17:24* “You loved me before the creation of the kosmos.”

Every part of the Universe is God’s creation, so when we observe events in galaxies and stars we
are observing what God did and is doing, such as the ongoing creation of new stars as we speak,
but happening over time, not instantaneously:

*Colossians 1:16-17* “For by him all things were created: thing in heaven and on
earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;
all things were created by him for him. He is before all things, and in him all
things hold together.”

The Bible speaks of the forming of a baby in the mother’s womb as “creation” so the fact that
things happen in what we consider a natural way, does not mean that they are not God’s creation:

*Psalm 139:13* “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my
mother’s womb.” Also *Job 31:15*. 
The universe has been continually expanding from the beginning of time and space (the Big Bang): 

Job 9:8  “He stretches out the heavens…”

Psalm 104:2  “He stretches out the heavens like a tent.”

Isaiah 40:22  “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.”

The Universe including earth is subject to fixed physical laws:

Jeremiah 33:25  “This is what the LORD says: ‘If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth...”

All of creation is subject to the same laws:

Romans 8:20-22  “For the creation was subjected....to decay...the whole creation...”

Bible metaphors give a sense of great age. God’s eternal existence is compared to the duration of the mountains, oceans, rivers, hills, soil, and fields:

Psalm 90:2  “Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

Ecclesiastes 1:4, 10  “Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever... It was here already long ago...”

Micah calls the earth everlasting (or enduring):

Micah 6:2  “Hear O mountains...listen you everlasting (enduring) foundations of the earth....”

Habakkuk declares God is eternal, but the mountains are “ancient” and the hills “age-old”:

Habakkuk 3:6  “The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.”

Peter says the heavens and earth existed “long ago”:

2 Peter 3:5  “they...forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and (surrounded) by water.”
Now perhaps long ago was 4,000 years? But not when God’s eternal existence is compared to the ancient and age-old earth. Doesn’t 4.6 Billion years for age of the earth seems like a bit more of a comparison to God’s eternity, than 4,000 years? Although Peter of course didn’t know that number.

Neither did Job, and both would agree that God could have created in any time he pleased, from instantaneous, to a 7 solar day week, to spread out over longer ages of an ancient and age-old earth:  Job 42:1-2  “Then Job replied to the LORD: I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted…surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.”

I hope that Adventism like Job will be willing, as more of God’s creation, more of his plans become revealed, to repent of our narrow chronological dogmatism on things like the true age of the earth we did not before understand, things perhaps new and different than we thought before, but perhaps things that will turn out in truth to be too wonderful to even now imagine!

Many times Ellen White’s agreement with Ussher’s short chronology of life on earth is used to stop this discussion, so let me remind you of her other words that may permit this discussion to continue.

"There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make an error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.”  Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, December 20, 1892.

Creationism is surely our true and foundational doctrine. The Adventist possible error is not Creationism, but an inadequate chronology of the age of the universe, the earth, and the wonderful creation events so simply and beautifully outlined in Genesis 1 and 2.
Joy = Strength

Submitted: Jan 23, 2013
By Debonnaire Kovacs

Nehemiah 8:1-10--Do not weep. . . the joy of the Lord is your strength.

This is one of my very favorite stories in the whole Bible. Just imagine it:

You have been away, probably your whole life, a captive in Babylon. Were you faithful there? Were you sucked into the rich, varied, and highly educated and entertaining dominant culture? Do you even remember Israel? (Likely not, since it’s been 70 years. There probably weren’t many old people going back, but I know in my heart that those who could, did.) When the call came to return, did you join in eagerly, or reluctantly go along with other family members who decided to go? Have you been raised on stories of The Homeland, where the streets were paved with gold and freedom was served with every meal raised by the sweat of your own brow in your own garden and vine and fig tree?

What has been your reaction so far to this golden Homeland? Do you have your house built yet? Your garden dug? Are the vine and fig tree producing?

Or were you one of the poor who were left here, who took over abandoned houses and fields and made a place for yourselves, and if so, how has the return of the exiles affected your life?

Either way, what did you think when you heard that the books of the law had been found?

Most importantly, what has been your reaction on this long and tiring day, listening to the words of scrolls that even your grandmother didn’t recall clearly, and your family certainly hasn’t been holding to and treasuring as well as it might have done.

Are you crying?

What is your reaction when a priest or Levite or Nehemiah himself say gently to you, “Don’t cry. The joy of the Lord is your strength”?

This story reminds me of a more recent story. After China was opened to Christianity again, some years ago, I saw a Mission Spotlight in which some older Chinese were having communion, including footwashing, for the first time in 40 years. The older ones, the ones who remembered, were all in tears. I cried when I watched.

Do we treasure God’s ways that much? Or do we have to lose them or nearly lose them to know what we have?
Laurent Grosvenor preaches at the 2012 Preachapalooza

Churches are full of pastors who tell stories about how God talked them into becoming pastors when their dream was entirely different. Laurent Grosvenor is not one of these people. By six years old, he says, he knew the names of most of the pastors in his region and loved to imitate them and pretend to preach. Like most little boys, young Grosvenor toyed with other career possibilities—fire fighter like his uncle?—but he always came back to preaching. By ten or eleven years old, he had the nickname of Preacher Boy.

Born in Oldham, England, Grosvenor remembers his boyhood as being centered around church life. He went to a teen camp in Wales, where he would spend the late evenings preaching in his tent, imitating the speakers. People came to listen to him, and he says even people who didn’t know him knew about Preacher Boy.

Grosvenor came to the U.S. to attend Oakwood University as an international student. He says it wasn’t easy, but he enjoyed it, worked hard, and made it in four years, graduating with no debt. He credits the “ministry and generosity of people” who helped him get through. Now he has already been called by the South Central Conference, who have sent him to the seminary at Andrews. He is trying to learn all he can there, but looks forward to going back to what is now
his home conference.

He has many friends who are pastors or seminary students of other denominations. When he asks what they think of Adventists, the most common answer is, “We just don’t know them. They keep to themselves.” When he was asked to preach at a prestigious Baptist church in New Jersey, one person said, “When we heard you were Adventist, we didn’t know what to expect. I know a couple of Adventists, and they are very closed. They won’t go to anyone else’s church, and they told us we weren’t saved unless we were in their church.”

Grosvenor agrees that often “Adventists have put themselves in a box, isolated themselves. But there’s a new tide, a wave of people, many of them young, who want to work together and stop being isolationist.”

He would know. A couple of years ago, on youtube, he found some sermons posted by young people and was both impressed and intrigued. He followed their links and learned about an organization called Academy of Preachers. He and two Oakwood friends, Richard Martin and Joniel Forsythe, went to the Academy’s 2011 Preachapalooza, a yearly competition for young preachers. In 2012, Grosvenor went again, and this time his own youtube sermon garnered 1237 hits and his preaching at the event placed him in the top ten. [Couldn't make a link work, but to watch his sermon, put Laurent Grosvenor into youtube.]

Grosvenor says the best thing about the event was “meeting new people and making friends from other denominations. They may not share all the same views, but they share a passionate love for Christ. The blood that unites us is greater than the denominations that divide us.”

He added, “A lot of young people are dropping out of churches, but at AoP I see a different story. I think it would be a wonderful idea for our churches and schools to encourage young people to be involved with AoP. I believe young people can reach young people. Like attracts like.”

What, then, is this Academy of Preachers? According to their website, [www.academyofpreachers.net]:

The Academy of Preachers seeks to Identify, Network, Support and Inspire young people in their call to Gospel preaching. Since its launch in 2009, this ecumenical organization has worked with more than 300 young people from across the nation. The Academy of Preachers is energized by the conviction that Gospel preaching is a vocation of public and social significance, a calling worthy of our very best and brightest young people.

Grosvenor says the AoP is not only for those who feel the call to lifelong, professional pastoring, but reaches out to any young people whose lives may be enriched by the gift of public speaking, and helps them to recognize that they can all be ministers for God, no matter what their lifework is.

Wyndee Holbrook, Lead Gospel Catalyst for AoP, says that many churches and schools use the organization and its events as a discernment. They encourage young people to participate and
explore what it means to preach, and in the process, perhaps discover whether they are or are not called by God to this lifework.

When asked what she believes is the main value of AoP, Holbrook said, “A key value of the Academy of Preachers is bringing together the fullness of the body of Christ. It is absolutely a stunning thing to be chatting with a 25-year-old Eastern Orthodox one moment, and a 16-year-old Pentecostal the next.” She added that the young Orthodox was female, and therefore couldn’t be a pastor in her denomination, but that a forward thinking leader in the Orthodox church put out a nationwide youtube challenge to young people of both sexes to post a sermon, and the winner of that challenge was sent to the 2012 Preachapalooza. In fact, the event gains most of its young participants because they saw other young preachers on youtube, and this year there was a prize for the sermon that got the most hits.

“I think it would be a wonderful idea for our churches and schools to encourage young people to be involved with AoP,” Grosvenor says. Not only does he believe it will enrich them and help get them “out of the box” to meet other people who think differently, but he adds, “Young people are finding the church not relevant, so they’re going other places that will fill their needs - -what kept me in church is that I was doing something. I was doing ministry.”