



newsl ine

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

No. 24

January 2011

The theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking recently hit the headlines with his latest book, *The Grand Design*, co-authored with physicist Leonard Mlodinow. Hawking's 1988 book *A Brief History of Time* ended with his now-famous statement that if we were to find the so-called 'theory of everything' to explain the universe 'it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason — for then we would know the mind of God'. His latest book closes that door and declares that science 'can explain the universe without the need for a creator'.

So what?

Needless to say, the secular media lapped it up, *The Times* leading the way with a banner front-page headline and nine pages in its *Eureka* magazine. Just as predictably, Richard Dawkins jumped on board, delighted to claim that physics had endorsed what he believed biology had already shown.

In 1697 the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfreid Leibnitz asked the fundamental philosophical question, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' and scholars have been wrestling with it ever since. Stephen Hawking now says, 'Philosophy is dead' because it has not kept up with science, especially physics. To explain our user-friendly universe he leans towards the idea that there is a multiplicity of universes (a multiverse) and that by a massive series of coincidences ours happens to be the one that ticks all the right boxes.



In Hawking's opinion the laws of physics alone mean that the universe 'can and will' create itself from nothing: 'Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist.' He says that string theory (which said that the universe was made up of tiny vibrating strings) has been replaced by M-theory (really a whole family of theories) though he admits that deciphering this 'may not be possible'.

The simple fact is that Hawking's latest best-seller gets us nowhere — other than suggesting a 'Grand Design' without a Designer! I much prefer this statement by the American astrophysicist Arno Penzias, who shared the 1978 Nobel Prize for Physics: 'The best data we have are exactly what I would have predicted had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole.'

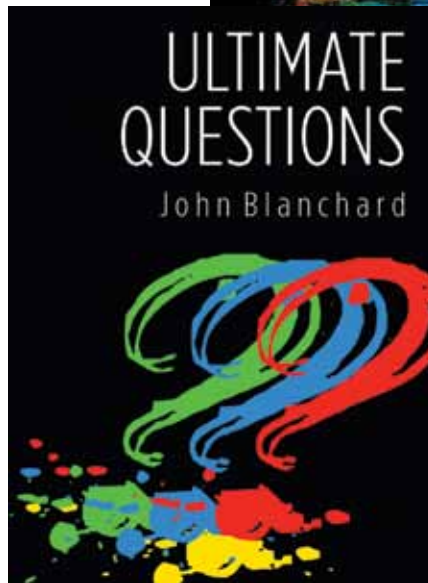
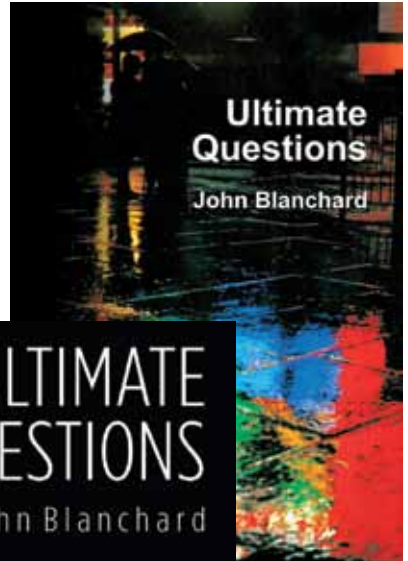
'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

AN ADDITION TO THE FAMILY!

When *Ultimate Questions* was first published in 1987 it did not occur to me that it might be translated into even one foreign language, so to know that it now has 13,000,000 copies in print in sixty-three languages is humbling and amazing.

Building on this remarkable fact, EP Books recently announced that there had been an addition to the *Ultimate Questions* family in the form of a pocket-sized version. Measuring just 4 x 3 inches, the 64-page production has the parent booklet's complete text, but its own black and white pictures. In fact, there is not just one birth, but triplets, as the pocket-sized booklets are available with the Scripture texts in three versions — AV (KJV), NIV and ESV. These are all proving very popular — the word from EP Books is that they are 'flying off the shelves'.

To order (and to get details of discounted offers) contact EP Books, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH — Email: sales@epbooks.org — Tel: 01325 380232. Readers in the USA should contact usasales@epbooks.org or phone/fax toll free: 1-866-588-6778.



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.

Ireland – Republic and Province

Whenever 'Ireland' appears in my immediate diary my pulse quickens a little, even after some 700 previous engagements there, dating back to 1966. The most recent Popular Christian Apologetics tour with Howard Williams took us first to **Drogheda** in the Irish Republic; there our good friends John Woodside and Billy Patterson have remarkable ministries. When John became pastor of Drogheda Presbyterian Church seven years ago fewer than fifteen attended and the spiritual temperature was almost at zero. Attendance is now over 175, most worshippers recently converted from a variety of backgrounds. There were obvious signs of new life at our meeting and we left for Northern Ireland in good heart.

Richview Presbyterian Church, **Belfast**, suffered seriously during the notorious 'Troubles' but Robin Greer leads a steady recovery and it was a privilege to join hands with him in an engagement that was a great encouragement to the church.

We then made our way to **Enniskillen**, where businessman Brendan Jones was our host at a return visit to The Stables. Listed buildings dating from 1892 have been converted into a splendid Christian conference centre, complete with a superb kitchen and two small town houses, often used for Christian workers suffering from burn-out. 'Saturday Night at The Stables' began in 2004 and is sometimes full. At our meeting people were crammed into every aisle, standing down the sides, and even in open doorways. It was an evening to remember and a huge encouragement to Brendan and his helpers, who together have such a significant ministry there.

Sunday preaching with our good friend Billy Reid in his church in **Tandragee** was warmly received. The visit included speaking to contacts in Nova Scotia and Portugal with regard to future plans and made Tandragee feel like a global communications centre!

On next to **Moir** Baptist Church, where it was a special joy to link up with my erstwhile MWE colleague

Eric Clarke. There had been some confusion as to the subject for the evening, and car park time preparing a suitable framework for blending three topics was interesting to say the least! In the goodness of God the meeting (with a fine Q and A time) was exceptionally well received by a crowd that nearly filled the church.

At **Newtownards** the following day it would have been difficult to get many more people into the Baptist Church, where Tom McLaughlin heads up the blossoming work. The meeting would have been a highlight on any tour and an invitation to hold a similar meeting in another church in the town as soon as possible added to the impact of the evening.

The tour ended in **Magherafelt**, where four years ago the local Baptist church moved into lovely new premises, which cater perfectly for all the church's ministries. An interesting Q and A session, covering a wide range of fascinating subjects, helped to make Magherafelt a fitting end to yet another tour in the Emerald Isle.



Woodside, JB, Patterson, HW

Howard's patch ...

About once a year, I do a Popular Christian Apologetics tour in the north-west of England, making my base at Howard and Marlene Williams' home in Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancs. This makes commuting to meetings easy for Howard and gives us time for reflection, assessment and planning.

Our October tour began in **Liverpool**, with a return visit to Belvidere Road Church. As on previous occasions it was a huge encouragement to see a large crowd, with so many people in the 20-40 age range. The feedback was so positive that it made a splendid beginning to the tour.

The following night saw us in **Bolton** where the fine premises of Bethel Evangelical Church were financed by the local council to replace the original building and allow road development. At a very warm meeting, questions included, 'Is it easier to be an atheist?' and 'Why did God take so long to send the gospel to Britain?' Q and A sessions are always wonderfully unpredictable!

I was last at Bethesda Evangelical Church, **Warrington**, several years ago and it was great to know that the congregation is now twice as large as it was then and that ambitious plans to extend the premises considerably are only 'on hold' because of the current economic climate. A warm invitation to return reflected how well the Warrington meeting went.

By contrast, I had never preached in **Chester** before, so it was a special privilege to be at Upton Baptist Church for a Saturday night. Unusual in design, the building was imported as a 'kit' from Sweden. The church is thriving under the dedicated leadership of Jim Waterworth and it was exciting to hear of a steady stream of conversions in recent times. The attendance at our meeting included numbers of people not attached to the church and there has since been good feedback of the ministry's effect.

On the Sunday I preached in Cave-Browne Evangelical Church, **Ashton-in Makerfield**, the Williams' home church (and my 'home church away from home' when I am in the north-west). The church's constant prayer support, fuelled by Howard's regular updates, means more to me than words can say.

The tour ended in **Southport**. We arrived at Grace Baptist Church in the nick of time, having been held up by a horrible road accident. The subject — 'Can we be good without God?' — stretched speaker and listeners alike and the Q and A session ranged from the early



Upton Baptist Church, Chester

Greek philosophers' ideas about living by reason to countering the arguments of relativists who deny the existence of absolute moral standards. Meeting several people helped by the ministry over many years contributed to making this a stirring end to another north-west tour.

... and mine !



Students to the fore in Bath

A few days after the end of the north-west tour Howard Williams and I made our way to the West Country, my family's home for ten years after moving to England in 1962. We began at Kensington Baptist Church, **Bristol**, which for 175 years has maintained a solid gospel witness in what is now a particularly difficult part

of the city, including what a national newspaper recently called 'the most dangerous street in the country'. Having served his father, Ken Paterson, many times when he was pastor of a London church, it was a special pleasure to renew links with Andy Paterson, pastor of a now splendidly renovated church. A good attendance, fine attention, and a lively response made it an excellent first meeting.

Our next stop was Widcombe Baptist Church, **Bath**, where the excellent crowd included large numbers of university students. Renewing friendships was a delightful part of a fine evening which produced some very encouraging feedback.

We then crossed the Severn to **St Mellons**, in South Wales, for a return visit to St Mellons Baptist Church, where my long-time friend Andy Christofides has such a fruitful ministry. I had been asked to speak on 'Meet the real Jesus' and it was a great encouragement to know that numbers of unconverted people had accepted invitations and that they had been challenged by the meeting. I was very thankful for the choice of subject and had a great sense of God's presence and enabling as I pressed home the gospel message.

Back in England, the final tour meeting was at Trinity Baptist Church, **Gloucester**. Superbly renovated and extended since I was last there, and with Phil Jones as an energetic new pastor, it was a great setting, and a good attendance and age range made it an excellent climax to the tour. I have since heard that the presentation (on God and suffering) had opened the way for many conversations with unbelievers who were present.

As Howard made his way home to Lancashire, I went back into Wales, this time to the far south-west, for a weekend at Westgate Baptist Church, **Pembroke**, where Rob James is doing a good work and where I was very warmly received by the church. A man told me that he had been converted when I was preaching at Filey forty-three years ago and a woman said that *Read Mark Learn* had kick-started her Christian discipleship twenty years ago. This kind of encouragement made the 260-mile drive home a little less tiring!

Portugal Première

In 1992 I had the honour of preaching twelve times at the FIEL Conference in Aguas de Lindoia, Brazil. Conference attendance had grown from about 40 to nearly 250 since the first event in 1985, while this year about 1,500 attended. Ten years ago FIEL (Portuguese for 'Faithful') launched its first conference in Portugal and in October it was my privilege to be one of its three preachers.

The conference is always held in Agua de Madeiros, a 90-minute drive north of Lisbon. The conference theme was 'The Glory of God' and my fellow speakers were Luiz Sayao from Brazil and the American missionary Karl Peterson, who has been serving in South Africa and Mozambique for fifteen years.

Portugal has a population of about ten million and freedom of religion since 1974 has led to an acceleration of evangelical growth. Yet the country is hugely influenced by strongly traditional Roman Catholicism, which claims 75% of the nation's professing Christians. There are vast areas of the country in which evangelical witness is very small or non-existent. The country's imperialistic history has left a legacy of self-sufficiency, which is often reflected in the church's hesitancy to accept outside help.

FIEL was founded by Richard Denham and his wife, who left the United States in



With Rick Denham at Agua de Madeiros

1949 as pioneer missionaries in Brazil. Their passion was Christian literature and initial progress was painstakingly slow. It was 1985 before a church was founded. The Denhams moved to Sao Paulo in the nineteen-sixties and eventually began publishing Christian books translated from English to Portuguese. Several of my own titles are now included and the work has grown to such an extent that FIEL owns superb premises in the centre of Sao Paulo. This is the base for a worldwide ministry, not only in book publishing but on the internet, where FIEL Community members can access twenty-five years of conference messages, a theologian's blog, a newsletter, a growing range of freely downloadable audio books in Portuguese (including my own *Where is God when things go wrong?*) and an ongoing series of discounted books.

In 2004 Richard Denham's son Rick abandoned a highly successful business career to join FIEL, in which he is now the driving force. Working with him in Portugal was a delight and may have opened up further ways in which I can serve a ministry which God is blessing so significantly.

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

A few months ago somebody pointed out that although I had written an evangelistic booklet on Jesus' incarnation (*Why on earth did Jesus come?*) and another on his resurrection (*JESUS: Dead or Alive?*) I had not written one on his crucifixion, which comes logically between these two.

I was duly rebuked — and have repented! EP Books enthusiastically welcomed the result and has ordered the largest first printing of any of the evangelistic booklets in the Popular Christian Apologetics series. In addition, Christian leaders on both sides of the Atlantic have warmly endorsed it:

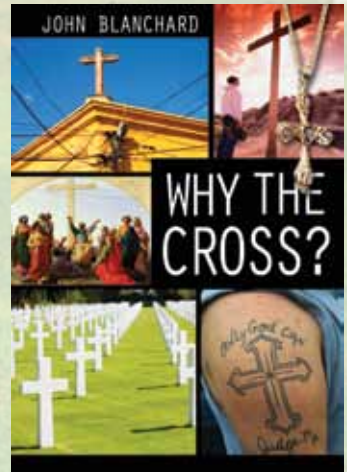
'Have you ever wondered why Christians see so much significance in the death of Jesus Christ on a cross? Why did Jesus have to die? Why such a humiliating public execution? And what does his death mean for me? John Blanchard answers those questions and, drawing on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible, he explains the meaning of the cross in a clear, simple, powerful way.' — **Dr John MacArthur, Sun Valley, California**

'In these pages that mighty work which in all its greatness was accomplished on Calvary's cross by the Lord who is both Creator and Redeemer is brought before us with clarity, reverence and spiritual insight.' — **The Rev. Geoff Thomas, Aberystwyth**

'John Blanchard superbly invites the reader in his typically serious, yet relevant, way to examine why Jesus should die as He did. Here is a thrilling reminder of what God did, in the sending of His Son, to secure salvation.' — **The Rev Jonathan Wood, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire**

'Urgently needed, lucidly written, Blanchard drives home the meaning of the cross of Jesus. No topic is more important than this one. Read this and then, with the apostle Paul, boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' — **Dr Derek W. H. Thomas, Jackson, Mississippi**

The booklet (illustrated in colour) will retail at £1.25, but EP Books is making this special offer to *Newsline* readers to encourage you (and your churches) to order in quantity — and in time for Easter! Orders over £50 are postage free.



Quantity	Price
1+	£0.81/\$1.19
40+	£0.78/\$1.13
80+	£0.74/\$1.07
150+	£0.69/\$1.00
1,000+	£0.55/\$0.87

To place your order, write to:

EP Books,

Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH;

email: sales@epbooks.org

or telephone: 01325 380232.

Readers in the United States 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.

January

- 3 SANDERSTEAD, Surrey: Mitchley Hill Evangelical Church, 82 Limpsfield Road, Sanderstead, South Croydon, CR2 9EB [Info: 020 8660 1954 or pnrj183@aol.com]
- 15-16 WELLINGTON, Herefordshire: Wellington Chapel, Wellington, HR4 8AX [Info: 01568 613 740 or mark@dayone.co.uk]
- 21 DARLINGTON, Co. Durham: Planning and review meeting at EP Books.
- 23-27 PORTUGAL: International Evangelical Church of the Algarve, Varzea da Mao, 8100-333 Loulé. [Info: 289328635 or iecav@sapo.pt]
- 30 TWICKENHAM: Amyand Park Chapel, 174 Amyand Park Road, Twickenham, TW1 3HY [Info: 020 8891 3938 or info@amyandparkchapel.org]

February

- 5 FARNHAM, Hants: Men's Breakfast at Bethel Baptist Church [Info: gachrispin@googlegmail.com]
- 17(pm) BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 01737 358695 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org]
- 23(pm) BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 01737 358695 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org]
- 30(pm) BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 01737 358695 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org]

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

March

- 11* BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Village Hall, Woodmansterne Lane, Banstead, SM7 2HH [Info: 01737 358695 or malcolm@cunnings.co.uk]
- 12* WINCHESTER, Hants: Guildhall Conference Centre, Broadway, High Street, Winchester [Info: 023 80445742 or rtstandfast@yahoo.co.uk]
- 13 WINCHESTER, Hants: Hyde Street Chapel, Hyde Street, Winchester [Info: 023 80445742 or rtstandfast@yahoo.co.uk]
- 14* IPSWICH, Suffolk: Bethesda Baptist Church, 9 St Margaret's Plain, Ipswich, IP4 2AB [Info: 01473 255035 or info@bethesdaipswich.org.uk]
- 15* TWICKENHAM, Middx: Amyand Park Chapel, 174 Amyand Park Road, St Margarets, Twickenham RW1 3HY [Info: 020 8891 3938 or gheimmings160@btinternet.com]
- 16* LONDON: Trinity Road Chapel, 205 Trinity Road, Tooting, SW17 7HW [Info: 020 8672 4600 or dave-blake@supanet.com]
- 18* NEWTOWNABBEY, Co. Antrim: Theatre at the Mill, Mossley Mill, Carnmoney Road North, BT36 7JA [Info: 028 9034020 or kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk]
- 19-20 NEWTOWNABBEY, Co. Antrim: Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, 560 Doagh Road, Mossley, Newtownabbey, BT36 5BU [Info: kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk]

April

- 6 UNITED STATES: Durham Memorial Baptist Church, 133 Robbins Road, CHARLOTTE, N.Carolina 27703 [Info: (919) 596 7350 or jacksonplb@aol.com]
- 9-12 UNITED STATES: Christ Community Church, 5908 Anaheim Avenue NE, ALBUQUERQUE, N.Mexico 87113-1708. [Info: (505) 797 3825 or pastorbrown66@msn.com]
- 13 UNITED STATES: First Presbyterian Church, 1390 North State Street, JACKSON, Mississippi 39202 [Info: (601) 353 8316 or receptionist@fpcjackson.org]
- 17 UNITED STATES: Briarwood Presbyterian Church, 2200 Briarwood Way, BIRMINGHAM, Alabama 35243 [Info: (205) 776 5200 or hreeder@briarwood.org]
- 19-21 UNITED STATES: The Reserve, Lake Keowee, 190 Village Green Loop, SUNSET, S. Carolina 29635 [Info: (77) 589 9323 or GLeeGOLF@AOL.COM]
- 22-24 UNITED STATES: Berean Baptist Church, 6705 Rustic Ridge Trail, GRAND BLANC, Michigan 48439 [Info: (810) 694 0400 or bereaninfo@allgrace.com]

* 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: 'Sarnia', 81 Lambert Road, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2QU.
Tel: 01737 357501 / e-mail: jbsarnia@gmail.com