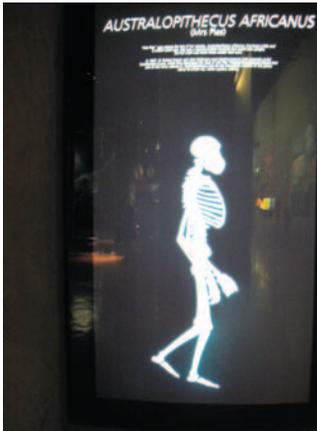




Marketing the myth

While on a recent preaching tour in South Africa my Gauteng hosts John and Elaine Joubert took me to see the impressive Cradle of Humankind, a World Heritage Site at Maropeng. Images on signposts as we entered the vast grounds more than hinted at the message that would be presented and the clues soon became concrete as the first



‘scientific’ statement as we entered the exhibition building was Richard Dawkins’ miserable mantra ‘We are survival machines — robot vehicles programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes.’

All the presentations that followed, from skulls to stones and graphics to gadgets, pressed home the same relentless tale — from an original (and accidental) spark of life humankind evolved over millions of years by a random and reckless process.

Two things made a particular impression on me. The first was the vast amount of guesswork needed to prop up the theory. Phrases like ‘it may be’, ‘it is thought’, ‘perhaps’ and ‘might’ peppered virtually every text and reminded me that similar terms appear some 800 times in Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. The second was that in asking exhibition staff members whether they believed the story of human evolution every one answered, ‘No’! As we had taken copies of *Evolution: Fact or Fiction?* with us we made sure that they all got a copy.

I left Maropeng grateful that my sense of personal and corporate dignity and worth as a human being rested not on accidental accumulations of atoms and molecules but on our loving and intelligent creation by ‘the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God’ (1 Timothy 1:17).

‘As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can’

ALBANIAN UPDATE

There continues to be good news about **Project Albania**, which was launched last September. At the time of going to press the following are the highlights:

- The original target of £19,000 was raised to £21,000 so that 5,000 copies of *Right with God* could be added to the other seven titles it is planned to translate and publish in Albanian. This new target has also been reached.
- It has now been suggested that two further titles should be added — my latest evangelistic booklet *Can we be good without God?* and a special printing of *Ultimate Questions*, which is already being published. Funds are already coming in towards enabling both of these goals to be reached.
- Our friends in Albania were potentially going to run into difficulties with a new law regarding ISBN numbers for all the titles envisaged in the project, but it has now been agreed with the Albanian Evangelical Mission that the publishing will be done under its banner as this will put the titles in line with the new law.
- AEM has also agreed to put all the **Project Albania** materials on its book list and will advertise them with its own titles. This allows access to very good and established means of getting the literature into the hands of Albanian churches and individuals. This is an unexpected and major step forward.
- Although we had originally scheduled *Does God believe in atheists?* for publication by the end of 2009, this translator has made such phenomenal progress that there is now a possibility that it will be translated and published by the end of 2007!
- It is hoped that the first three evangelistic booklets will be published by the end of the summer.

Those who have already given to **Project Albania** will be heartened by this news. Please continue to pray that all its goals will be reached and that God will graciously use all the publications to his great glory. Readers wishing to make further or first gifts should make them payable to **Sarnia Evangelical Trust** and send them to me at my home address. Donations can be made under Gift Aid, which will greatly increase their value.

S-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g the north-west!

Regular *Newsline* readers will remember that a Popular Christian Apologetics Tour of the north-west last year stretched into Derbyshire. Slow to learn as I am, a recent return to the north-west took in both Derbyshire and Yorkshire!

Day one can be summarized like this: Three hours work in my study at home; cab to Gatwick Airport; flight to Manchester; two hours' driving to **Chesterfield**; an excellent return meeting at Walton Evangelical Church, ably pastored by my good friend Simon Robinson and including a great question by an 'atheist-turning-agnostic' that gave a superb opportunity to demonstrate the uniqueness of Christianity and the supremacy of Christ; a late-night drive across the Pennines; arrive at Howard Williams' home soon after midnight; tucked up in bed by 1am.

The next night's meeting in **Chorley**, Lancs, had a disappointing attendance due to a clash with several other events, but there was a fine spirit in the meeting and some useful contacts were made.

The following day Howard and I crossed the Pennines twice to take in an excellent meeting in **Dewsbury**, West Yorkshire. Five local churches had combined to sponsor an event in the home stadium of Dewsbury Rams RFC and extra chairs had to be brought in to the Royal Suite to accommodate the crowd. There was an extraordinary stillness and 'grip' to the meeting from the very first minute and one had a real sense that God was at work in the lives of many who were present. An immediate invitation to return capped an evening that made the long trek home more than worthwhile.

Next came a double-header in **Liverpool**. Regular schools work lies in the distant past, but I could not resist an unexpected invitation to speak on 'Science and Christianity' to 120 senior students at Gateacre Community Comprehensive School (the biggest in Liverpool). Excellent attention and penetrating questions marked the event and over 100 students took away a free copy of *Has science got rid of God?* Please pray that God will make effective use of these in the coming days. A return visit to Bridge Chapel, Garston, was a great encouragement, not only because of the large crowd's enthusiastic response but because of another chance to get updated on the ministry's progress, which now includes four church plants but still has it contemplating the need to hold two Sunday morning services.

Our last stop was in **Wigan**, where Bryn Baptist Church is a familiar stamping ground and the whole evening, not least the warm fellowship afterwards, provided a delightful finish to a very rewarding tour. PS: Any future north-west tour will stay west of the Pennines, leaving 't'other side' for a separate tour, taking in several churches in Yorkshire and elsewhere from which there are invitations pending.



Getting the message to Gateacre

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika!

My latest visit to South Africa began with a 5am alarm call the day after my arrival at the end of a 24-hour journey there via Dubai – and with a leap into 96° weather as opposed to 46° in London!

The first engagement was a 6.30am Men's Breakfast at a Seattle Coffee Company coffee shop in **Hyde Park**, a weekly event running under the name TGIF (Thank God it's Friday)! Over 60 business personnel packed the place for a superb first meeting, crowned by a man telling me he had come to Christ while reading *Right with God* twenty years ago. Next came the Baptist Theological College, **Johannesburg**, where faculty and students were joined by over thirty pastors for two sessions lasting over three hours. A fine service at Christ Church, **Horison**, ended a hugely encouraging first day.

Rosebank Union Church, **Sandton**, was the venue for a three-hour seminar the next morning and I was encouraged to meet two young men who told me they were converted when I preached at the church two years ago.



Another full house

Sunday morning saw me preaching at a superbly led service in Central Baptist Church, **Pretoria**, where I was told of a renowned South African artist who towards the end of his life came to Christ while reading *Does God believe in Atheists?* In the evening hundreds of students helped to cram Honeyridge Baptist Church, **Honeydew**, to capacity and there was such a grip on the meeting that I heard of people ordering as many as six CDs to share with unconverted friends.

The rest of my stay in Gauteng Province took in engagements at **Johannesburg** Bible College where the normal attendance was doubled by visitors and at Baptist churches in **Blairgowrie** and **Brackenhurst**, at both of which I heard of men converted while reading *Does God believe in Atheists?*

A flight to Durban led to three packed days in KwaZulu-Natal, including three seminars at Trinity Church, **Hilton** (where the temperature was 102!), two Sunday morning services at Christ Church, **Pinetown**, with around 1,000 in attendance and a remarkable united churches evening service in **Bluff** where people had to sit in the vestibule and on window sills to get a hearing. This was a memorable way to mark the end of my forty-fourth year in full-time Christian ministry.

Another flight took me to **George** on the south coast for fine meetings in St Philips

Church of England and George Baptist Church, though the highlight for me was an exceptionally fine Breakfast attended by some seventy-five men, one of whom told me he came to faith while reading *Ultimate Questions* fifteen years ago.

A third internal flight landed me in Cape Town in time for a good service that night in St Matthew's Church, **Tableview**. The next day began at George Whitefield College in **Muizenberg** and it was a great privilege to pay a return visit there and to minister to about 100 faculty and students. A little later that day I was at the University of **Cape Town** (the nation's oldest, nestling under Table Mountain and home to well over 21,000 students). Determined opposition to a Christian meeting meant that most of the campus posters advertising the event were torn down within two hours of being put

up, but this did not prevent a good attendance and a fine meeting. A very worthwhile evening meeting at St Barnabas Church, Cape Town, brought a full and rewarding day to an end.

The next day began at The Bible Institute of South Africa in **Kalk Bay** (is there a finer Bible College setting anywhere in the world?) for a heartening session with faculty, students and alumni. It was delightful to hear of two



University of Cape Town

men who came to Christ while reading *Does God believe in Atheists?* One, in New Zealand, began reading as an atheist, became an agnostic half way through and ended it as a Christian! At St Barnabas Anglican Church that night the event was marked by a succession of perhaps the most challenging questions I have ever faced during the years I have been involved in Christian apologetics. Very stimulating!

Two Saturday morning sessions in **Villiersdorp** — where the temperature touched 114! — reached people from a wide range of places in the winelands and beyond and it was a great privilege to preach and teach to packed audiences.

My final day was spent at Friends First Church, **Cape Town**, which arranged four services, each attended by some 400 people with a median age that must have been in the low thirties and which packed the auditorium. Several professions of faith during the day helped to mark it out as very special — and not only because these were the final services there before the building is torn down, to be replaced by one twice its size.

Throughout the tour Christian Book Discounters staff managed the large supplies of materials it made available at every engagement and their generous discounts generated very large sales and ensured that the ministry will potentially go far beyond anything that was accomplished at the meetings. I left the country with more than a little reluctance, grateful for the privilege of sharing the truth of God's Word in one of my favourite places in the world. To translate the title of its national anthem that heads this article — Lord, bless Africa!

'It's best in the West...'

... or so Frank Farley used to tell me. It was under his ministry that I responded to the call to full-time Christian ministry and he never lost his enthusiastic promotion of his native 'parish'. Having lived there for ten years, returning recently for a Popular Christian Apologetics tour was therefore a special delight — though as with the 'north-west' tour (see page 3) the boundaries got a little stretched!

The opening night was in delightful Dorset where the lovely Christ Church, **Westbourne**, was nearly packed for a rousing start to the tour. A special bonus was that Howard Williams and I were guests of Allan and Liz Simmons, valued long-time friends.

Sidmouth, Devon, has a special charm in spite of sinister undertones from occult influences and the New Age Movement. Emmanuel Baptist Church has been so transformed under Alistair

McKenna's leadership that I needed a double take to be sure that I was in the same place in which I had preached on previous occasions. Prayerful preparation for the meeting produced a fine response and it was a privilege to serve a church with such potential.

The next stop took us to **Andover**, Hants (not quite the West Country!), where Koinonia Independent Evangelical Church hosted us at the local Baptist church. Elder Don Olden and other leaders had worked hard to put the event together and their warm response to it was very heartening. On the following day we headed west again, all the way to **Kingsbridge**, on the south-western tip of Devon, where Kingsbridge Evangelical occupies a prime site in the town. Derek Hill and his fellow leaders had advertised the event over a wide area and it was a great encouragement to see people there from as far away as Torquay. Enthusiastic feedback seemed to show that for visitors and members this special event had been well worthwhile.

The tour ended in **Wantage**, Oxon (definitely not the West Country!), where two local churches combined to sponsor a well-attended meeting enlivened by an exchange with an atheist during the Q and A session. It was especially good to have an opportunity to counter the suggestion that morality is relative and the meeting proved an upbeat ending to the tour.



The right time in Sidmouth

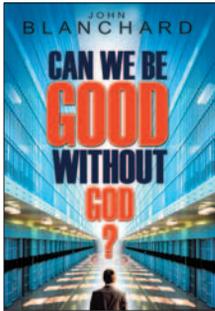
STOP PRESS!

Following the horrific massacre at Virginia Tech on April 16, a church in the United States provided 4,500 copies of *Where is God when things go wrong?* for use at local memorial services and in ministering to those impacted by this appalling event. Please pray that God will graciously use this booklet to his glory in the lives of many who read it.

Special Newslines Offer

Deep in the heart of the Old Testament we are told of a time when ‘Everyone did what was right in his own eyes’ (Judges 17:6) and some 3,000 years later we seem to be in exactly the same situation. We are in a moral maze, people picking and choosing their own moral standards on the same basis as they might choose items from a restaurant menu: Steak or salmon? Carrots or cauliflower? Tea or coffee? The result is moral chaos and a horrendous breakdown in every part of society.

My new booklet *Can we be good without God?* addresses this issue and shows that even those who deny the existence of moral absolutes recognize the authority of personal conscience. But where does conscience get its mandate? Is it something inherent in nature? Is personal opinion a sufficient basis? Is it enough to go with the flow of the surrounding culture? After examining these questions the booklet goes on to show that the only tenable basis is one that is transcendent, perfect, unchanging and personal and that God alone meets these criteria. Without God we can have no way of defining right and wrong, or even of differentiating between them. But there is another question — ‘Can we be good enough for God without God?’ — and more than 50% of the booklet is taken up with answering this. Based on the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector and Paul’s testimony in



Philippians 3, the gospel is presented as clearly as I know how and my prayer is that the booklet will be widely used by Christians in their personal evangelism, especially among friends who think they are ‘good enough’ to earn their way to heaven.

As ever, Evangelical Press has done a superb job on the presentation and the booklet will retail at £14.95 for a pack of 10 copies.

EP is also making this special offer to *Newslines* readers. Postage is just £3.95 per order.

1-4 packs	£12.50 per pack
5-9 packs	£10.00 per pack
10 + packs	£7.50 per pack

Contact Evangelical Press at 01325 380232 or sales@evangelicalpress.org to take advantage of this offer — telling EP that you are a *Newslines* reader.

Thank you!

My warmest thanks once again to friends who have recently sent gifts through the CM Trust for the support of my ministry. Your fellowship is greatly appreciated. Gifts sent directly to my home address are always acknowledged personally at the time.

COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2007

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**
- 6 SANDERSTEAD, Surrey: Mitchley Hill Evangelical Church [Info: 020 8657 1667 or royandjuliet@39sanderstead.freeserve.co.uk]
 - 10 HOLLAND: Combined students meeting (Depositum Custodi and Civitas Studiosorum in Fundamento Reformato) in Utrecht [Info: 030 230 35 00 or tinekesmith@debanier.nl]
 - 11 HOLLAND: University lecture in Putten and newspaper interview [Info: 030 230 35 00 or tinekesmith@debanier.nl]
 - 12 HOLLAND: Three meetings in Hardinxveldt [Info: 030 230 35 00 or tinekesmith@debanier.nl]
 - 13 HOLLAND: International Christian Fellowship Church, Rotterdam [Info: 010 485 4662 or 010 480 9273 or info@icf-church-rotterdam.nl]
 - 16* PURLEY, Surrey: Purley Baptist Church [Info: 020 8668 0422 or kevinahronson@purleybaptist.org]
 - 20am IRELAND: Calvary Mission, Westport [Info: 00 353 9423702 or Calvarymayo@eircom.net]
 - 20-25 IRELAND: Christian Golfers Conference, Westport, Co. Mayo.
- June**
- 5* STRANRAER: Stranraer Baptist Church [Info: 01776 889339 or member@stranraer.wanadoo.co.uk]
 - 6* GLASGOW: Chryston Church, Main Street, Chryston [Info: 0141 779 1436 or allensall@hotmail.com]
 - 7* INVERNESS: Inshes Church [Info: 01463 772402 or ali.inshes@btinternet.com]
 - 8* BUCKIE: Venue t.b.a. [Info: 01542 834696 or albaministries@yahoo.com]
 - 9* ABERDEEN: Gilcomston South Church, Union Street [Info: 08452 255121 or gilc@btconnect.com]
 - 10 ABERDEEN: Gilcomston South Church, Union Street [Info: 08452 255121 or gilc@btconnect.com]
 - 11* TURRIFF: St Kanes Church, New Deer [Info: 01771 644216 or alistair.donald@v21.me.uk]
 - 12* PETERHEAD: The Palace Hotel [Info: estheroliver@bruxie.freeserve.co.uk]
 - 13* EDINBURGH: Holyrood Abbey [Info: 0131 652 0640 or phil@holyroodabbey.f2s.com]
 - 14* GREENOCK: Orangefield Baptist Church [Info: 01475 785084 or gordon.davey@red5audio.com]
 - 15* DALRY, Ayrshire: Trinity Church [Info: 01294 832363 or martin@thomsonm40.freeserve.co.uk]
 - 24 WIGAN, Greater Manchester: Cave Browne Evangelical Church, Heath Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield – 125th Anniversary services. [Info: 01942 256498 or hgandm@the-hollows.co.uk]
- June** *The whole of July is reserved for research, study and writing*
- Aug** 4-5 UNITED STATES: Cedar Falls Bible Conference, Cedar Falls, Iowa [Info: (319) 268 0787 or Director@CF-BibleConference.org]

The rest of August is reserved for research, study and writing

* 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. Telephone 01737 357501 E-mail: jbsarnia@gmail.com