

newsline

Four-monthly notes and news
of his ministry from John Blanchard

No. 25 May 2011

Newtownabbey shows the way!

Postponed for a year due to commitments surrounding my wife's homecall I recently fulfilled a long-standing invitation to speak at a weekend of meetings hosted by Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey, in Northern Ireland. Under the leadership of The Rev. Professor Edward Donnelly the church is making solid progress and a daughter church has been founded in Carrickfergus.

For this particular weekend the church took the bold step of hiring the superb Theatre at the Mill, located near the church, for the Friday evening and the theatre included the meeting in its own publicity. When it was realized that it could not hold all those applying for tickets it was decided to hold an additional meeting at 5.45pm and the theatre was well on the way to being filled for both events. Although I had only just flown in from London I felt greatly upheld during the two meetings, not least during an interesting Q and A session at each. Questions opened up a variety of subjects including the age of the earth, the integrity of Scripture, the testability of God's existence and the church's mission. The church had made special arrangements with EP Books that resulted in a remarkable amount of literature being sold. In addition, the church had bought 1,000 copies of a pocket version of *Ultimate Questions* for free distribution.

Saturday began with about 100 people at breakfast, followed by a meeting in the church when others joined us. In the evening the church was virtually full, mostly of young people, for a session on 'Evolution: Fact or Fiction?' The organization of the weekend by the church's Outreach Committee, under the leadership of Ken Russell, was simply superb and the publicity the best I have ever seen for this kind of engagement. It was a privilege to serve the church and to hear that quite apart from unbelievers reached with the gospel the church felt strengthened and better equipped for its ongoing witness. Hearing from those significantly helped in their Christian lives by books like *Read Mark Learn* and *Learning and Living* added to my thankfulness for the weekend.

Does God Believe in Atheists?
Friday March 18th 2011 at 5:45pm
This event due to public demand

Is God Past His Sell-by Date?
Saturday March 19th 2011
Light breakfast from 8:30am to 9:30am. Please book for breakfast by confirming numbers and any special dietary requirements to: service@reformed.org.uk or phone 028 9098 2227
Presentation by Dr. Blanchard at 8:45am
Can't make it to the breakfast? You are still welcome at the presentation.

Evolution: Fact Or Fiction?
Saturday March 19th 2011 at 7:30pm

Theatre At The Mill
Carroney Road North,
Newtownabbey BT36 5QA.
*contact the Theatre for tickets
advance booking essential*

Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church

speaker Dr. John Blanchard

'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

ALBANIAN UPDATE

Regular *Newsline* readers who gave in support of Project Albania will be delighted to read this update received from missionary Will Niven, who lives in Fier and is responsible for several churches in that area. Along with Albanian Evangelical Mission worker Geoff Townsend he has been actively engaged in the translation, publishing and distribution of our book titles. His report makes encouraging reading.

'We have been overjoyed in the last year not only by God's provision for the translation and publication of new titles — we now have eleven titles in Albanian — but also by the response of the churches to them.

'We were able to print 5,000 copies of *Why on earth did Jesus come?* for free distribution to churches in December 2009. Many churches used this booklet in open-air work, in door-to-door evangelism and also to be given away at Christmas events. It was also used as we distributed calendars with Scripture verses on them. Whilst the 2009 edition was free of charge, there was so much demand for it last Christmas that we printed 3,000 more and virtually sold them all!

'We have seen medical missionaries using *Where is God when things go wrong?* with desperate patients. *Has science got rid of God?* and *Evolution: Fact or Fiction* have been used greatly by a brother who is taking seminars about Biblical creationism in Albania and Kosova. We have also found that there is a high demand for these works amongst those involved in student work. In Fier we have found that the clarity of *Right with God* has been of immense help to those with whom we are sharing the gospel.



'One of the side effects of this literature ministry is not only reaching the lost but educating the church. Many Christians have bought books so that they might be equipped to share the gospel and to defend the faith. God willing, we intend to publish *Whatever happened to hell?*, both to challenge non-Christians and to urge the churches on in the work of the gospel. Please pray that God might be pleased to use these works for the salvation of many souls.'



One year on

It was amazing to know that on 17 February my darling wife Joyce had been ‘away from the body and at home with the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 5:8) for a year. Out of kindness, fewer people now ask me how I am coping, but I know that I am being upheld in prayer by countless Christian friends (and, remarkably, some I have never met).

It is difficult to know exactly how to answer the unasked question. The loss remains indescribable and so many ‘little things’ we enjoyed together are now empty and formal. Strangely (though perhaps not so?) when I hear a particular bit of news or receive certain emails or letters, I find myself — just for a nanosecond — thinking, ‘I must tell Joyce,’ or ‘Joyce would like to know this’, then instantly realize that this will not be possible. Those moments are always poignant reminders of what has been torn away from my life, but these are always overwhelmed by the assurance that Joyce is now in the glorious presence of her God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

As a family, we had planned to have her memorial stone erected by 17 February, but two outbreaks of snow and several other events prevented me going over details with the stonemason until three weeks before that date. His usual lead time is 10-12 weeks, but amazingly he was able to complete the work with just one day to spare! It looks magnificent and is in a stunning position right at the top of Epsom Cemetery. I have chosen the text deliberately to ensure that even after my body is laid there all who pass by will be able to read my testimony of God’s saving grace.

Regular *Newsline* readers will have received reports of my ministry during the past year and new readers can check back on the ‘Newsline’ page on my website — www.johnblanchard.org In December and January I had two operations for cataracts and the results are excellent, for which I am grateful.

Howard Williams and I were in the USA for three weeks in April and there will be a full report in the next issue of *Newsline*.



SOUTHERN SWING

Few of the Popular Christian Apologetics tours I plan are in the part of the country colloquially known as ‘south of Watford Gap’, but March saw an exception and Howard Williams and I were based partly in my home as we fulfilled several engagements.

To my special delight the first event was hosted in **Banstead** by my home fellowship, Banstead Community Church, under the leadership of our pastor, The Rev. Dan Green. As a church member I had the first opportunity to see how much work goes on behind the scenes especially when the event is held on secular premises, in this case Banstead Community Hall. A visitation programme and detailed arrangements at the hall were all carried out by efficient teams of church members, who were rewarded by a fine attendance and a clear sense of God’s presence and blessing.

Our next stop was **Winchester**, which has seldom featured on my schedules. The city is steeped in history, notably surrounding King Alfred the Great, whose Christian influence at the head of the nation was not to be equalled for several centuries. Hyde Street Chapel is a small fellowship, but twice a year it takes the big step of organizing a meeting in the Council Chamber of the Guildhall, a superb building that dominates the centre of the city. These meetings are usually focused on a topic relating to science and faith, but I was asked to speak on ‘Where is God when things go wrong?’ As the horrendous Japanese earthquake and tsumami had taken place a few days earlier the topic could not have been more relevant and I sensed people’s close engagement with the issue as I spoke. A vocal atheist threatened to monopolize the Q and A session, but his comments gave opportunity to develop some relevant truths, especially God’s unquestionable sovereignty. It was a delight to preach at Hyde Street Chapel on the Sunday and to take a brief look at one or two of the city’s historical sites.

The longest journey then took us to East Anglia, one of my favourite parts of the country, for a meeting at Bethesda Baptist Church, **Ipswich**. I had preached there from time to time in the past and with MWE colleagues had held an evangelistic mission there many years ago. There is something special about a rural audience and I warmed to the opportunity of fitting my assigned subject into the church’s present emphasis on equipping



Statue of King
Alfred the Great

its members for evangelism. Most of the audience came from outside of the church's own membership, raising the hope that the message will find its way to other places in this delightful part of the country.

We were based at my home for the rest of the tour, on which the first stop was **Twickenham**. I have preached at Amyand Park Chapel many times, but was encouraged



Busy in Banstead

and surprised to see the church packed for the meeting. I find it impossible to put my finger on exactly what makes a meeting outstanding (and of course a subjective assessment bears no necessary relation to what God is doing) but from the opening moment I had a relaxed but excited sense that it was a very special occasion. The pastor, Gerard Hemmings, has since emailed me to say, 'The message was

warm, direct and compelling. We had an excellent evening. Not only were there many encouraging conversations but a number have expressed a strong interest in "Christianity Explored".'

The final meeting was in **London**, where the venue was Trinity Road Chapel, Tooting. Several colleagues and I held a mission there in 1977 and a leader now told me that it had revolutionized the church's view on evangelism and made a lasting mark on its ongoing witness. It was a special encouragement to meet a lady converted while reading *Right with God* and a man who came to Christ after reading *Ultimate Questions*. Another man told me that I had given him a copy of *Ultimate Questions* during the 1997 mission when he was a school student. He came to Christ soon afterwards — and is now a pastor! The ministry at the meeting was very warmly received and the Q and A session gave an opportunity of expanding on several important issues: altogether, the TRC event was a fine end to the first Popular Christian Apologetics tour of 2011.



My warmest thanks once again to friends who have recently sent ministry gifts through the CM Trust.

Your fellowship is greatly appreciated. Gifts sent directly to my home address are always acknowledged personally at the time.

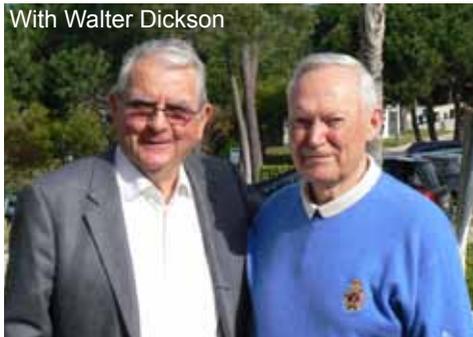
PORTUGAL ENCORE

It is sometimes said of London buses that you wait for ages for one to come and then two come together. I felt a little like that when opportunities arose for me to preach in Portugal at the end of January. I had paid my first-ever visit to the country in October to preach at the FIEL Conference in Agua de Madeiros, north of Lisbon, and three months later was on a plane to Faro for further opportunities.

The first was at the International Evangelical Church of the Algarve, in Loulé, Algarve, a fellowship with an interesting and encouraging history. It was born in the living room of a Portuguese hotel in 1985 when eleven adults met under the leadership of the Dutch Pastor Peter Sluimer and his wife Marianne who had the vision to plant the first English-speaking church in the country south of Lisbon. By the following year the services were held in a restaurant and a year later in a dilapidated farm in Vale Judeu. By 1990 the growing church was meeting in a marquee erected behind the farm and in 1993 moved into a lovely new purpose-built church on the farm premises with financial help from believers in Portugal and elsewhere.



In 2008 Mark and Judith Loney from N. Ireland, who had been pastoring a church elsewhere in Portugal for thirteen years, took over the leadership of IECA. It was a great privilege to preach to a vibrant congregation with a love for God's Word, an imaginative programme and a concern for local evangelism and overseas missions. The ministry, with



simultaneous translation, was very well received and an invitation to return was not received lightly! *Newsline* readers visiting the Algarve and wishing to worship at IECA should visit its website — www.iec-algarve.com — for details.

A bonus came when Walter Dickson, president of Pinheiros Altos Golf Club, arranged what was originally intended to be a Men's Breakfast at the club. As all forty places were soon taken it was opened up to ladies as well and eventually over eighty people came. In

the Lord's goodness there was a tremendous 'grip' in the meeting and fifty copies of *Is anybody out there?* were taken. Golf at Pineiros Altos and Quinta do Lago added to the pleasure of the visit!

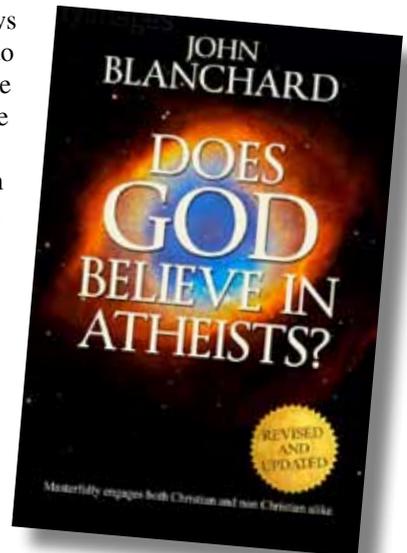
HOT OFF THE PRESS !

When the 655-page volume *Does God believe in Atheists?* was first published in 2000 it received a remarkable reception and was voted 'Christian Book of the Year' at the inaugural UK Christian Book Awards. It has been reprinted many times and the publishers and I have received countless testimonies of the help it has been, including messages from those who have become Christians through reading it. As regular *Newsline* readers will know, it has also been translated into Albanian.

It has now been decided to release the first paperback edition, which will have a revised and updated version of the original text and an Appendix with the text of my recent book *Dealing with Dawkins*. People now in their mid-teens were only four years old when *Does God believe in Atheists?* was first published, so we feel that a vast, new readership can now be reached with the paperback edition. It traces the development of atheistic and agnostic thinking over the past 2,500 years and shows how thinkers like Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell and others have shaped many people's thinking today. It also pinpoints the flaws in evolutionist claims made by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others, explains why secular humanism self-destructs, reveals why there is no conflict between science and belief in God, exposes fatal errors in nine world religions and fourteen major cults, and shows why the existence of evil and suffering is no reason to deny God's existence. In addition it reveals the nature of God, the deity of Christ and the central truths of the Christian gospel.

In his kind Foreword, Dr Sinclair Ferguson writes, 'Even by John Blanchard's normal standards of excellence and clarity, this work is a *tour de force* ... bulging with facts and fascinating information ... wonderfully readable.'

The book will eventually retail at £12.99, but this first printing will be £9.99. **Regular *Newsline* readers can order it for £8.00 per copy + postage** from EP Books, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH; sales@epbooks.org; or 01325 380232. United States readers should contact usasales@epbooks.org or phone/fax toll free: 1-866-588-6778.



COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2011

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For up-to-date news of any additional meetings, visit www.johnblanchard.org. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and if possible plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

MAY

12-13 **CREWE:** Crewe Christian Convention, Meathfield Gospel Hall, Meathfield Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3BA [Info: 01270 257182]

22-27 **IRELAND:** Christian Golfers' Conference at Carlton Millrace Hotel, Buncody, Co. Wexford.

The rest of May is reserved for writing, study and preparation.

JUNE

1 **PURLEY, Surrey:** Purley Baptist Church Study Group.

12^(pm) **BANSTEAD, Surrey:** Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 01737 358695 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org]

15* **AIRDRIE, Lanarkshire:** Airdrie Baptist Church, 97 Graham Street, Airdrie, ML6 6DE [Info: 01236 762022 or revrossmurphy@gmail.com]

16* **KILMARNOCK, East Ayrshire:** John Ritchie Warehouse, 40 Beansburn, KA3 1RL [Info: 01563 536394 or shop@johnritchie.co.uk]

17* **ISLE OF SKYE:** Village Hall, Kyleakin, Isle of Skye, IV41 8PH [Info: 01471 820063 or benonskye@onetel.com]

18* **DORNOCH, Sutherland:** Dornoch Academy, Evelix Road, IV25 3HR [Info 01862 811524 or stay@auchlea.co.uk]

19* **INVERNESS, Highland:** Inshes Church, Sir Walter Scott Drive, Inverness, IV2 3TW [Info: 01463 772402 or ali.inshes@btinternet.com]

20* **DINGWALL, Highland:** Dingwall & Strathpeffer Free Church, Dingwall High Street, Dingwall, IV15 9HA [Info: 01349 862183 or angmacrae@aol.com]

21* **INVERNESS, Highland:** Inverness East Church, Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1LU [Info: 01463 236695 / 01463 238770 or atbmcgowan@invernesseast.com]

22* **BROUGHTY FERRY, Dundee:** Broughty Ferry Baptist Church, 86 St Vincent Street, DD5 2EZ [Info: 01382 779364 or briantalbot@hotmail.co.uk]

23* **EDINBURGH:** New Restalrig Church, 1 Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7EZ [Info: 0131 661 4045 or david@dlc.org.uk]

JULY

2-4 **LONGSHORSLEY, Northumberland:** Longshorsley Christian Convention [Info: 01661 822546 or alan@pagan.freeserve.co.uk or g.r.curry@btinternet.com]

The rest of July is reserved for writing, study and preparation.

AUGUST

7^(am) **BANSTEAD, Surrey:** Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 01737 358695 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org]

The rest of August is reserved for writing, study and preparation.

* Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting

JOIN THE TEAM!

Thank you for reading *Newsline*. If you have not seen it before and would like to receive future copies (by post or e-mail) please let me know at:

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