

newsline

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

No. 23

August 2010

SANDOWN SURPRISE

In many contests there is an air of nervous excitement as the master of ceremonies reads out a list of nominees for any award, then ends with, '...and the winner is.' At this year's Christian Resources Exhibition held at Sandown Park in May there were fifteen awards, so fifteen times when nominees wondered if, having been short-listed, they were about to be declared the winner.



With a heavy schedule, I had not intended being at the Exhibitions Awards Dinner, but EP Books encouraged me to attend (and kindly paid my way!). I was glad I went. One of the awards was for 'Resource of the Year' and to my great surprise *Why on earth did Jesus come?* was on the short list. I would have expected this category to be populated by hefty tomes of one kind or another, and not by a 40-page booklet. To be told that the judges were looking for something that showed innovative, 'out of the box' thinking had me even more baffled, as *Why on earth did Jesus come?* is a straightforward exposition of the Bible's teaching on the Incarnation, though put across in my own particular style.

The judges then went one step further and it was announced that *Why on earth did Jesus come?* had been voted the winner of this particular section. In my acceptance speech I expressed my bewilderment at the award, and made it clear that the greatest thanks were due not to the judges or to the publishers, who had all played a part, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the heartbeat of everything I write.

Within a few weeks of the award, one church ordered 3,000 copies for use in a special event, and as this issue of *Newslines* takes us up to the end of the year, EP Books is making a remarkable offer to help readers and their churches to use it widely in the weeks leading up to Christmas (see page 7). I hope it will be a great help to you as you seek to tell others 'the reason for the season'.

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

SCOTLAND 2010 – PART 2

For the first time, two successive Popular Christian Apologetics tours took me to the same part of the UK, as in June Howard Williams and I made our way back to Scotland, just five weeks after the tour reported in the last issue of *Newsline*. Scotland has long been one of our favourite stamping grounds, and the second 2010 tour there confirmed why this is the case.

We began in **Glasgow**, where we were hosted by Balshagray Victoria Park Church, in the city's West End. An unfortunate delay in circulating publicity (not the church's fault) meant we had a smaller audience than expected, but there was a fine spirit and we felt that the tour had got off to an encouraging start.

Next came a long drive north to **Lossiemouth**, known as 'The Jewel of the Moray Firth' because of its beautiful location. The initial contact at Lossiemouth Baptist Church had been the pastor, Trevor Wilson, who was due to leave the church a few days before the meeting (but see later in this report). The leadership decided to endorse the invitation and I am glad they did. My warmest memory of the meeting in 'Lossie' was the Question Time, when I found myself organizing the answers in my mind while the questions were being framed. It was a remarkable example of the Lord's enabling — and surely an answer to the prayers of those who support me in the ministry.

After the meeting we drove to **Inverness**, where I preached morning and evening at the splendid Inshes Church. The Minister, Alistair Malcolm, and his wife Ann are firm friends of ours, and had agreed that we should stay in their manse for three nights — a welcome relief from the constant changes a tour demands. As ever they were the perfect hosts. Both services were very well attended and interaction with the people was stimulating and encouraging. It was a special joy to meet a lady who told me that she had come to Christ in Denmark some years ago while reading *Right with God*.



A blissful break

The following morning was taken up with administration, then we headed for Royal Dornoch Golf Club, one of my favourite spots on the planet, for a welcome break wrapped in breathtaking scenery, the sight and smell of acres of gorse, and the sound of sea and skylarks; wonderful! A short drive then took us to Castle Street Church, **Dingwall**. It had been planned to meet in the large church hall, but well before the starting time it was clear that this

would not be large enough, so we decamped to the main church auditorium, where we eventually had more than twice the expected number of people. Later feedback from the Minister, Dr Bruce Ritchie, endorsed our sense that this had been an exceptionally fruitful meeting.

HELPING THE HURTING

There are often opportunities to use my evangelistic literature to help those grievously hurt by natural disasters or in some other way. There were two notable cases recently.

On 12 January the strongest earthquake to hit that area since 1770 smashed into the Caribbean island of Haiti, with devastating results. Haiti is one of the poorest countries on the planet, with most of its population living on \$2 a day or less. When the earthquake and its sixty aftershocks were over, the wreckage was such that one journalist said, 'Haiti will need to be completely rebuilt from the ground up.' Some 230,000 people died and 2,000,000 were left homeless.



Devastation in Haiti

Newsline readers were surely among countless people who sent financial help to relief agencies. In addition, my own charitable trust helped in having 5,000 copies of the French edition of *Where is God when things go wrong?* delivered to the Dominican Republic and then taken into Haiti for use among sufferers who were asking that question.



Crisis in Cumbria

Here in the UK, we were shocked when fifty-two-year-old cab driver Derrick Bird went on a shooting spree in West Cumbria and killed twelve innocent people before ending his own life. Soon after the shootings, 200 copies of *Where is God when things go wrong?* were sent to Trinity Baptist Church, Maryport.

Pastor Garry Rowcroft has sent the following report on how they were used: '*Some of the fatalities from the shootings were former work colleagues, or customers of church members. Shortly*

after the shootings we gave out copies of the booklet on the shopping street in Maryport. We simply asked if people would like a copy and gave out about 120 copies very quickly. Other copies were also given out by church members to family and work colleagues. Our prayer is that God may be pleased to work in many hearts in what has been a very difficult time.'

Newsline readers will want to join in praying that this may be the case.

MIDLANDS RETURN

Regular readers of *Newsline* will know that last October saw my first Popular Christian Apologetics tour in the Midlands, which had somehow slipped through the net after nearly ten years of basing these tours on different regions of the country. The tour went so well that it raised the prospect of an early return and in June Howard Williams and I were there again.

We began with a return visit to Welcome Hall Evangelical Church, **Bromsgrove**, and it was good to see the church nearly full. The subject — ‘Can we be good without God?’ — was not the easiest to tackle and I had to work hard to get its important message across, but the feedback was more positive than I thought likely and all in all it was a good start to the tour.



Andrew and Jan Jack — perfect hosts!

Bromsgrove became our base for the whole tour, and we were generously hosted by Andrew and Jan Jack, whose kindness ensured that we were always ready for our commitments during the week. They graciously provided us with all that we needed and more than we deserved, and their hospitality made an enormous contribution to the entire tour.

Day 2 saw us in **Warley**. My last visit to Spring Meadow Baptist Chapel had been ten years earlier and it was delightful to renew the warm links I have there. The body of the church was virtually full, with quite a number in the gallery, for a lively evening dealing with the subject ‘Is anybody out there?’ The Q and A session took nearly half an hour, with topics including the age of the earth, media coverage of religious issues and the relationship between science and faith.

On the following evening we were at **Dudley** Baptist Church, the largest on the tour. I had spoken at the church’s annual convention a couple of years ago, when it was without a pastor, and it was good to meet David Gayton, who had been in office for some fifteen months. The church has a renewed commitment to evangelism and a large attendance for our meeting included many with no church links. The Q and A session was surprisingly gentle, but the overall response to the event was excellent.

On next to **Kings Norton**, for the first of two engagements in the Birmingham area. In 1988 a few Christians began meeting for worship in a home and a year later founded South Birmingham Evangelical Church. After steady growth it moved to a different area and identified with it by

becoming Monyhull Church, meeting in a listed building surrounded by an impressive housing development. There was good attention during the presentation, but the meeting sprang to life when an atheist threatened to dominate the Q and A session. I responded to all his challenges, then a young man sitting just behind him took over and completely demolished his arguments, leaving him with no response. This was hugely encouraging, but better was to follow. When I spoke to the man and his wife afterwards they told me that they had both come to faith in the course of reading my book *Invitation to Live!* In their own words, 'We were part way through the book when we were both convicted and converted.' Writing can be a very lonely discipline, but news like this makes it more than worthwhile.

The last PCA meeting on the tour was at Junction Road Evangelical Church, **Handsworth**, where on a swelteringly hot evening it was surprising to see an attendance twice as large as the church's average Sunday morning congregation. The meeting went very well, and once again the Q and A session was a highlight, this time as several people testified to God's grace to them in times of great pain. One couple told of losing two daughters, both thirty-five years old, within the space of two years, then coming to faith in Christ and finding their view of suffering transformed by the grace of God.

Howard returned home to Lancashire after the meeting, but I stayed in Bromsgrove and made my way to **Worcester** in the morning to preach at Woodgreen Evangelical Church, Warndon. Woodgreen is a thriving fellowship that launched a successful church plant five years ago and still has over 300 at morning worship. On the Sunday I was there the morning service incorporated the final day of a Good News Club weekend (including for some a sleepover on church premises!). This meant a good attendance of GNC members' parents and an unusually fine opportunity to preach the gospel. There could not have been a better way to sign off on the latest tour.

You prayed — God answered!

It would be good to take up a large part of one issue of *Newsline* with specific news of the way God is graciously answering readers' prayers for the ministry. Here are extracts from two recent messages received.

- From Malawi: 'Thank you for your gift of 100 copies of *Mafuso Ofunika (Ultimate Questions in Chichewa)*. After I had preached on one section of the booklet four people came to faith and now attend our church. We praise God for doing his work in us.'
- From Russia: 'A friend gave a copy of *Ultimate Questions* to a Russian seaman in Norway. Before he arrived back in St Petersburg he had trusted Christ and introduced his experience to his wife, who is now a very bright Christian. They are both now testifying to the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.'

THANK YOU!

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.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

One of my pet hates is the way preparation for the Christmas season seems to creep in earlier every year. If things get much worse we will be hearing ‘Hark the herald angels sing’ while the calendar still says ‘August’! Yet as this is the last edition of *Newsline* this year, I have no other opportunity to remind readers that *Why on earth did Jesus come?* is firmly in print and available to be used widely during the Christmas season, which still presents the most obvious opportunity of the year to challenge people with the question the title asks — and to present them with the answer.

Last year there was a massive uptake of the booklet, which had just come into print. As you will have read on page 1, it has since been awarded the ‘Resource of the Year’ at the 2010 Christian Resources Exhibition. In addition, leading Christian communicators on both sides of the Atlantic have been kind enough to commend it:

‘Here is Blanchard at his best, tackling the incarnation and showing what it means and why it matters. Wonderfully clear, admirably succinct and profoundly helpful.’

Alistair Begg, Senior Pastor, Parkside Church, Cleveland, Ohio

‘I marvel at how much research John Blanchard fits into a small book. I can’t think of a better short read to give to a sceptical friend at Christmas.’

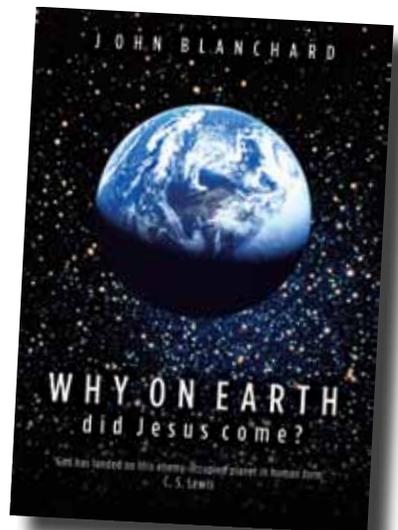
Rico Tice, Ass. Minister, All Souls, Langham Place, London and author of *Christianity Explored*

EP Books hopes that there will be a new impetus to use the booklet as we move towards the Christmas season. The booklet retails at £1.10 a copy (it was £1.50 last year) but EP Books wants to make this special offer to *Newsline* readers:

Quantity	Price
1+	£0.66/\$1.19
40+	£0.63/\$1.13
80+	£0.59/\$1.07
150+	£0.55/\$1.00
1,000+	£0.50/\$0.87

To place your order, write to:
 Evangelical Press,
 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 2010

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.

September

- 6-7 PORTUGAL: FIEL Church Leaders' Conference at Acampamento Baptista, Aguade Madeiros, Pataias
[Info: tjsfilho@editorafiel.com.br]
- 23* IRELAND. Drogheda, Co. Louth: Drogheda Presbyterian Church, Colpe Road
[Info: 0035341 9802860 or johnwoodside@hotmail.com]
- 24* BELFAST: Richview Presbyterian Church, 7 Garland Crescent. BT8 6JY [Info: 028 9070 4668 or greer.r@sky.com]
- 25* ENNISKILLEN, Co. Fermanagh: The Stables [Info: 028 6634 6777 or 028 6632 9997 or Brendan@mizpahproperties.com]
- 26* CRAIGAVON, Co. Armagh: Tandragee Baptist Church, Madden Road, Tandragee
[Info: 028 3884 2023 or wreid4651@aol.com]
- 27* MOIRA, Co. Armagh: Moira Baptist Church, Churchill Road, Moira. BT67 0PD
[Info: 028 9261 3184 or eric@ingleside.org.uk]
- 28* NEWTOWNARDS, Co. Down: Newtownards Baptist Church, Frances Street, Newtownards
[Info: geraldbr5@talktalk.net]
- 29* MAGHERAFELT, Co. Londonderry: Magherafelt Baptist Church, 6 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt. BT45 6BP
[Info: johnmcderm@g.mail.com]

October

- 3 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe
[Info: 01737 358695 or dan_otieno@hotmail.com]
- 6* LIVERPOOL: Belvidere Road Church, Belvidere Road, Princes Park, Liverpool. L8 3TG
[Info: 0151 728 9293 or ldhigham@aol.com]
- 7* BOLTON, Greater Manchester: Bethel Evangelical Church, Clarence Street, Bolton. BL1 2DQ (next to Holiday Inn)
[Info: 01204 386283 or 07932 550211 or njnewton@talktalk.net]
- 8* WARRINGTON, Cheshire: Bethesda Evangelical Church, Chester Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington. WA4 2RX
[Info: 01925 637706 or jandd.hayes@gmail.com]
- 9* CHESTER: Upton Baptist Church, Heath Terrace, Chester. CH2 1LB [Info: 01244 377 142 or jimcwaterworth@gmail.com]
- 10 ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD, Lancs: Cave-Browne Evangelical Church, Heath Rd, Ashton-in-Makerfield. WN4 9DY
[Info: 01924 723762 or hgandm@the-hollows.co.uk]
- 11* SOUTHPORT, Merseyside: Grace Baptist Church, Princes Street, Southport. PR8 1EG
[Info: 01704 531751 or adam.laughton@btinternet.com]
- 19* BRISTOL: Kensington Baptist Church, 208 Stapleton Road, Bristol. BS5 0NX
[Info: 0117 951 1202 or andrew.paterson@talk212.com]
- 20* BATH: Widcombe Baptist Church, Ebenezer Terrace, Pulteney Rd, Bath. BA2 4JB. Missionary meeting re Albania
[Info: 01225 316 358 or jonathanskinner@btinternet.com]
- 21* CARDIFF, S. Glamorgan: St Mellons Baptist Church (Caersalem), Old St Mellons, Ty'r Winch Road
[Info: 02929 333349 or 02920 779290 or andychristofides@gmail.com]
- 22* GLOUCESTER: Trinity Baptist Church, Finlay Place, Gloucester. GL4 6DG
[Info: 01452 523711 or philbjones@hotmail.com or alan@gilmore77.freesev.co.uk]
- 23-24 PEMBROKE, Wales: Westgate Evangelical Church, Westgate Hill (Commons Road), Pembroke, Dyfed. SA71 4EA
[Info: 01646 687871 or R.James2954@aol.com]

November

- 24 SANDERSTAD, Surrey: Mitchley Hill Evangelical Church, 82 Limpsfield Rd, Sanderstead, South Croydon. CR2 9EB
[Info: 020 8660 1954 or pnjn183@aol.com]

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

December

- 19 LONDON: Grove Chapel, 96A Camberwell Grove, London. SE5 8RF [Info: 020 7277 2767 or info@grovechapel.org]
- The rest of December is reserved for study, preparation 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:

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