



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

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September 2011

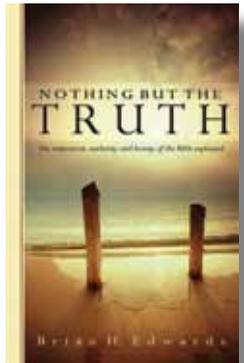
Living and abiding

Among the many landmarks celebrated this year, none has been more significant than the 400th anniversary of the first publication of the Authorized (or King James) Version of the Bible. In England alone, events were triggered by the Duke of Edinburgh with a party in Whitehall's Banqueting House and included exhibitions at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities as well as at Lambeth Palace. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre had a recital of the complete text that lasted throughout Holy Week and The Royal Shakespeare Company commissioned a new play based on the translation. Listing numerous other events, *Daily Telegraph* correspondent Christopher Howse wrote: 'Britain is going Bible bananas.'

The iconic version was born at a conference called by King James I and held at Hampton Court Palace in 1604, though he had no hand in preparing it and it was never formally authorized by Parliament. Long before that, the Great Bible (1539), heavily dependent on William Tyndale's translation, was found in every parish church in the land, but by the end of the sixteenth century it had been overtaken by the Geneva Bible, the chosen version of the later Reformers, the Puritans and the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed to America in 1620.

The Great Bible changed the course of English history, but was too Protestant and Reformed for King James, who arranged for forty-seven scholars to produce a revised version, modelled on the 1568 Bishops' Bible. This 'Authorized' version is the one that has had such a profound and worldwide impact for the last four centuries.

The last 150 years have seen many new English translations all of which, like the Authorized Version, have their strengths and weaknesses. Nobody is qualified to determine which is the best version, but those rated highly include the New American Standard Version (1970), the New International Version (1978), the New King James Version (1982) and the English Standard Version (2001). Whatever version you prefer, *Nothing but the Truth*, by Brian Edwards (EP Books), is a *must read* on the history, infallibility and authority of 'the living and abiding word of God' (1 Peter 1:23, ESV).



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



USA 2011

– Tornadoes & Timetables

When Howard Williams and I left for the United States in early April we could never have guessed what delights, delays and disappointments lay ahead. Our first day ended in **Charlotte, N. Carolina**, at the home of Paul and Audrey Jackson. Joyce and I had been their guests at least ten times over the years, when together with Don and Betty Cannon and Ned and Betty Teague we had spent many days of restful and enjoyable fellowship and I had also preached in their local church.

To shorten the transatlantic flight Howard and I went via Boston, but this proved a bad call as we ran into a long layover and a complicated change of terminal. Then came a bigger disappointment. We had structured the trip around the understanding that we could get tickets for a practice day at the famous Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia, but through nobody's fault no tickets were available. The silver lining was that we had four days of much-needed rest in Charlotte, enjoying the Jacksons' gracious hospitality. We had one minor scare when we narrowly escaped the danger of 90mph winds which one night ripped through the neighbourhood, tearing down trees and driving some through the roofs of nearby homes.



Tornado damage in Tuscaloosa

Rested and refreshed, two flights took us two time zones west to **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, where I was to preach four times in Christ Community Fellowship. I first met Pastor Bob Brown in 1978 and had preached at eleven conferences for him in five different churches in Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. He has become a very dear friend and it has been a joy to see his development as a person and a pastor. It was a privilege to serve him and a congregation that received the ministry so warmly. After the Sunday night service we had a Q and A session, when questions ranged over subjects such as Islam, the media, the Reformation, apologetics, guidance and TV evangelists. The informality of this session seemed to make it all the more effective.

Roughly half the people in New Mexico live in the Albuquerque area,

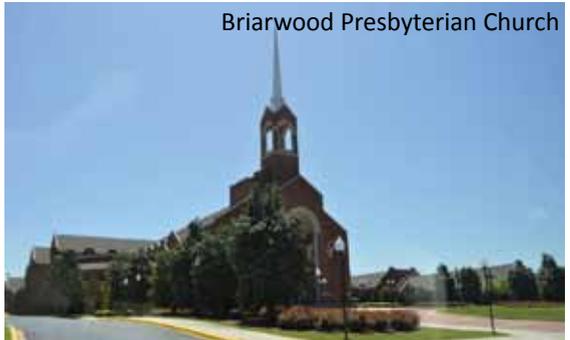


A warm welcome in Albuquerque

which is over 5,000 feet above sea level (in some places over 1,000 feet higher than Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the United Kingdom). The elevation caused Howard and myself breathing and sleeping problems but mercifully it did not affect me while I was preaching. Testimonies of those significantly helped through the ministry during this and previous visits far outweighed the physical difficulties.

Another two flights took us back east to **Jackson, Mississippi**, which for me was another very familiar stamping ground. Under the leadership of my good friend, Dr Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson has an outstanding programme of evangelism, preaching, teaching, discipleship, outreach and pastoral care as well as a thriving Day School. It has always been a special delight to preach there and the fact that some people had travelled all the way from Iowa to attend added to the worth of this particular visit.

We stayed in the home of Dr Bill and Mrs Lou Anne Harper and I confess to some deeply emotional moments as I recalled the many heart-warming times I had been there with Joyce over the years. Bill and Lou Anne's southern hospitality was once again perfect and enriched the time that Howard and I spent there. We will also remember Jackson for having narrowly escaped a tornado which generated winds of up to 135mph, wrecked cars on a road we had been on an hour earlier, blew the roof off a nearby bank and killed several people in the area.



Briarwood Presbyterian Church

From Jackson we opted to drive to **Birmingham, Alabama**, for engagements at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. On the way we drove through Tuscaloosa, which soon afterwards bore the brunt of the worst system of tornadoes to hit the country since 1974. Over 300 tornadoes obliterated whole communities and killed some 350 people. In Tuscaloosa alone a tornado claimed over forty lives.

I have known Pastor Harry Reeder for nearly twenty years and had previously served him in Matthews, North Carolina. At Briarwood he leads a staff of some 200 in a church that has an amazing 30,000 events a year. My main responsibilities were focused on Palm Sunday services, when I preached to 1,000 at 8.00am and 2,000 at 11.00am, both carried live on local radio. A retired pastor told me that a copy of *Right with God* he had been given while in seminary many years ago had proved the backbone of his ministry; numbers of people said that other titles had been of great help to them; and to hear later of professions of faith following Sunday's ministry was a special encouragement. I was also able to share a working breakfast at a local Cracker Barrel restaurant with a razor-keen class of seminary students, when I was usefully stretched in discussing theological and practical issues.

At the invitation of long-time friend Trey Lee we travelled to **Sunset, South**

Carolina, partly to have a two-day break before a busy end to the tour. The Reserve at Lake Keowee has been called 'an exceptional, timeless place' and this is no exaggeration. An award-winning community in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it provided exactly what we needed — not least because it boasts a Jack Nicklaus-designed championship golf course! It is difficult to put what follows into perspective for non-golfing readers, but when we went to the clubhouse I was ushered to a locker with my own name etched into a brass plate and told that I had become an honorary member of the club. I was completely overwhelmed by this and Howard said that he had never seen me so bowled over — but there was more to follow.

The next evening Trey had arranged a dinner at the club in my honour and several friends from Georgia joined him in testifying to ways in which, over the last twenty-five years, God had graciously used my ministry to impact their lives. When Trey read a letter from his mother telling of what Joyce had meant to her there was scarcely a dry eye in the house. The whole after-dinner experience was deeply moving, and I was enabled to close it with an impromptu epilogue.

On Good Friday morning I preached in The Reserve's superb Founders Hall, then Howard and I made for Greenville Spartanburg airport for a flight to Detroit, on our way to **Grand Blanc, Michigan**, for a service that night. I had last worked with

Pastor Dickie at a church leaders' conference in the Ukraine and it was a privilege to return to Berean Baptist Church. Michigan has been hit very hard by the current financial recession, with houses sometimes selling at 25% of their original value. Thousands have left the state for economic reasons. Even a thriving church like Berean has seen attendances drop from over 400 to fewer than 300, yet the spirit remains very positive. Easter Day began with about 100 attending a Sunrise Service held



With Pastor
Bob Dickie

in a mausoleum in Crestwood Memorial Cemetery, then breakfast in the church before a triumphant morning service. During warm-hearted interaction with church members a man told me that my preaching at a conference in the church five years ago marked 'the completion of my conversion' and another told me that he had come to Christ while reading *Ultimate Questions*. I have since heard, 'We are still getting a lot of great feedback from your services and people are listening and downloading the talks you gave from our website in large numbers.'

These final hours at Berean sent us gratefully on our way to Boston that night, ready to catch a daytime flight home the next day. Michigan was the first American state in which I preached (in March 1969). It would be a nice coincidence if this recent eightieth visit to the USA was to be my last — but as ever 'my times are in

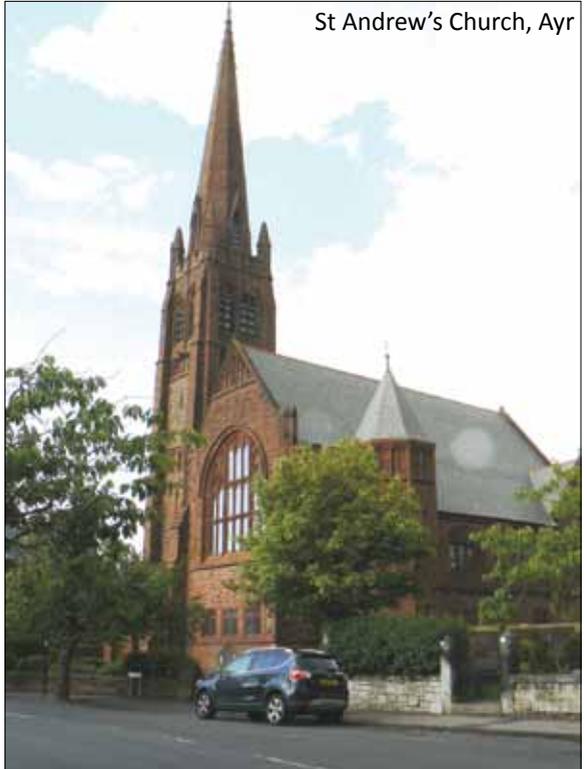
His hands'!

ANOTHER TARTAN TOUR

Of all the areas Howard Williams and I cover in our Popular Christian Apologetics tours, there is none we visit more often than Scotland, where there is always a warm welcome for the ministry. Our latest tour began in St Andrew's Church, **Ayr**, a thriving fellowship under the enthusiastic leadership of Harry Mealyea. A good hearing and an exceptional demand for books made it a fine beginning to the tour, but an incident after the meeting made it even more special. When a man in his seventies came to me and said, 'You look just like your father' I was completely baffled. After a few minutes I discovered that his parents were the couple from Shotts, in Lanarkshire, who 'adopted' my brother David as an evacuee from Guernsey at the beginning of World War 2. My father and step-mother had visited the Williamsons several times after the war and this was when the then young Tommy Williamson (the same age as my brother) had met them. It was an unexpected privilege to share the gospel with him and give him some literature to read.

Our second meeting was unique — the first time one had been hosted by a bookshop. Ritchie's Christian Bookshop in

Kilmarnock has a fine reputation and hosted a packed meeting as part of the launch of the new edition of *Does God believe in Atheists?* Meeting several people significantly helped by some of my earlier publications was a great encouragement and it was also good to do two local radio interviews.

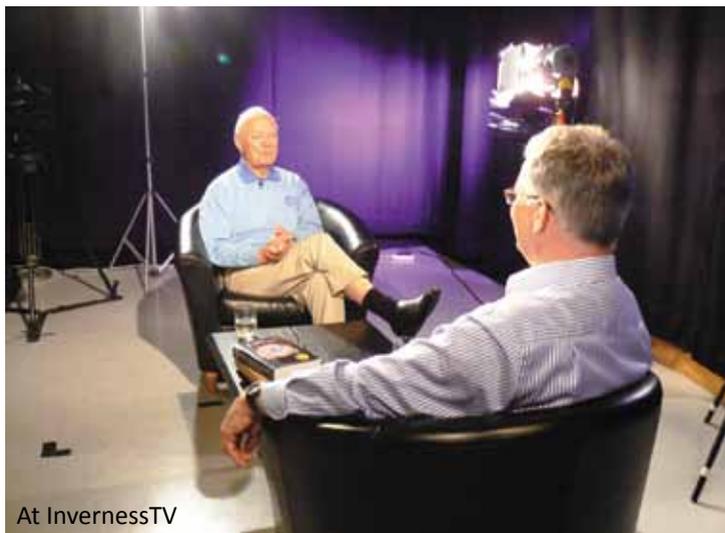


St Andrew's Church, Ayr

NEWSLINE - SEPTEMBER 2011

The **Isle of Skye** is delightful and the meeting in Kyleakin Community Hall drew a fine and appreciative crowd. On the following day we crossed the country to **Dornoch**, which may be my favourite village in the whole world (what other community of 1,200 people has a cathedral, to say nothing of one of the world's finest golf courses?). Quite apart from the meeting, the long trek was worthwhile to renew fellowship with John and Fiona Garvie, who bear such a fine witness in Dornoch Academy and at their delightful guest house.

A short drive took us to **Inverness**, where we were to spend three nights as guests of Alistair and Ann Malcolm. Alistair is the highly respected Minister of



At InvernessTV

Inshes Church and it was a privilege to preach to warm-hearted crowds at both Sunday services. It was also good to meet a man converted when I preached at the Scottish Northern Convention some twenty years ago. While at Inverness I also recorded a 45-minute interview at Inverness TV. This can be seen at <http://smithton.smithtonchurch.com/2011/06/27/one-on-one-with-john-blanchard/>

Another 'local' meeting came next, at the Free Church of Scotland, **Dingwall**, where there was an enthusiastic reception following a similar response at another church in the town last year. While in Dingwall I visited Highland Theological College, of which I have had the honour to be a Trustee since it was founded in 1994. The college has faced and overcome massive obstacles over the years and is superbly equipped to provide opportunities for men and women to study the Christian faith, on a full-time, part-time or open learning basis, from an evangelical and Reformed perspective, in the context of a worshipping community. The college's website is <http://www.htc.uhi.ac.uk/>. Another 'bonus' was to have an unexpected reunion with Dr Richard Gibbons, a long-time friend I helped in his earliest days in full-time

Christian service. Richard is now Senior Minister at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, S. Carolina and was visiting his family and friends in Scotland.

We returned to **Inverness** for the largest meeting of the tour, at East Church, whose minister, Dr Andrew McGowan, is another long-time friend. The meeting was superbly organized and feedback since has been very encouraging. On the following day a long drive south took us to **Broughty Ferry**, on the outskirts of Dundee, where Dr Brian Talbot, pastor of the local Baptist Church, told us that the meeting was the largest midweek meeting he had ever known there.

Richard Gibbons reunion



The final meeting of the tour was originally meant to be at New Restalrig Church, Edinburgh, but was switched to nearby **Leith**, as part of the build-up to a new church plant. The meeting was on the third floor of The Granary Restaurant and the interaction and feedback since, especially email correspondence with a young atheist, may mean that it was one of the most fruitful of the tour. The scope for this fledgling church, under the enthusiastic leadership of Athole Rennie, is enormous, as you can see at its website — www.gracechurchleith.com. A third unplanned contact on the tour came in the person of Dr Curt Daniel, who was visiting Edinburgh. Ten years ago I held evangelistic meetings in his church in Springfield, Illinois. The church has used countless copies of *Ultimate Questions* over the years and Dr Daniel told me that it has also distributed thousands of CDs of the messages I preached while I was there. This was a great encouragement and was a totally unexpected 'epilogue' to another very fruitful tour north of the border.



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.

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.

SEPTEMBER

- 1* **DROMORE**, Co. Down: Dromore Baptist Church, Maypole Hill, Dromore
[Info: 028 9269 3997 or jimmagill@tiscali.co.uk]
- 2* **MILLISLE**, Co. Down: Millisle Baptist Church, Main Street, Millisle [Info: 028 9186 1906 or Stephen.r.logan@btinternet.com]
- 3* **COLERAINE**, Co. Londonderry: Coleraine Baptist Church, Abbey Street, Coleraine
[Info: trevorandreaewatson@tiscali.co.uk]
- 4 **BALLYMENA**, Co. Antrim: Ballymena Baptist Church, 18-22 Main Street, Ballymena
[Info: 028 2563 7822 or pastor@ballymenabaptist.org]
- 9-11* **ITALY**: Festival della Letteratura and Sola Grazia Church, Montava
[Info: andrea.artioli@tiscali.it]
- 20* **RUGBY**, Warwickshire: Rugby Evangelical Free Church, 54 Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3EX [Info: uk4christ@pobox.com]
- 21* **WORCESTER**: Woodgreen Evangelical Church, Hastings Drive, Warndon, Worcester
[Info: 01905 754 548 or lacey-richard@sky.com]
- 22* **WALSALL**, W. Midlands: Pelsall Evangelical Church, Old Town Lane, Pelsall, WS3 4NJ
[Info: pastortimsmylie@pech.co.uk]
- 23* **KIDDERMINSTER**, Hereford and Worcester: Kidderminster Evangelical Church, Greatfield Road, Kidderminster DY11 6PP [Info: 01562 745 737 or philip@hearn.fsnet.co.uk]
- 24* **NOTTINGHAM**: Details to be announced. [Info: colinwebster1@ntlworld.com]
- 25 **BROMSGROVE**, Worcs: Welcome Hall, Woodrow Lane, Catshill, B61 1P0
[Info: 01527 872126 or andrew.jack@googlemail.com]

OCTOBER

- 1-2 **WELWYN**, Herts: Welwyn Evangelical Church, Fulling Mill Lane, AL6 9NH
[Info: 01438 715372 or pastor@welwyn-evangelical.org.uk]
- 8-9 **ITALY**: Bologna [Info: stefanomariotti@chiesaevangelica.org]
- 18* **TAUNTON**, Somerset: The Octagon Chapel, 113A East Street, Taunton, TA1 3HL
[Info: 01823 491018 or cyrilaston@talktalk.net]
- 19* **SIDMOUTH**, Devon: Emmanuel Baptist Church, Manstone Lane, Sidmouth, EX10 9TU
[Info: 01395 519327 or alistairmckenna@hotmail.com]
- 20* **TRURO**: Truro College, Truro Way, Truro, TR1 3XX [Info: 01326 211005 or 07717845652 or mikecoles@aim.com]
- 21* **PENZANCE**: Penzance Baptist Church, Clarence Street, Penzance, TR18 2NY
[Info: 01326 211005 or 07717845652 or mikecoles@aim.com]
- 22-23 **MORVAL**, Cornwall: Grace Community Church, Oak Trees, Morval, PL13 1PR
[Info: 01503 240930 or office@graceccmorval.co.uk]
- 30 **BANSTEAD**, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]

NOVEMBER

- 12 **OCKLEY**, Surrey: Men's Breakfast in Ockley Village Hall [Info: barry.thomson@btinternet.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:
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