



Four-monthly notes from John Blanchard, with news of his ministry

No. 1

May 2003

My dear friends:

It seems — and is! — a long time since I left Guernsey and entered full-time Christian service. Nearly four years on the staff of the National Young Life Campaign went by in a blink and over thirteen years in The Movement for World Evangelization seem like a brief interlude. Now, I look back on twenty-three years in the warmest of fellowship with my two friends Peter Anderson and Derek Cleave and I thank God for his significant blessing on Christian Ministries ever since we launched it together in 1980.

Now I am enthusiastically stepping out into a very different sphere, without the security of the Christian Ministries 'umbrella' but in the firm assurance that this is God's will for me at this time. As you will know from recent issues of COMMUNICATION the thrust — but not the goal — of my ministry has undergone a radical change over the last three years. Ever since the publication of *'Does God Believe in Atheists?'* I have become increasingly involved in evangelistic apologetics rather than in the more traditional approach to evangelism and Bible teaching. This has led to what I call the Popular Christian Apologetics project, which now takes up virtually all of my energies, not only in preaching and teaching, but in research, writing and the production of other means of reaching people with God's truth.

The outcome has been quite remarkable. I now have more openings and possibilities than I can ever recall and I have never been in greater need of 'the wisdom that comes from heaven' so that I might get my priorities right and make the most of my remaining time. In some ways I feel like a marathon runner who has completed 27 miles (make those 41 years!) in full-time Christian service and has now entered the stadium. My longing is to run the last lap to the best of my ability, doing all I can to be an effective instrument in reaching atheists, agnostics and sceptics with biblical truth, so that they might 'turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus'.

I am so grateful for your prayerful partnership. I am especially thankful to those who have already begun to provide the necessary financial support or have pledged to do so in the coming days. As you read this first issue of *Newsline* I trust that you will feel an integral part of all that it reflects.

With warmest Christian greetings,

UPDATE

- On tour Recent meetings as part of the goal of reaching every county in the nation have been especially encouraging and have sometimes meant 'standing room only'. Venues where this has been the case have included Letchworth and Bovey Tracey. Other encouragements at Popular Christian Apologetics meetings have been the numbers of people taking a free copy of *'Meet the Real Jesus'* as an indication that they were seeking for a living faith. This is a somewhat expensive (£7.95 retail) book to offer but I am so concerned that seekers should come face to face with the Saviour that I feel it is an investment worth making.
- Across the pond My last visit to the United States included engagements in Texas, Georgia, Arkansas and Mississippi. It also gave an opportunity to speak three times at the annual Bolton Conference in Whitinsville, Massachusetts, which reaches many pastors and church leaders from right across New England.
- A closed door — and an open one. The missionary arm of Evangelical Press invited me to share in a pastors and church leaders conference in Belarus, but a few weeks before it was due to be held the nation's President signed into a law a measure that discriminated strongly against evangelicals and would have made holding the conference very risky — not least for visitors from the West. The organisers quickly switched the conference to a remote venue in Poland and it was an honour to have a share in it. Delegates came from Russia, Poland, Belarus and Latvia, some spending days of difficult travel to get there, and it was a great privilege to serve them in the ministry of God's Word and to encourage them in their work and witness for Christ.
- Books and blessings In early March I gave a lecture in Bath at the annual service of Evangelical Library West. This very worthy cause has been established for twelve years, houses over 5,000 books and has more than 300 members. The church was crammed, as was an overflow room serviced by CCTV, while others were seated in the vestry. Five days later I heard of a young man who had come to the service with many questions — and came to faith in Christ the next day! In talking to people after the service I met a married man who had come to the Lord at a PCA tour rally a few months beforehand, while another man told me that he was in the process of giving a copy of *'Is God past his Sell-by Date?'* to 200 key people in the Bath area.

- Illusion and reality A recent visit to the Isle of Wight included an opportunity to take part in a one-hour phone-in programme on the local BBC radio station. Minutes before we were due on air the producer discovered there had been a double booking and that the illusionist Paul Daniels had also been asked to be the guest. As he was not there as the programme began I was able to have 20 minutes of air time discussing the Christian faith with a rather lively disc jockey and answering some quite aggressive phone calls from listeners. When Paul Daniels arrived he and I had another 15 minutes on air, during which he admitted that he was an atheist but felt we should live in line with the Ten Commandments! The disc jockey teased me that I would have opposition that night as Paul Daniels and I would be doing our 'shows' in different theatres ... but within a couple of hours of the programme ending the illusionist came face to face with the reality of a heart attack, so that while I was sharing the gospel in the Medina Theatre, Newport he was lying in St Mary's Hospital. The whole incident was a sobering reminder that we dare not treat God lightly.

- Upmarket! Recent appointments included one at Eton College, where I was invited to address The Paley Society. As with an encouraging number of meetings recently this one was packed to overflowing and I had an excellent hearing as I sought to indicate the evidence for God's existence and the need to connect with him through faith in Christ. There were good and serious conversations afterwards and many students took a copy of *'Meet the Real Jesus'*. Who knows what might come of this in the lives of these potentially influential young people?

- Early risers Men's breakfasts can be very effective means of reaching those whose business commitments make certain meetings difficult to attend. At Farnborough, well over fifty men came to one of these events — one of the largest of its kind that the organizing group had ever held. With world events giving an added relevance to the subject there was a rapt hearing to the message.

- Pen pushing As well as trying to write further books, I often have the opportunity to contribute elsewhere. An evangelistic article in a special edition of *Evangelical Times* reached at least 86,000 readers, including every British MP, every member of the European Parliament and the members of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. A piece encouraging personal Bible study was published in the magazine published by The Evangelical Movement of Wales and an evangelistic article will shortly appear in *Challenge*. In addition, I have written a Foreword to a major commentary on Hebrews, written by Professor Edgar Andrews and due to appear later this year.

POINTS OF CONTACT

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POPULAR CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS PROJECT

In this first issue I felt it would be useful to set out the various goals in the project and to give an indication of the project's overall status. I began with twelve goals, but as you will see the total has now risen to 27 — and I am not sure I can promise that there will not be others!

The two 'active' goals at the moment are working on completing the 'every county' aim and trying to make some early headway on the book tackling the subject of God and science. It is proving almost impossible to get moving on the latter: please pray!

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Status</u>
1. 'Does God Believe in Atheists?'	Published
2. 'Meet the Real Jesus'	Published
3. <i>Public presentation in every county in UK</i>	<i>56 completed; 16 planned</i>
4. 'September 11' booklet	Published
5. 'Is God past his Sell-by Date?'	Published
6. 'Answers for Atheists' book	
7. 'Ultimate Questions'-type booklet	
8. Book on God and Science	
9. Book on God and Morality	
10. Book on God and Evil/Suffering	
11. 'Evolution: Fact or Fiction?'	Published
12. Videotape of general presentation	Released

13.	Audio tape of general presentation	Released
14.	Major presentation on God's 'sell-by date'	Completed
15.	Major presentation on God and Science	Completed
16.	Major presentation on God and Morality	Completed
17.	Major presentation on God and Evil/Suffering	Completed
18.	Video tape on 'Is God past his Sell-by Date?'	Released
19.	<i>Video tape on God and Science</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
20.	<i>Video tape on God and Morality</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
21.	<i>Video tape on God and Evil/Suffering</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
22.	Audio tape on God's 'sell-by date'	Released
23.	<i>Audio tape on God and Science</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
24.	<i>Audio tape on God and Morality</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
25.	<i>Audio tape on God and Evil/Suffering</i>	<i>To be released soon</i>
26.	<i>CD-ROM combining 'Does God believe in Atheists?', 'Gathered Gold', 'More Gathered Gold' and 'Sifted Silver.'</i>	<i>Being prepared</i>
27.	Offer of free evangelistic book to all non-Christians attending PCA meetings	In operation

The following are counties in which no project meetings have been held and for which no provisional plans have been made. Please get in touch with me if you know of any possible openings in any of these counties:

Isle of Man
Isles of Scilly
Lincolnshire

Staffordshire
Warwickshire
South Yorkshire

HEAD FOR THE HIGH STREET!



After a very long period of negotiation the W. H. Smith Group has agreed to stock *'Is God past his Sell-by Date?'* in its shops. One only has to visit a typical secular bookshop's 'religious section' to realize that this is a major breakthrough and one that has great potential.

As a first step, W. H. Smith is to place copies in 90 of its stores nationwide. Evangelical Press, the book's publisher, has no idea which shops these might be and would therefore encourage Christians to ask for it at their local W. H. Smith and to place an order for it if it is not in stock. In addition to the title, author and publisher it would help if you were to quote the ISBN number, which in this case is 0-85234-500-3. The more copies that are bought at Smiths the more they will order — and the greater the potential to get the book 'out there', where it is most needed. This is a simple yet effective means of getting this evangelistic presentation into the secular market-place. *Please consider taking it up!*

CLICK HERE!

To help in giving the ministry a wider profile I have recently gone online with my own website. Designed, created and hosted by Saratoga, its straightforward Homepage has an index to eight other pages — Biography, Statement of Faith., Books, Videos, Cassettes, Popular Christian Apologetics, Diary and Contact Details. In today's cyberspace world I hope that this will reach many other people and give them the opportunity of being helped by material they come across there. The address could not be easier to remember — and to pass on to others! It is: www.johnblanchard.org

SOUTH AFRICA REVISITED



Three months ago I paid my fourth visit to South Africa — and once again fell under its spell. In spite of its many serious social problems (no fewer now than under the previous administration) it is a truly wonderful country, not least because it is blessed with outstanding natural beauty.

On this occasion my visit was confined to churches in the Western Cape. Attendances were generally very good and there was special interest in my approach to evangelistic apologetics. My primary purpose in making the trip was to record three further videos in the Popular Christian Apologetics series. This involved a great deal of hard work by those involved in the technical side of things, but they responded well and I was able to return home with all the needed material 'in the can.' The videos will be released in due course. Check my website for details.

THE END ...AND THE BEGINNING

The Easter weekend was the occasion of the final Christian Ministries event, when about 100 guests joined the team for a delightful Houseparty at Brunel Manor, Torquay. Excellent weather, warm fellowship and biblical ministry all contributed to what many called the 'best ever'



Peter Anderson, John Blanchard and Derek Cleave

of the many houseparties held since the first one in 1980.

Although there was some inevitable sadness, this was overcome by a wonderful spirit of thanksgiving at God's goodness to Christian Ministries over the past 23 years and a deepening assurance that new chapters were opening in the ministries of the three evangelists.

This first issue of NEWSLINE is being sent out by post, but if you prefer you could receive future issues by e-mail. This would save a considerable amount of expense and I would be glad to arrange this if you wish. A one-line message to jb@johnblanchard.co.uk and it will be done!

COMING ENGAGEMENTS

At the time of going to print, these are my engagements for the next four months. For up to date news log on to www.johnblanchard.org. Please pray for God's enabling as I speak at these events — and do come along if any are being held in your area.

- May**
- 2 HAYWARDS HEATH, W.Sussex: [Info: 01444 440356]
 - 5* GUISBOROUGH, Cleveland: Prior Pursglove Centre, near Guisborough Priory. [Info: 01287 630835 or PBanc10723@aol.com]
 - 6* GATESHEAD, Tyne & Wear: Emmanuel College. [Info: 0191 2854895 or fmjohnson@waitrose.com]
 - 7 GATESHEAD: Gateshead Evangelical Church: Ministers' Breakfast
 - 7* SWARLAND, Northumberland: Lindisfarne Middle School. [Info: 01670 787046 or John@Grindell.freeseerve.co.uk]
 - 8* NORTHALLERTON, N.Yorks: Main Hall, Community Centre, Bullamoor Road. [Info: 01642 700739 or johnper@onetel.net.uk]
 - 9* DURHAM: Claypath United Reformed Church. [Info: 01388 810626 or nandk.appleby@btopenworld.com]
 - 10 YORK: University of York. [Info: ijw102@york.ac.uk]
 - 12 IPSWICH, Suffolk: Shepherd Drive Baptist Church [Info: 01473 612848 or james.sayers@btinternet.com]
 - 17 DORKING, Surrey: United Reformed Church [Info: 01737 843350 or les@lm-mitchell42.fsnet.co.uk]
 - 26-30 UCKFIELD, East Sussex: Thornton Heath Evangelical Church Holiday Week
- June**
- 9-9 AUSTRIA: Munich International Community Church Houseparty at Scholl Mittersill.
 - 13 OXFORD: Oxford Univerity [Info: kate.hancock@keble.oxford.ac.uk]
 - 19* WIGTOWN, Dumfries and Galloway. Wigtown Primary School. [Info: 01988 402242 or martin@thomsonm40.freeseerve.co.uk]
 - 20* HAWICK, Borders: Teviot Church [Info: 01450 372150 or neil.combe@btinternet.com]
 - 21* EDINBURGH: New Restalrig Church. [Info: 0131 661 4045 or david@lamont-court.freeseerve.co.uk]
 - 22 EDINBURGH: New Restalrig Church [Info: 0131 6614045]
 - 24* DUNDEE, Tayside: The Steeple Church [Info: 01382 455411 or 01382 502296 or Brenda@elwell-sutton.co.uk]
 - 25* GLASGOW: St George's Tron [Info: 0141 221 2141 or info@thetron.org]
 - 26* KIRCALDY, Fife: Newcraigs Evangelical Church. [Info: 01592 264085 or neilmacm@blueyonder.co.uk]
- July**
- 4-4 CHESSINGTON, Surrey: The King's Centre [Info: alstairharper@hotmail.com]
 - 13-13 GILLINGHAM, Dorset: Gillingham Baptist Church [Info: peter.wick@btopenworld.com]
 - 20 THORNTON HEATH, Surrey: Brigstock Manor
 - 26-31 ARBROATH, Tayside: Arbroath Convention. [Info: 01241 872309]
- August**
- 1-2 ARBROATH, Tayside: Arbroath Convention. [Info: 01241 872309]
 - 3 ARBROATH, Tayside: Arbroath Town Mission. [Info: 01241 872309]

**Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting when I will be speaking on 'Does God Believe in Atheists?'*