### NEWS

**Uncompensated Health Care at Loma Linda University Medical Center:** Not a lot is published about the community services and free care given by non-profit health centers like Loma Linda. But it's also true that some of that free service may bring PR and marketing benefits....

**Adventist Movie Series Based on ‘The Great Controversy’ Wins Film Award:** A movie now in production based on the Great Controversy theme has been cited for outstanding early achievement....

**Adventist Peace Fellowship Launches New Website and Initiatives:** Can a faith that holds the words "Great Controversy" as central to its cosmic view become a peacemaker on Earth? Adventist Peace Fellowship, a nonprofit organization of laymen, is convinced we can and has expanded its ministry and Web site....

### OPINION

**Up AND Out:** Is it possible to have a spiritual life that spends too much time mystically searching for God, while neglecting fellow human beings? Debbonnaire Kovacs tries to sort things through....

**Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 15, Chapter 14:** Like species on the ladder of life, religions have adapted and changed over time, competing and at times cross-pollinating to form new permutations that offer novel possibilities. Will religion wither away in time, or will it be with us in some form till time is no more? Columnist Ervin Taylor looks at religion and human need....

### FEATURES (available to logged-in Subscribers. [Click to register for instant, free 30-day subscription.])

**Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 20:** *Identity Theft Protection:* Who could have imagined so much material about identity theft in the Bible? "The words image, name, and number strongly allude to a similar sequence of concepts found on the first table of the Ten Commandments. Could these words possibly be a concept used to describe the devil’s identity-stealing scheme?" asks Debbonnaire Kovacs.....
| A Different Kind of Bikers’ Week: | In this continuing roundup of American camp meetings, we read about a gathering of bikers who listen to sermons that include references to skulls and crossbones. Follow Debonnaire Kovacs in the slipstream of the Adventist Harley-and-Honda crowd.... |

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Uncompensated Health Care at Loma Lind University Medical Center

Submitted: Aug 21, 2013

By T Joe Willey

This is the third article in a series on the financial aspects of Adventist health care institutions.

"The public believes that hospitals – and especially nonprofit hospitals – have obligations to their communities to provide a critical safety net for care. … When the public is surveyed, eighty-two percent said that these hospitals have an obligation to work with patients who don’t have enough money to pay for care up front and to help them with a financing plan. Ninety percent said that nonprofit hospitals should be required to provide information to the public on the free and low-cost programs and services they offer to the community." (Community Catalyst. Best Kept Secrets: Are Nonprofit Hospitals Informing Patients About Charity Care Programs. May 2010.)

I spent a few days in the Loma Linda University Medical Center, not to gain information for this report, but to receive an implant of a newly-improved pacemaker. This pacemaker has its own defibrillator which when activated can slam the heart with six-hundred volts. I was instructed to avoid situations that might set it off, or at least sit down quickly and put my arms around a tree.

In the bed next to mine, separated by a curtain, was a forty-year old male patient who apparently could not speak English. I will call him Raza Shadaba (not his real name). Each time the resident came in or a nurse he spoke Arabic feigning he did not understand. Based on their side of the conversation I could tell they wanted to get him to sign off on further treatment and return home. He kept saying, “no comprehendo.” And they kept asking, “Do you have a wife? Can you call her or a friend to come and get you?” At one point the resident even used his own cell phone to call Raza’s wife which turned out to be a nonexistent number. It was clear Raza did not want to go home. Then I noticed something peculiar.

During the day he had visitors. When they came around his bed he spoke reasonably good English. I overheard the cleric tell the resident that Raza had just arrived in the country, was jobless, there was no food in his house, not even a loaf of bread, his wife with four children did not have a telephone or a car and worst of all his wife had “thrown Raza out of the house” for being belligerent. Raza figured the best place to go was the LLUMC emergency room. There somehow he claimed he suffered loss of memory from a concussion. After several days of testing and observation on the ward, with the help of his cleric, the hospital was finally able to discharge Raza. Representatives from the hospital helped him fill out the financial assistance forms to cover his costs under charity. On the way out Raza came by the foot of my bed and gave me thumbs up saying; “I had them on the run … didn’t you think?”
When it came my time to leave, a representative from Medicare appeared and asked me to read over the discharge instructions and sign a form that basically indicated I was satisfied with the treatment I had received. While he was there I asked him a few questions.

He told me how difficult it can be for the hospital to discharge Medicare or Medi-Cal patients who over stay in the hospital. I mentioned about Raza and how he feigned lack of English when all along he knew what the hospital staff was saying to him. The representative told me about two instances at LLUMC where elderly patients were homeless and continued to overstay the hospital for more than a year. He explained, “The hospital cannot force you to leave.” If you think your Medicare-covered services are ending too soon you can appeal. The discharge instructions are also required to avoid returning to the emergency room after leaving the hospital. Hospitals are financially punished if they readmit patients again within thirty days.

All of these rules and regulations surrounding Medicare and Medi-Cal give the appearance of a quasi-governmental institution at LLUMC, a nonprofit faith-based hospital which derives greater than half its revenues from these two federal programs. Some economists say that the nonprofit charitable tax-exempt model gives the government too much influence over competitive health care markets, which in turn provides camouflage for the real profit seeking motives of hospitals. [1]

**Historical Overview of Hospitals & Charity**

The first hospitals in America’s cities were almshouses for the very sick and generally the poor. They were rooted in the tradition of charity and supported by donations. The poor were housed in long wards and were not expected to pay (and for that manner not expected to live either). Volunteers usually provided the care. One of the earliest examples was Bellevue Hospital, originally called the “Poor House of New York City.” Bellevue was established in 1786 to house the “poor, aged, insane, and disreputable.” [2]

The wealthy on the other hand, stayed at home and physicians treated the patients there. Most Americans gave birth and even endured surgery at home. Over time medical care improved and evolved. From modest origins hospitals began to grow. They were often founded and funded by religious orders or charitable business leaders. Anesthesia was introduced in surgical procedures and scientific discoveries shifted the role and importance of hospitals. At the turn of the twentieth century physicians for the first time began to charge for their services in the hospitals. The larger ward layout shifted to private rooms to accommodate paying patients. By 1922 sixty-five percent of revenues in hospitals were generated by private payments. Around this same time health insurance was sold by a Texas hospital to the city’s school teachers. [3] Soon other hospitals joined together to offer insurance which became Blue Cross and the poor began to be pushed away from medical care they could not afford. By the 1960s, billions of dollars were flowing into hospital from insurance companies.

**Government Influences have Shaped the Hospital Industry**

Without getting into too much detail, as hospitals evolved and relied on patient payments their revenues were impacted by tax laws. By 1913 the federal income tax exempted “any corporation or association organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific or educational purposes.” Hospitals recognized they could be tax exempt under the law if they organized exclusively for charitable purposes and as long as no earnings were skimmed off to private shareholders or individuals. Tax agencies did not spell out what was meant by amorphous charitable features in exchange for forgone taxes, probably because of this long legacy of charity activities to begin with.

Then the American Hospital Association convinced the federal government to offer loans and programs in the construction of additional facilities. From 1946 and up until 1997 the Hill-Burton Hospital Construction Act became a major influence to modernize or expand hospitals. This legislation also came with a promise to provide free or reduced-cost care to the indigent. [4]

In 1966 the hospital industry received another boost from the federal government. The Social Security Act created Medicare. Medicare provided significant medical benefits to Americans over age sixty-five. This group was most likely to need hospitalization and hospitals were assured that they would be reimbursed on the “basis of reasonable costs.” The companion program, Medicaid (known as Medi-Cal in California) was established to support individuals classified as medically indigent (persons of low income). Medicaid was a joint program
between the federal and state governments. These two government programs probably did more to fuel the rising costs of hospital care than any other factor. The two programs also altered the long-standing charity mission of hospitals.

Providing hospital services to needy Medicaid patients (as a government subsidy) was often unprofitable, so it has become a type of charity benefit. In a word, when Medicaid is unprofitable the offsetting shortfall becomes charity. Medicare and private insurance also contributes indirectly to revenue shortfalls, including patient’s failure to co-pay or to pay deductibles.

It wasn’t long after Medicare was introduced before hospitals morphed into higher profits, maximizing more lucrative activities, becoming more technical and market oriented and aggressively enterprising. Medicare programs favored entrepreneurial, short-term financial interests. There were no regulatory caps on hospital profits even though they have the face of the “beloved local charities.” [5] For various reasons the nonprofit charitable tax-exempt hospitals are the most common type in this country. Nearly seventy percent of the licensed beds in America are located in nonprofit hospitals. But keep in mind, tax exemptions given to nonprofit hospitals can be viewed as another form of government subsidy for charity, along with the financial performance of Medicare and Medicaid, or lack thereof.

It seemed to make good social policy that a hospital could keep the revenues it would have otherwise paid in taxes and apply them for charitable purposes. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) does not specifically require that a hospital provide a certain level of charity care to qualify for tax-exempt status. Of course, leaving this measure ambiguous (which the American Hospital Association lobbied for), as you can imagine, has created confusion as to what constitutes charity and unreimbursed provided care. For example, does bad debt qualify as charity? How are sliding discounts treated? Does giving grants to Adventist colleges or conferences constitute hospital charity?

According to the Congressional Budget Office the estimated tax benefits and value of the exemption from federal, state and local taxes that should be paid by hospitals is somewhere in the neighborhood of $12.6 billion annually (in 2002 dollars when last it was measured) [6] or about $16.38 billion today in loss tax revenues (including property and sales taxes). Obviously, if hospitals with slim margins were required to pay taxes some would go out of business.

Two additional important points: Number one, the federal government allows nonprofit hospitals to issue tax-exempt debt and receive charitable contributions that are tax-deductions to donors. As more “free” tax dollars enter hospital revenues the definition of charity was enlarged to cover more ambiguous community benefits, and some observers see some portions of community benefits as an aid to competitive marketing, rather than as charity.

Number two, to qualify for all of these tax advantages, the hospitals must provide community benefits as an expense, which the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) defines as promoting the health of any broad class of people, including such activities as charity care, health screening, and community education about health risks, emergency room services, and basic research. Since 1969 these unreimbursed provisions have been broadened to include many other charitable obligations “as services and activities that benefit the community as a whole.” [7]

Schedule H and the IRS

The IRS community benefit standard is the legal basis to determine whether or not a nonprofit charitable hospital is exempt from federal income tax. But members in Congress and state regulators recognized that the tax agency’s oversight of charities had largely failed. There was strong bipartisan interest in Congress in supervising the tax benefits of nonprofit hospitals as well as making affordable health care accessible to everyone. Nonprofit hospitals were already on the defensive over billing and collection practices against the uninsured and the public was asking hospital systems to justify executive perks. By 2006 the IRS finally became concerned about how well community benefits were being accounted and administered. Five hundred hospitals were sent questionnaires concerning their charity programs and another twenty nonprofits were examined regarding executive compensation practices. [8] The IRS study sought to review benefit reporting, bad debt and shortfalls, research, and income and health insurance coverage levels; a wide variety of issues.

One of the take-away lessons from the study resulted in a priority to create Schedule H in the 990 Form that nonprofit hospitals use in reporting to the IRS. This report was designed to make charity reporting more transparent. A copy of this section for LLUMC is included below. This table summarizes the charity care and community benefits for 2011-2012 as reported on the 990 Form.

In the next article in this series (Part 4) we will discuss the most significant features of this table and compare these findings to our
group of other teaching hospital examples. Beyond this tax summary, Loma Linda University Health System (LLUHS) has a comprehensive and impressive community benefit report that is used to support tax-exemptions within the State of California. We will say more about this in the next report.

Adventist Today readers will benefit knowing about the complexities of the hospital’s relationship to both the poor and indigent within the communities it serves and their advocates. Something like forty percent of residents struggle to pay medical bills. So charity is an important safety net. But is there a way to prevent hospital care in the first place? As you will see in the next section, LLUHS not only provides free medical care, picking up the costs for residency training, etc., but is also working on a two county-wide community plan to improve health, promote social change, and make health care available especially for the most vulnerable to fulfill its obligation to California’s Community Benefit Law and protect its exemption from taxation.

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4. From what I could determine none of the Adventist hospitals in California accepted Hill-Burton funding.
7. IRS Revenue Ruling 69-545.
8. IRS Nonprofit Hospital Project Final Report.

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Adventist Movie Series Based on ‘The Great Controversy’ Wins Film Award

Submitted: Aug 19, 2013

By Adventist News Network

Monday night (August 19) the trailer for a drama series to be distributed on the Web sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church made headlines at the first Geekie Awards in Hollywood. The Record Keeper, which dramatizes the epic struggle between good and evil, won the award for "Best Trailer" in a category which recognizes movies still in the final stages of post-production.

The Geekie Awards are a new thing in cinema recognizing the best independent productions with "geek-genre content, art, products and experiences." The organizers said the goal of the event "is to create an impact on mainstream media, putting the true geek culture in the spotlight as a collection of valid award-winning genres for storytelling and creation." An Adventist production group was among the first award winners at this new show.

Director Jason Satterlund and executive producer Garrett Caldwell accepted the award, accompanied by cast members Aris Juson and Jelynn Sophia. The award show was live-streamed from the Avalon, a historic landmark in Hollywood. “I feel so honored to be here,” Satterlund said. “We are excited to receive this response on a series that isn’t even out yet.”

“We can’t wait to show you the rest of the series,” Caldwell said, acknowledging the role of co-creator Rajeev Sigamoney and the two other executive producers, Ben Schoun and Delbert Baker, both vice presidents of the denomination's General Conference (GC). Web release of The Record Keeper series is expected to begin in October, producers said.

Caldwell is an associate director in the GC communication department, an ordained minister who served as a pastor in Portland, Oregon, and the Washington DC area before joining the GC staff.

The Record Keeper follows the story of Cadan (JuneSoo Ham) and Larus (Dennis Hill), two angels who struggle to maintain their friendship after civil war breaks out in the universe. Another angel, Raina (Lindsay Frame), pursues an accurate record of events while trying to make sense of the chaos. The award-winning trailer shows Raina reacting as rebellion spreads to Earth.

The series echoes major themes from The Great Controversy, a book written in the last 19th century by Ellen G. White that chronicles God’s guidance throughout history. The films use the “Steampunk” genre, an approach to story-telling that mixes 19th century costumes, design and manners with science fiction. It features steam-powered machinery in an alternate world or fantasy setting.

The Record Keeper will resonate with people who may not otherwise come into contact with White’s book or even the Bible, Caldwell pointed out. “The inspired insights that Ellen White provides in The Great Controversy make the compelling narratives of scripture even more relevant,” Caldwell said. “Many people are expressing interest in [White] as an individual and in her writings as a result of The Record Keeper project. We simply must consider continuing to tell these stories in this manner.”

The Geekie Awards is the first award show recognizing the best independently-produced comic books, graphic novels, short films, Web series and more. The winning short promotional piece for The Record Keeper can be seen online:

http://www.thegreekieawards.com/the-record-keeper-2/
Adventist Peace Fellowship Launches New Website and Initiatives

Submitted: Aug 20, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

The Adventist Peace Fellowship (APF) launched a redesigned website today (August 20), highlighting new avenues for member involvement in local congregations and on university campuses. The APF is a lay-organized nonprofit, which “seeks to raise consciousness about the centrality of peacemaking to the beliefs and heritage of Seventh-day Adventists,” states the APF website.

Though developed by and for the Seventh-day Adventist faith community, the APF “is not officially affiliated, funded, or controlled by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in any way and does not speak on the Church's behalf,” clarifies the agency's website. Rather, as a lay organization, APF invites Adventists and friends of Adventists to join the APF “network and to add their voices and their talents to the work of peace education and advocacy informed by the values of the Adventist tradition.”

The APF originally formed to be “a hub to help Adventists be aware of what other Adventists are doing and saying, to stimulate interest in peace and peacemaking,” Douglas Morgan told Adventist Today in a 2011 interview. Morgan is APF’s co-founder, and he was the director from its inception in 2003 until July 2011. He continues by explaining that it was also intended “to connect Adventists with what other people are doing. So we became part of Christian Peace Witness and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.” Now as the treasurer, Morgan continues to be active in APF leadership while teaching history at Washington Adventist University.

The colorful website is the first visible sign of the organizational changes that Ron Osborn has been leading since he became the executive director in 2011. For instance, campaigns listed on the site reveal the organization's expanded focus. In his first post on the new APF blog, Osborn describes this widening circle of interest. “APF was founded in 2001 with a focus on questions of war and peace in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11. The organization’s work today encompasses peacemaking in the broadest and most holistic sense of the word, including concern for economic justice, human rights, freedom of conscience, and care for the environment.”

Osborn's first major initiative relates to a new organizational structure—local chapters. “College and university groups, Sabbath school classes, and others can put their commitment to human rights, peacemaking, and social justice into practice by forming their own local chapters of the Adventist Peace Fellowship,” explains the APF website. The process includes organizing a core team, identifying a campaign or issue on which to focus, and getting chartered.

The second initiative, becoming a peace church, is related to the first. This expands the first initiative; rather than have an APF chapter operating within a congregation, the label “peace church” applies to the local congregation as a whole. “The Adventist Peace Fellowship provides a certification program for churches committed to working for peace and justice as an integral part of their identity and mission. In order to fulfill these certification requirements and become part of the Adventist Peace Church network, churches must demonstrate a serious long-term commitment to certain core values and ongoing practical actions in their local communities.”

In addition to providing guidelines for chapter formation and peace church certification, the new website also has an extensive selection of peacemaking resources. A second notable feature is a list of “profiles of more than 60 Adventists or friends of Adventists who have made
important contributions to public life through their activism, advocacy, scholarship, and service for peace and social justice,” Osborn reports on the APF blog.

More information can be found at www.adventistpeace.org. The interview with Doug Morgan is here: www.atoday.org/article/738/features/interviews/2011/douglas-morgan-phd-interview-by-jeff-boyd

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I frequently think each chapter in *The Monastery of the Heart* is “the best yet!” This one, “Spiritual Tools,” touches me right where I live as a Seventh-day Adventist.

_Beware the spirituality, the Rule implies, that lacks balance, that lacks the fullness of the spiritual life, that revolves around mystique and mystery, around esoteric ritual or secret knowledge._

Why on earth, you may wonder, would a sentence like that reach an Adventist? We certainly aren’t heavy on “mystique and mystery,” let alone “esoteric ritual”! And you’d be right. It could be just the oddness of my mind that made this grab me. But here’s what it brought to my mind.

In some faith practices, both Christian and non-Christian, including the Old Testament Jewish practices, everything centers on certain rituals and actions, such as sacrifices or certain songs or chants. These rituals are always meant to embody something greater, but they are always also vulnerable to becoming an end in themselves.

So you have people, (in Is. 58, for instance), saying, “Why aren’t You listening? We’re doing all the Stuff!” They’ve come to think that the ritual itself is what brings power, like a magic spell or something. And God replies (in Is 1, for instance), “I have had enough of burnt offerings. . . stop bringing meaningless offerings. . . I cannot bear your worthless assemblies!” By Jesus’ time, idolatry was no longer the issue—not of physical, carved gods, that is—just idolatry of the hundreds of nit-picky little rules that would, all by themselves, get you in good with God. _If you did them just right._

What do we do that’s like that? Well, there are two things I can think of—one affects me personally more than the other. First, you have the Protestant Order of Service. We didn’t invent it; we just inherited it. But woe betide the soul who tampers with it! Some people in some churches really do act as if the power of the Holy Spirit resides in those precise actions and words done in those precise ways, week after week.

This doesn’t tempt me. . .okay, except to annoyance and irritation. . .

But we also give so much weight to our personal, private spirituality that our lives can become unbalanced. What we say and do in our daily devotional lives is definitely of immense importance. We will die without that quiet, consistent time reading, studying, praying, meditating, listening.
Unfortunately, for years on end, I thought that was the goal to be reached, in itself. I wanted a spiritual life that was all wrapped up in God to the exclusion of God's children. Especially the annoying, difficult ones. Including me, I might add. I didn’t want to have to deal with my own irritating, irregular humanness, let alone anyone else’s.

I could read 1 John on the necessity of loving the brothers and sisters if you claim to love God, and think I was all right, because I did love them—I cared about them very much, and prayed for them every day!

It’s only in the past few years that I’ve been reconnected with the horizontal element of the spiritual life, and I have to say, it’s hard! I still don’t like dealing with irrational, erratic, faulty humans. And worse yet, I still am one! Maybe that’s why those words grabbed me: “Beware the spirituality. . .that lacks balance, that lacks the fullness of the spiritual life. . .”

Reach for the spirituality that reaches up and sideways.

Like a cross.

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Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 15, Chapter 14

Submitted: Aug 20, 2013

By Ervin Taylor

This is Part 15 of the summary of Dr. Wilbur’s book. It should be emphasized that all of the text in this series of blogs in bold font in the body of the text of the chapter summary has been kindly provided by Dr. Wilbur. If there are any of my own comments, they will follow in regular type.

**Summary for Chapter 14 Summary: Conclusions and Futures**

**The Evolution of Religion**

All the current major religions are the result of thousands of years of cultural evolution. In apparent response to many different human needs, all of these long-lasting religions have developed many strands with variations in details or emphases. Islam, the youngest of these faiths, despite a Qur’anic call for unity, has split into multiple sects and sub-sects including some violent fundamentalists willing to use terrorism to achieve religious or political goals. The other great religions have had at least at some times similar splits and problems with confident and violent fundamentalists.

The vigor of religious belief in the United States may reflect the lively religious market place that has been present here for hundreds of years. Adam Smith in his 1776 book The Wealth of Nations made such an attribution. He felt that religions that had official state support tended to be complacent while those that needed support from voluntary adherents were more dynamic and service oriented.

**The Good of Religion**

Religion has at least some of the time over the past few thousand years supported many good things such as education, morality, charity and humane treatment of others. It has served to organize communities for various common and important needs. Unfortunately it has also been used to justify hierarchy and the oppression of the common man by his “betters” and to validate the destruction or impoverishment of those who don’t share the preferred belief system.

All civilizations have been built on some supernatural religious belief system. The Marxists were unable to provide a viable alternative. Supernatural beliefs may seem quite “natural” to a majority of humans and may partly work because they reinforce our intuitive optimism.

**The Possibility of a Universal Ethics**

Going back to the Axial Age (800-200 BCE) there is a strand somewhere in each great religion that says the most important thing is to rise above sectarian or theological concerns and apply a sophisticated form of what is often called the “Golden Rule,” making respect for others, even all life, the ultimate concern.
Perhaps someday our religions could agree on a common human ethics that would be taught in all educational establishments. Religions refusing would face public criticism but not be made illegal and adherence to these rules would be expected of exemplary citizens but not enforced by law—perhaps a dream.

Accommodation with Science

Scientific discovery has done more to change human life, mostly for the better, in the last few hundred years than occurred in modern man’s tens of thousands of prior years. Some religions having made claims about the natural world find themselves in conflict with science. In the short run they can reject the findings of science but over a period of many generations it seems likely they will find it necessary to bring their beliefs into rough agreement with science—or lose adherents and power.

A new religion that was science friendly and exploited an admiration for scientific discovery might have some chance of thriving, but so far that is an unfulfilled wish.

Tolerance and Pluralism

Global media coverage has made religious violence more visible to all, but the news coverage we see doesn’t always explain the religious mandates that drive this violence. Fundamentalists with Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh affiliations have in my lifetime caused terrible atrocities that seem to the uninvolved observer senseless. Removing the turn to violence from the religious traditions would seem a wonderful possibility—unlikely to be achieved because many find it useful for political goals.

Both primitive and civilized humans like confident black-and-white understandings, classifying others as good people like us or dangerous people who are different. Education of young people about the great variety of religious beliefs in our world might defuse some of the intolerance that comes from this intuitive practice.

The Future—Seen Darkly

The conflicts between religion and science could largely disappear over many generations. There may always be some risk related to the development of messianic cults with tight bonding, unusual beliefs, apocalyptic expectations and suicidal solutions all justified by some leader’s dissociative private experiences.

The world would not be better off if there was only one great religion. Competition makes religions better providers of their kind of goods and protects us from their fundamental conservatism—idealizing the past. Far into the future our religions are apt to still be here offering solutions that, though possibly imaginary, are more congenial for many people than the stark answers of the objective student of reality.

Summary

Religious representatives and interested secular parties should be involved in establishing, disseminating and teaching universal ethical standards. Society might also benefit from providing a universal education about the many forms of religion present in our world—in an attempt to improve religious tolerance.

A future worry is the acquisition of weapons of “mass destruction” by apocalyptic sects with “holy goals” justifying the killing of large numbers of people. Another concern is the ruthless politician who in times of societal stress will target as scapegoats religious minorities—for oppression or extermination.
The Security of the Covenant

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV).

Modern-day criminals no longer need to resort to violence, robbery or burglary to gain access to your money. By obtaining your Social Security number, drivers’ license or bank account numbers, these thieves can easily, and often without your knowledge, siphon off your monies through identity theft.

Our enemy, Satan, works in a similar manner. Since the beginning of time, he has been in the business of identity theft and has been stealing identities, often undetected, and siphoned off the assurance of God’s precious promises to which we are entitled as His very own heirs. While his ultimate goal is to kill and destroy, his initial approach is to destroy you from the inside out by the subtle siphoning off of your internal self-worth residing in your God-given identity. Your God-given identity resides in the knowledge of knowing who you are because you know Whose you are. Your internalized God-given identity provides an impenetrable firewall to protect against the virus of Satan’s subtle scheme of identity theft. Thus it is entirely possible that we may be on high-alert to the operations of the historical beast and its latter-day resurgence, while we remain blind to the possible experiential operations of the beast principle in our own lives.

Our God-given identity can be compared to the operating system of computer. When the operating system crashes, the entire computer crashes, no matter how perfect the hardware. Satan deceitfully disguises his temptations of identity theft as an offer to improve your existing God-given identity, when he really wants our lives to crash (destruct). Youth are not the only ones to declare, “I am only trying to discover who I really am!” When we question our God-given identity, we immediately open our lives for an invasion of Satan’s viruses, lies designed to cause our eternal crash and ruin.

God wants to protect this operating system residing in our personal identity. The good news of the gospel is that with the forgiveness of our sins, God also gives us a new personal identity. This identity is based on the unassailable historical facts of the gospel, namely the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, which will be experientially applied to our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus your internalized God-given identity provides an impenetrable firewall to protect against the virus of Satan’s subtle scheme of identity theft. Through the gospel, God seals us with the Holy Spirit, and this sealing is a progressive work of “settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually,” so we cannot be moved. [1] Conversely, Satan’s computer virus, designed to cause our spiritual operating system to crash, is the opposite of the “seal of God,” and it is called the “mark of the beast.”

Consider these comparisons between false vs. true identity.
**False identity**: what you do determines who you are.
**True identity**: who you are determines what you do.

While, like many Christians, you may be on high alert to the more obvious last-day historical and prophetic fulfillments of the deceptions of the historical beast power, is it possible that the enemy right now may be engaged in a most subtle fraud of stealing your identity – and you were the last one to know? Satan aims his most clever temptations at our God-given identity, so that we will be unable to detect and resist the final end-time deceptions, which are rooted more in pre-existing self-deception than in direct deceptions by the enemy. For illustrative purposes, may I suggest that Satan wants to create in us an identity crisis to cause an identity disorder that he may steal our God-given identity, and through our efforts of do-it-yourself-salvation arrive at a self-generated and self-certified identity?

Our personal identity has tremendous power to shape our conduct. For this reason, Satan is not too troubled when we focus on overcoming a whole list of seemingly outward sinful behaviors, but he trembles when we discover our true identity as God’s very own children. Why? Because the internalization of our God-given identity through genuine worship provides the programming that breaks the power of Satan over us. “The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken.” [2] This is our spiritual immune system.

**Identity Theft – It is Everywhere in Scripture**

The originator of identity theft is Satan, who in heaven attempted to steal God’s identity as he said, “I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14). Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were fully aware of their identity because in the beginning God had created them in His image, and called them by name. In the seventh-ness of the Sabbath (His number), He declared their identity “very good” as they celebrated their relationship with their Creator. Later, in the Garden of Eden, the enemy suggested to Eve that she could transcend her allegedly defective and restrictive [do not touch, do not eat] God-given identity by his offer of a new and improved identity – “...you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). “Just think, Eve, of the possibilities before you when you no longer have to look outside of yourself to God, but you can look within yourself and there find the source of your identity!”

In the wilderness temptations, Satan challenged Jesus’ identity: “If you are the Son of God...then perform some miracles to demonstrate your identity to yourself and others.” Between the lines, can you not hear the tempter’s taunts? “Jesus, you can overcome your ‘nothing-good-can-come-out-of-Nazareth’ identity through miracles and publicity stunts. And besides, you can avoid suffering to save the world, for no genuine son of God should have to go to the cross to save His people.” While hanging on the cross Jesus again heard through the Roman soldiers a final assault on His identity, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself” (Luke 23:37).

**The Origin of ‘Beast’ Worship – Nothing New Under the Sun**
The beast is not just an end-time impostor. The Scriptures hint that the beast virus, or beast principle, has been operational throughout human history. People who reject the truth about their own and God’s identity will replace it with lies, and eventually become beast-like in their behaviors. (Romans 1:23, 25). The proud Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, experienced a seven-year exile as a beast (Daniel 4:28-37) when God judged him for his self-centered and abusive conduct. He looked to his own accomplishments as the source of his identity. “Is this not great Babylon that I have built?”

And at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God’s own people custom-designed a beast, a golden calf, in the image of their covetous longings to return to the security of Egypt. So, in addition to the last-day appearance of the beast, the beast principle can also be any replacement or substitute [idol] for God and His Son, Jesus Christ, in which we trust, because we do not believe that God is big enough to handle our lives. Ask yourself, what is your own personal beast, golden calf, or sacred cow through which you try find your source of significance and self-worth because you somehow believe that you cannot find these in your Creator God?

The work of the antichrist, operational since the beginning of Christian church, also appears to be that of identity theft, where the non-redemptive work of the beast replaces the redemptive work of the Lamb. Just peruse for a few moment the many literary parallels between the beast and the Lamb, and ask yourself this question: Is it possible that the early Christian believers in these symbols saw a wider field of applications for the beast than we do today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Lamb</th>
<th>The Beast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receives authority from God</td>
<td>Receives authority from the dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has seven horns</td>
<td>Has seven heads and ten horns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven eyes</td>
<td>Ten crowns on head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accused of blasphemy</td>
<td>Has names of blasphemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was, is, and is to come</td>
<td>Was, is not, and yet is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers for 3 ½ years</td>
<td>Continues for 42 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustains the saints</td>
<td>Persecutes the saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is slain</td>
<td>Receives a deadly wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrected</td>
<td>Deadly wound is healed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives freedom to followers</td>
<td>Leads to captivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worshipers of the Lamb rest</td>
<td>Worshipers of the beast have no rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduces ‘image of Christ’ in His followers</td>
<td>Reproduces ‘image to beast’ in its followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seals followers in the forehead</td>
<td>Marks followers in forehead or hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a bride – Jerusalem</td>
<td>Has a harlot - Babylon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examine these literary parallels, and you’ll discover that the beast is in the business of portraying himself as the genuine Christ in order to steal Christ’s identity. Would you let a physician treat you if he was unlicensed? Would you let an attorney represent you in court if he had flunked the state bar? Why then would anyone trust an antichrist (any counterfeit savior) to save them? Ultimately, the beast counterfeits Christ’s identity in order that he may steal your identity.
The book of Revelation describes the victory over the beast as a victory “over his image, and over his mark and the number of his name” (Revelation 15:2 NKJV). The words – image, name, and number –strongly hint as an allusion to a similar sequence of concepts found in the first table of the Ten Commandments. Here it speaks about image (the 2nd commandment), name (the 3rd commandment) and number (the 4th commandment). Could these words – image, name, and number (as found in Revelation 15:2) – possibly be a conceptual, thematic pun used by the apostle John to describe the devil’s agenda to steal your identity? To correctly decode the meaning of these words, let us not just rely on matching Scripture with historical events or with newspaper headlines, but let Scripture interpreting Scripture be the primary source of our conclusions.

**The Commandments – Secure Protection against Identity Theft**

The prologue (Exodus 20) to the Ten Commandments places a strong emphasis on identity. Also certain key words in the first four commandments speak about acknowledging only one God, avoiding the worship of any image, respecting His name, and acknowledging His number. These key words contain God’s very own encoding for the protection of your identity, a code which guards you against trying to discover an identity in anything or anyone other than God.

The Ten Commandments are not just a list of rules to follow. They are really the TENder commandments, given us to us by our most loving heavenly Father, who desires nothing greater than the ultimate well-being of His people. God did not just show up at Mt. Sinai, hoping amidst lightning, thunder and smoke to frighten the people into submission. Rather, before telling them first about His rules, He first reminded them about their identity in Him. A rules orientation to the Ten Commandments causes our living to become a legal religion that is as “dry as the hills of Gilboa” [3] A relationship orientation will make all the difference in our lives, for the Ten Commandments are really a covenant, not a contract.

Thus in the preamble to the law, you will find these words, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of bondage” (Exodus 20:2). Notice that before God uttered a single command, He first reminded His people of their identity. It was as if He was tenderly saying to them, “You are my very own, you belong to me; just remember what I did for you at the Red Sea where the armies of Egypt perished. And I did it all because of my faithfulness to the covenant I established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Because the commandments are an integral part of God’s covenant, we must always remember the covenant context of the commandments, where God is saying, I am all for you! Just look how the concept of identity is embedded everywhere in the prologue to the commandments.

- Accept God’s identity. “I am the Lord…”
- Accept your own identity in God. “…your God.”
- Accept the origins of your identity. “…who brought you out of Egypt.”

The deliverance from Egypt was based on God’s covenant promises. And behind the deliverance from Egyptian bondage stands the everlasting covenant initiated by God and His Son, who before the foundation of the world clasped hands in holy covenant and thus took the initiative to save us. [4]

Take now a closer look at the spiritual identity theft protection features built into the first four of
the Ten Commandments. Just as on your computer you may have an anti-virus program, designed to protect you against operating system crashes, God has in the first four commandments provided an anti-virus program, which includes an impenetrable identity-theft protection for your life.

- **Find your identity in one God only** (the 1st Commandment): “You shall have no other gods before me.” Why? Is God afraid of the competition? No, for there are no other gods anywhere. The so-called “other gods” exist only in the twisted thinking of people who deny the plain truth about God and construct their own designer deities, resident only in their own minds. The competition arises in the twisted thinking of people who deny the abundantly plain truth about God and construct their own gods in their minds. (Romans 1:18-22). This one God is all you really need. He is BIG enough to handle anything. Just look at the track-record of His performance at the Red Sea where He acted redemptively in behalf of His people. He wants you to trust Him for everything. And in the New Testament, Paul tells us to look at His redemptive act of the cross. “He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32). Satan’s lie is this – find your identity in many gods. If God does not come through for you in ways that please you, have some spare gods available. How do you make a substitute god? Make him in your own image. This is why the first two commandments are really two sides of the same coin, for all sin has its origin in the idolatry of god-replacement.

- **Protect your God-given identity** (the 2nd Commandment): “You shall not make unto yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything in heaven above or the earth beneath, you shall not bow down and worship them, for I am a jealous God.” Or, in other words, “You shall NOT make and worship god-substitutes made in your own image.” Some have seen this commandment as merely a prohibition against images, icons, and other religious art, but even God Himself utilizes religious art. Remember the uplifted bronze serpent, and the two cherubim over the mercy seat at the ark of the covenant? God wants us to define our identity by letting Him express His image in us, for He has already created us in His image.

- **Know the power of your identity**, (3rd Commandment): You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. On the surface, many see this as a mere prohibition against profanity. The wider and deeper meaning of these words refers to the pursuit of expressing your identity by trying to make a name for yourself by god-playing. Remember Nebuchadnezzar! For the person who possesses a solid and secure sense of identity in his covenant-keeping God, this is really an invitation to know the power and resources of your identity by depending on the sufficiency, supremacy and sovereignty of God as expressed in His many glorious names.
Because you are so secure in the greatness of your Creator-God, you gratefully engage in praise and worship, as you give Him glory for His sufficiency, as expressed in His glorious names. Here are a few of these:

- The LORD is my Banner (Hebrew YHWH-Nissi)
- The LORD of Hosts (Hebrew YHWH-Sabaoth)
- The LORD is Peace (Hebrew YHWH-Shalom)
- The LORD will Provide (Hebrew YHWH-Yireh)
- The LORD our Righteousness (Hebrew YHWH-Tsidekenu)
- The LORD is my Shepherd (Hebrew YHWH-Rohi)
- Most High (Aramaic Illaya)
- The LORD who heals (Hebrew YHWY Rophi)

- *Cherish your identity* (the 4th Commandment) and celebrate your identity. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy…the seventh day [the number] is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work…for in six days God created heaven and earth.”

**Here are some things to celebrate:**

- Celebrate that you don’t have to depend on your work as the source of your identity. Really, the Sabbath commandment should be the easiest of all the commandments to keep. Why? After all, what is easier – to work or to rest?

- Celebrate that you are not saved by *your* work, but by Christ’s redemptive work at Calvary’s cross. So if some people charge you that by your Sabbath-keeping you are trying to work your way to heaven, you can just reply that you are *not working* but *resting*, and that this is a celebration that you are not saved by your works, but by Christ’s work.

- Celebrate on this day God’s rating of the completeness of your identity in Him as a perfect ‘7.’ Because of the sufficiency and fullness of Christ, celebrate your identity – for you are a new creation of infinite worth, deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Do-it-yourself religion only gets a grade of ‘6,’ but if you try really hard you might get a ‘666.’

In genuine worship, our self-worth and identity becomes so securely embedded and programmed into our hearts through the first four commandments (*one* God, His *image*, His *name*, and His *number*) that we develop an impenetrable immunity to all the lies of the enemy, an impenetrable virus-protection against the lies of Satan’s cunning deceptions. Temptations lose their power as we securely rest in the *identity* with which we were created and redeemed.

The “new covenant” promises in the Old Testament speak of this new identity: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his
brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:33, 34 KJV). Our new identity is as much a gift of grace as is the forgiveness of sins.

To worship is to serve God with our praises and to lay hold of His sufficiency for our every need. This takes away our need to pursue any idol and our own custom-designed “beasts,” as being able to fill our deepest needs.

*The best protection against the beast is the genuine worship of the Lamb, for in such worship we express through praise and adoration our contentment with the sufficiency, supremacy, and sovereignty of our Creator-Redeemer God.*

Live then to take full advantage of your God-given identity as you rest in the security of His everlasting covenant!

**The Security of the Gospel**

Through the everlasting gospel God announces that in Christ He has already reconciled us to Himself. He has totally justified us by treating us as though we have never sinned, and He has with that acquittal also given us a new identity as His very own children. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). He even wants you to call Him, “Daddy” (Romans 8:14-16), for before the foundation of the world He had you in mind. Max Lucado once said that God has carried your picture in His wallet for a long time. Our identity is not derived from our own works and accomplishments of trying to make good impressions on God or others. Our heavenly Father loves us, not because of what we do, but just because we are His very own children. In the gospel resides the basis for a secure identity, resulting in rock-solid self-worth based on what God says about us, and not on our performance plus the opinions of others.

What does God say about you? The same words He said about His Son at His baptism in the river Jordan. Believe those words! Then your identity will be securely anchored in Jesus Christ, and you will know that you are also God’s “beloved child in whom He is well pleased!”

The everlasting gospel contains all we need for every situation we will ever face, for this gospel gives us…

- an *identity* in Jesus Christ which is unassailable and rock-solid. Because He has purchased us with a price, we are now His and we belong to Him forever. We know who we are because we know Whose we are.

- *security*, an assurance of salvation built on God’s word and not our own performance.
“This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all he has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:39,40).

- dignity, because we know that God has created us in His very own image, and we derive our self-worth and significance from what He thinks of us, expressed both in creation and at the cross. “Kneeling in faith at the cross, he [the believer] has reached the highest place to which man can attain.” [5]

- a new history because with His precious blood He blots out our old history with all the sins of our past, and gives us a new history, namely Christ’s personal history, based on all the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. Through baptism we are dead, buried, risen, and ascended with Christ. Our legal position in Christ, that of being seated with Him in heavenly places, is so secure that the enemy cannot touch it.

- a new destiny, a place in His kingdom, and a custom-designed life-purpose, that the rest of your life may be our best life for Him now!

The Great Controversy – It Is All About Worship

The great controversy between Christ and Satan is all about worship, and, it is, therefore, also about whose identity will program your life. To worship is to acknowledge and express our preference and value for someone or something. Who will it be? Christ or His impostor? Those who belong to Jesus Christ will in their lives receive the “seal of the living God,” which is our only protection against the mark of the beast. How do you overcome the identity – image, name, and number – of the beast, the antichrist? The answer is to avoid all forms of idolatry or the expectation that gods which are not gods will deliver what only God can. Idolatry is essentially covetousness (Ephesians 5:5) that has run amuck.

It is noteworthy that the same book, the First Letter of John, which describes the work of the antichrist, closes with these words, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). The key to overcoming the devil’s program of identity theft is the genuine worship of the Lamb. In true worship we discover that our self-worth does not reside in our performance, but it is based on God’s covenant acts of creation and redemption.

When we in worship give Jesus Christ what He is worth, at the same time we also discover and declare our own worth. This God-given self-worth will be our primary protection against seeking love, self-worth, and significance in all the wrong places.
False self-worth: Your worth = your performance + the opinions of others about that performance.
Genuine self-worth: Your worth = what God thinks and says about you.

The good news is that God esteems you as He esteems His own Son, summarized by Ellen G. White like this:

“The Father gave all honour to His Son, seating Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers. He expressed His great joy and delight in receiving the Crucified One, and crowning Him with glory and honour. And all the favours He has shown to His Son in His acceptance of the great atonement are shown to His people...The seal of Heaven has been affixed to Christ's atonement. His sacrifice is in every way satisfactory. In Him mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The Father embraced His Son, and in this included all who receive Him” [6]

Have you perhaps up to this time believed that your personal vigilance about last-day events constituted your primary and adequate preparation to overcome the enemy’s end-time deceptions? Maybe you have tried to keep yourself updated on information about impending legislation about worship, church-state issues, or bio-chip implants in the forehead or hand, the avoidance of the number 666 in all personal documents, and you may even have stored up caches of food and oil for kerosene lamps. But the preparation for last-day events is primarily internal and spiritual. The warnings against the worship of the beast (Revelation 14:9-12) are really God’s challenge for you to build your entire life and personal identity on the worship of the Lamb as fully sufficient for both redemption as well as daily living. “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!” (Revelation 5:9). Through the power of the gospel God now wants to enhance the resistance of your spiritual immune system, so that before the final tests come you will be able to say, “For the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me” (John 14:30).

Text to Remember
But now, thus says the Lord who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel. Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, You are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you... For I am the Lord your God, the holy One of Israel, your Savior. Isaiah 43:1-3.

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder

Definition of idolatry: “When anyone or anything receives more glory than Jesus Christ.” Do you agree with this definition? Please write out your own personal definition of idolatry.
What are the areas in your life where, because of discontent with God, you have replaced Him or His Son Jesus Christ? Name some of those replacements.

Why is knowledge of the operations of the historical beast not sufficient to protect you?

What are some areas in your life where the enemy may already have initiated his work of identity theft?

**Truth vs. Lies:**

Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free.

“You desire truth in the inward parts” *Psalm 51:6*

**Satan’s Lies of half-truths**

It is what I do which determines who I am

You must try your very best to impress God and others.

Put on a good front!

Live your life to discover “who you are”

**God’s truths**

It is who I am which determines what I do.

There is no need to try to impress God, because He already knows all about you and He loves you in Jesus Christ.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Live your life to express who God is and whose you are.

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**Endnotes**

A Different Kind of Bikers’ Week

Submitted: Aug 21, 2013
By Debonnaire Kovacs

Next in our summer series is a story about “Rev It Up! Revival”—a camp meeting that probably would have shocked the church founders—though they might have loved it, once they got used to it!

For Pastor Tom Hughes, pastor of the Newark, Ohio, Seventh-day Adventist Church and longtime member of the Christian Motorcycle Association, a biker camp meeting was a no-brainer. In 2011 he and others organized the first one, and Dave Weigley, Columbia Union president, was its first keynote speaker. Hughes says about 100 people attended that first one. The second one brought 125, and this year there were about 140 attendees—and of course, 30-40 or more bikes!

A few weeks before the camp meeting, which is held in mid-June, Newark holds an annual Strawberry Festival. Bill Rickett, a Newark church member, urged the church to put up $125 for a booth. It would raise local awareness of Adventists and their ministries, and might even open a door to salvation for someone. So the church agreed, and Rickett and several other volunteers worked hard to bring it off.

Among those volunteers were Pastor Hughes and his wife, Debbie, and a man named Brett Opdyke. According to Hughes, Opdyke “is one of those people who never met a stranger. He stands in front of the table and talks to everyone.”

Debbie Hughes and Brett Opdyke talk to visitors at the Strawberry Festival

One of those he talked to was Jay Estep, a biker. So of course, Opdyke told Estep about the biker camp meeting which would be held shortly, and invited him to come. Estep did.
At the Rev It Up! Revival, Estep and the rest of the crowd were treated to a concert from the GloryWay quartet and several sermons—events similar to those at camp meetings across the nation. It was the content that was intriguing:

- the story of Leave a Mark Ministries, a ministry especially for bikers, told by one of its founders, Paul Collins
- sermons with titles like “God of Everyday” and “Trading the Scarlet Letter for the Scarlet Cord,” given by Dick Montanez, chaplain for the Sabbath Keepers, a biker ministry with chapters all across the country
- another sermon, by Tom Hughes, called “Christ in the Cross Bones,” detailing the startling Christian background of a symbol that has been largely hijacked by various ungodly groups—the skull and crossbones
- the Sabbath worship hour given by Preacher Man John Harris, President of Armor Bearers Motorcycle Ministries, which has a church and a community services center which provide, among other things, free dental and health care to bikers
- a presentation by Juan Santos, president of Adventist Motorcycle Ministries Ohio (another organization with chapters all over)

Then there were the activities—“biker games” (I was afraid to ask), and of course, rides in gorgeous Amish country.

On Sunday morning, Jay Estep, the man who had been invited at the Strawberry Festival, gave his heart to Jesus, to the thrill of all present. And when he left, he said, “See you Saturday!” He’s been attending Newark Seventh-day Adventist Church ever since. More importantly, he’s been volunteering at the community services center, which is the sort of activity that gives a person “ownership” in his or her new family, and keeps them in the fold better than anything else.

Next year, Hughes says they will “break the gender barrier” by having women speakers for the first time, and in fact, this reporter is honored to be one of them.
Learn more at any of the sites below:

www.biblebiker.com, Tom Hughes’ biker webpage

http://www.biblebiker.com/BIKER_CAMPMEETING.php, where you can see pictures from this year’s Rev It Up! Revival

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amHBvAVBbQM Hear for yourself the presentation on the origins of the skull and crossbones. Hughes also has a book, available at his website and at www.remnantpublications.com.

http://www.skmm-national.org/SKMM/welcome.html, the website of the Sabbath Keepers