Prepare to answer tough questions
by David Marshall, Editor

How do we turn this attempt to trash Christianity into an evangelistic opportunity?

W hat will you say if someone asks, “Did you know Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that they had a child?”

Think again. Most of us have been asked it already. Those who haven’t will be asked it before the end of May.

A certain film about which I have warned you will have hit every cinema in the British Isles by then. The DVD will be released in the autumn. The Da Vinci Code. Remember?

Don’t get me wrong. Christianity survived seventy years of state-sponsored atheism in the Soviet Union. It survived the regimes associated with Stalin, Hitler and Mao, so it will survive Dan Brown. The Da Vinci Code is a work of fiction. Right?

Yes, it is. Sort of.

It’s a highly readable work in which fact and fiction are interwoven, and no distinction is drawn between the two. The area in which the boundaries of history and hysteria are especially blurred and darkened is the one relating to the early development of Christianity.

Since the assertion that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene is largely based on the idea that the disciple next to Jesus in Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper looks like a woman, it is easily disposed of. Leonardo’s painting was done 1,500 years after the last supper took place! In any event, the disciple with the long hair is leaning on the disciple next to him, not on Jesus.

So you’ll have no problem with the Jesus-Mary question. You might, however, be thrown by other questions — if you are not prepared.

Dan Brown’s fictional story is based on a body of conspiracy theory that saw the light of day in Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln’s Holy Blood, Holy Grail, first published in 1984. Indeed, the release of Da Vinci Code the movie has been somewhat delayed by a 10-million-dollar claim brought by Messrs Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln against Dan Brown.

The Mary Magdalene connection is only one part of the Holy Blood, Holy Grail conspiracy pedalled by Brown. He strikes at:

• the divinity of Christ
• the authenticity of the New Testament.

This conspiracy theory represents the divinity of Christ as a belief that was “invented” in the reign of Constantine in the fourth century. The New Testament (indeed, the Bible as a whole) is represented as totally manmade. Here is a direct quote:

[The Bible] has evolved through countless translations, additions and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.

• “The fundamental irony of Christianity: The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.”

More palatable to Adventists is where Brown has his central character say, “Originally . . . Christianity honoured the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagans’ ‘veneration of the day of the sun.’”

Dan Brown is not the only novelist to blur the distinction between fact and fiction; Da Vinci Code is, however, the twenty-first century’s best seller so far. Michael Dobbs has written a series of novels based on the life of Winston Churchill, and there is a whole genre of fiction termed “faction” (a mix of fact and fiction). Each “faction” novelist has his own agenda. Dobbs, for example, “spins” wartime history in a way that anyone alive then,
You...th can make it happen!

by Nathan Stickland, Associate Youth director, SEC

I was feeling a little tired and looking forward to a few hours of driving to the SEC Camp Meeting. Having just finished dealing with post-SEC Adventurer Camporee matters, with the better part of 400 people on site in the beautiful New Forest, I was now ready for the calm before the next storm. There was just my music and me. Then I got a phone call:

“You need to meet at the local church board who said, ‘The Pathfinder kids told their club leader they did not want to do what you and Michael think they should do. We are a God thing happening. It turns out that I was the last thing I wanted. Why me? Why this meeting? I need a driver,’ said the voice. This was the last I heard.

The short of it is that the Pathfinder kids told their church leaders they did not want to do community service any more. Instead, they wanted to preach the Gospel. The club leader took it to the church board who said, ‘The computer says no!’

What is a church saying ‘no’ to?

I take my metaphorical hat off to this leader who was so open to the idea.

Health Who

Dr Who

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has just issued a report on preventing chronic disease. As its means of communication it has listed ten widespread misunderstandings about chronic disease alongside the reality of the situation. WHO’s report put me in mind of the chef who was said to have saved over a hundred lives by not turning up for work.

According to the report, each year:

4.9M people die as a result of tobacco use, 2.8M die of overweight and obesity, 4.4M die as a result of raised total cholesterol levels; and 7.1M die as a result of raised blood pressure.

WHO has listed ten widespread misunderstandings about chronic disease.

• chronic diseases are in low and middle income countries
• affect mainly rich people (reality: people are equally likely to have chronic diseases because of financial burdens and poverty)
• affect mainly old people (reality: half of chronic diseases affect people under 70 years of age, and one quarter is found in people under 60; young people are now affected, with around 2.1M children under 18 being overweight)
• affect mainly men (reality: chronic diseases are fairly evenly spread between the sexes)
• are the result of unhealthy lifestyles (true only in the broadest sense. Often the lifestyle is not a matter of choice but of circumstances, limited education, and social inequalities, and, in the case of children, part of what the parents eat)
• are unavoidable (reality: people are preventable if they choose the environment in which they live)
• cannot be prevented (reality: known risk factors are estimated to account for 80% of all heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and over 40% of all cancer would be prevented)
• are unavoidable, everyone has to die of something again, partially true but death does not have to be slow, painful, or premature as is often chronic disease

The list also states that:

• low and middle income countries should control infectious diseases before chronic diseases (true in both categories of disease, thus making it difficult to tackle both)
• prevention and control is too expensive (preventive solutions have been shown to be cost effective and often inexpensive)
• many people with poor lifestyles live into their 90s (true, but the vast majority do not)

WHO aims to get a 2% reduction in chronic disease death rates a year over the next decade. It is estimated that this will prevent 36M premature deaths by 2025, and the scientific knowledge to achieve this goal already exists. Anything that we can do to help WHO reach their goal is a service to mankind. In the last analysis the life that you save might be your own!

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Swimathon
Stanbrook Park Adventure and Pathfinder Club held a swimming marathon on Sunday 26 March at the local Brickett Wood sports centre. For two hours children aged between 5 and 14 put their energies into chasing the highest number of metres their strength allowed. Their grit and determination won them a total of 36,348 metres, which is just a little further than the 22 miles across the English Channel. Three-year-old Shana

SP: ‘Truth for Today’
It was another full house for the second illustrated lecture by Brian Davison at the Stanbrook Centre in North Walsham. Descons were again required to bring in extra chairs following a delightful sit-down meal which was well orchestrated by the church’s catering team. Almost all of those who attended the first meeting came back to enjoy further glimpses of physical and spiritual food.

Many visitors from the local community expressed appreciation regarding the balanced nature of the programmes which include good musical collections, a quiz, and a ten-minute episode from a popular video on the life of Jesus Christ. This week’s instalment gave insights into the balanced nature of the programmes which include good musical collections, a quiz, and a ten-minute episode from a popular video on the life of Jesus Christ. This week’s instalment gave insights into the balance between the church’s catering team. Almost all of those who attended the first meeting came back to enjoy further glimpses of physical and spiritual food.

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Creation Society founded
In January 2005 a notice appeared in the Torbay local newspaper, the Herald Express, inviting anyone interested in forming a Creation Society to contact a certain number. Two lady residents at Coniston House, the Adventist retirement flats at Pagetian, responded. Shortly afterwards Dr Robert Law called at the house, introduced himself to Ruth and Bevan, and stated that his purpose in founding The Torbay Creation Society is to offer stringently scientific evidence for a Designer/Creator; as Evolutionists will not accept the Bible, he could not be heard. Dr Law is a retired Church of England vicar. He knew about Seventeenth-century Adventists, and did not agree with some of our beliefs. However, on looking round the spacious room, he said, ‘We could meet here, couldn’t we? ’ So Torbay Creation Society meets monthly at Coniston House helping its members attended the first meeting. Dr Law reads a paper, circulates it, and a video is shown. Naturally, dealing with creation, the Sabbath Day crops up. One lady of Jewish background is taking a very serious view of it, and is going for our literature on the subject.

Another great interest has been in the amount of correspondence in the Herald Express regarding evolution vs Creation. Ruth has taken the lead in giving Biblical replies to the false ideas presented and has had a good number of letters published.

Fire Fighters ‘speechless’
The plan for the ‘cookie run’ was to place cookies in a box with a Bible text taped on the lid and visit three different public service stations: the fire station; the police station; and the ambulance station. The morning of our youth-led service, 13 March went smoothly and we were all very excited about the lunch awaiting us, provided by our youth department. Food was eaten quickly, and the 25 people there were divided into three mixed groups. For say, they found the fire fighters seemed to have a lot of females (including me)! Each group carried three cookie boxes and were eagerly waiting for departure. Since I can’t be in three places at once, I can only speak from my experience at the fire station. Here, I mention that the visits to the police and ambulance stations were completed. Cookies were dropped off and appreciated.

Back at the fire station (gigging and blushing), we chose our representative and spoke to the duty manager. We told them we were representing the St Albans Seventh-day Adventist church, and wanted to express our thanks for their service by giving them cookies. They were speechless!

The duty manager took us back to the garage where the trucks were kept. One of us was allowed to climb onto a fire truck and my camera started snapping away as the rest of the youth joined in. One by one, fire fighters joined us at the photo shoot as well.

It’s about more than just loving. It’s getting connected. Connecting with our youth. Connecting with our community. An easy way to connect is just showing appreciation and thanks.

Teen baptism at Manchester South
Sabbath 28 January was a day of celebration at Manchester South church for the Taylor, Nyakundi and Questile-Lewis families, when their respective teenagers made a commitment and took a stand for Jesus. From the Taylor family were Rochelle, Danielle and Ian. They were accompanied by Hannah Questile-Lewis and Gideon Nyakundi. The Nyakundis were made even more special by the return visit of our guest speaker, Roger Duncan. He had an important role to play in helping to keep the teens seal this commitment.

During Roger’s first visit to Manchester South in November 2004 he conducted a special Week of Prayer. When he made an appeal to all teenagers in the congregation, the candidates were among those who responded. Roger made a point of collecting details after the appeal and then included them in his prayers regularly. Dr Nyakundi also received email communications from Roger enquiring about the welfare of his son, Gideon. Among those who came to witness this special occasion were family members of the teens. They had traveled from near and far, and some participated by rendering musical items, eulogising the candidates and reading chosen Bible texts. Amanda, Hannah’s mother, sang a special song for her daughter; one she had kept for when this occasion came.

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Camp Hill: ‘God is with us’
Pastor S. F. Fry from Oxford Street, Wolverhampton was the guest speaker on 18 February. His message was titled ‘God is with us’, during which he said that we can be wicked, hateful and sinful, but the Lord is loving, kind, merciful, patient, loyal, and our Master, Redeemer, peacekeeper, our Healer – and he is good. ‘Some people are treated differ- ently from others,’ he said, ‘but the ground at the foot of the cross is even.’

Durham: A Passion for Christ
Mel Gibson’s film helped bring Rebecca to Christ. Rebecca knew nothing of the Holy Spirit’s leading when she watched The Passion of the Christ, again and again, crying every time. God also used a person, friend, whom she has never met, and who had previously attended the church in the South of England. Rebecca’s first search for the nearest church, and enrolled in it, was in the Sunderland Walkabout pub. Rebecca, 16, was utterly confused by the public information provided. ‘We celebrated our life and God’s pres- ence for the first time. We had the chance to talk about online support, together with our new evangelist.’

Kosi Veny (1952-2006) d. 14 February
Kosi, as he was affectionately known, was a valuable and much loved member at the end of 2005. Kosi had fought bravely against cancer and had displayed great faith during his illness. For the last six months he lived to live for now. Kosi was no longer saying that whatever the Lord had in store, he would take it on the chin. ‘What a testament to his faith and endurance. Bayom was a trailblazer by trade, initially working with his father Ali and en- trance to a local club. Kosi, he was known for excellent workmanship and in- tegrity. The erected steel built was half a. The walkabout pub, our church church, was packed with family, friends and church members. Pastor Perry Messen- ger our town’s general church, conducted the Service of Remembrance, and on 1 February it was only fitting that the funeral service was conducted by Pastor Catar Perry Messenger. When the service was over, Kosi was laid to rest at a local church. Kosi was a man of great heart and a person who never complained, but spoke freely to them of the things that had happened to him. He was a man of great heart and a person who never complained, but spoke freely to them of the things that had happened to him.

Margaret was born in Hull, Yorkshire, and came to live in Great Wymondham, Norfolk, as a child. She left school, in Hull, Yorkshire, and came to live in Great Wymondham, Norfolk, as a child. She left school, in Hull, Yorkshire, and came to live in Great Wymondham, Norfolk, as a child. She left school, in Hull, Yorkshire, and came to live in Great Wymondham, Norfolk, as a child. She left school, in Hull, Yorkshire, and came to live in Great Wymondham, Norfolk, as a child.
the end of the first century.4 Hammadi among the pioneers of the Christian gospels. The Catholic Truth Society has issued a series of pamphlets which says they are written in Aramaic. Brown draws from them. gospels do not support the conclusion that they would never draw from purely historical sources.

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Ten years of broadcasts Adventist Radio Milton Keynes (ARKMK) began in September 1996 under the direction of Pastor Michael Hamilton and Mike Johnson and is owned and operated by the Adventist Church. Mike Johnson previously presented ‘Sweet Inspiration’ on Cable Radio Milton Keynes. ARMK operates under a special 28-day Restricted Services Licence from Ofcom.

We are reaching in excess of 100,000 people in the Milton Keynes area and around the station is making a life-changing impact in the lives of its listeners. Throughout its history, ARMK has received the support of local companies and organisations. These include the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Borneo Linen, Solicitors, Archers Insurance, Milton Keynes Council, Parcel Force Worldwide, Granovita, JD Systems, On Eagles’ Wings Ministries, and Milton Keynes Citizen Newspaper.

ARKMK is celebrating ten years of broadcasts with its Easter period 2-29 April programmes. It will be streamed on the internet for the first time in the station’s history.

Listeners to ARMK can also hear programmes featuring the very best and latest Gospel music, programmes on all aspects of family life, worship services and other Christian teachings, business tips, dedications and requests, and much more. The station’s main purpose is to provide programmes that will make a difference in the lives of the listeners, to bring a sense of hope and to inspire.

www.arkmk.org