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FOUR-MONTHLY NOTES AND NEWS  
OF HIS MINISTRY FROM JOHN BLANCHARD

No. 35

September 2014



Boarding British Airways flight BA 227 for Atlanta with Howard Williams at the end of April had a special feel to it. Unresolved health issues, another year on the clock and a heavy writing schedule meant that I was already thinking of this as my last preaching tour in the United States. As it was also my eightieth such trip it would mean ending on a nice round number!

We began with a few days' break at **The Reserve at Lake Keowee** in South Carolina — a perfect place to recharge one's batteries. Our time there was arranged by a very dear and long-time friend Trey Lee and, as ever, it worked perfectly. For the first time, it included preaching at First Baptist Church, **Pickens, SC**, just a few miles away. Pastor Fred Stone gave the warmest of welcomes, and the enthusiastic response to the ministry was such that he told me, 'You must preach here every time you come back to the States!'

The next highlight was entirely unexpected. David Leadbetter, a world-renowned golf coach, was conducting a clinic at The Reserve one day. We were not part of this, but he needed to get to Augusta, Georgia, at the end of the day for responsibilities at The Masters golf tournament. Trey Lee had somehow arranged entry tickets (they are like gold dust!) for Howard and me on the following day, so we offered to drive David Leadbetter there and had the pleasure of his company for nearly three hours. It was a privilege to share the gospel

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

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with him at length, to answer his questions about the faith, and to give him a signed copy of the Classic Series edition of *Meet the real Jesus* as we parted. I was also able to give a copy to the United States senator who provided the Masters tickets for us.

Our next stop was **Savannah, Georgia**, where I had the honour of preaching at the historic Independent Presbyterian Church. My previous visit there had been in 1991, and the pastor then and now, Terry Johnson, greeted me like a long-lost brother. IPC meets in a magnificent building (known at one time as the most beautiful building in North America) and the church was established in 1755. Its massive mahogany pulpit symbolizes the focal point of its ministry, which has pioneered the establishment of several area churches and steadily increased its mission giving. Among many refreshing contacts it was a special joy to meet a lady whose conversion had been triggered off by *Ultimate Questions*.

A few hours' drive took us next to **Eastman, Georgia**, for five engagements in three days at the First Baptist Church, which has a significant influence in the area under the enthusiastic leadership of Jerry Peele. I had last served him elsewhere in the state over twenty years earlier, and it was encouraging to hear him tell his congregation that reading *Truth for Life* had led him to abandon topical sermons and commit himself to expository preaching.



First Baptist Church, Eastman, Georgia

Engagements in Eastman included a session for pastors and church leaders — always a special event for me — and it was good to see them respond so well to the literature that Howard made available by arrangement with EP Books.

Our schedule next called for a long drive and two flights west to **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, for three days of ministry at Christ Community Fellowship. I have known Pastor

Bob Brown for over twenty-five years and have preached at many conferences for him in Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. He and I had prepared for this visit on the basis of it being my final time with him, so it was sad that he had major back surgery a couple of weeks earlier, and was only able to be at church on the last day, and not able to lead the services. Albuquerque is roughly 5,000 feet above sea level, some 600 feet higher than the summit of Scotland's Ben Nevis, but Howard and I had no related problems. The ministry was very well received, the Sunday morning attendance being the highest ever. The final event was a showing of *Going Strongly for the Summit*. While I was in Albuquerque I was hugely encouraged by an email from a man telling me he had come to Christ when I spoke at a barbeque in Devon in 1962!

Two flights back east next for five days in Mississippi. The first engagement was in **Yazoo City**, where I had preached many times in the past and where it was grand to link up with several old friends. Next came **Laurel**, driving past communities with delightful names such as D'Lo and Hot Coffee (honestly!). Laurel is in Jones County, which has more churches than in any other in the country. Bethlehem Baptist Church's pastor, Cary Kimbrell, who I had not met for some twenty or more years, had contacted me out of the blue, wondering whether I could visit his church, never guessing that this would fit so perfectly into my schedule. His people responded superbly in attendance and attention.

The tour ended at First Presbyterian Church, **Jackson**. I had preached there many times, beginning when Dr Jim Baird was Senior Minister, then over the eighteen years when Dr Ligon Duncan led the church. Now, the services were led by The Rev. David Strain from Scotland, shortly before his Induction as Senior Minister. The church has over 3,000 members and played a significant part in the formation

With Ligon Duncan and David Strain



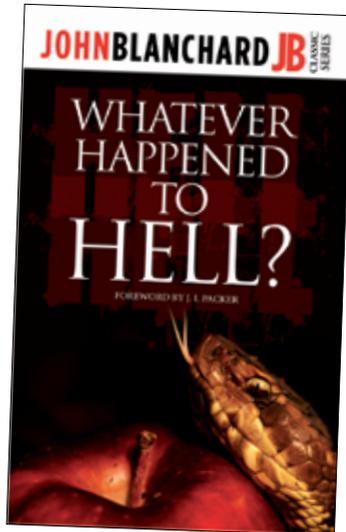
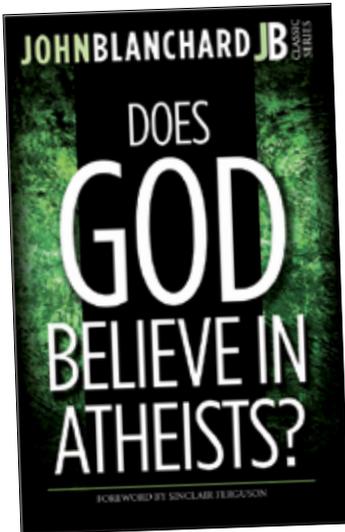
of Reformed Theological Seminary. As you can imagine, the thought that I was preaching my final sermons in the United States added something special, and I will not easily forget that day.

But *was* this the end of my American ministry? I am finding it very difficult to settle for the fact that it was. As with us all, 'our times are in *his* hands'. Keep reading *Newsline!*

# TWO MORE CLASSICS

The last issue of *Newsline* introduced you to the first in EP Books' Classic Series of my books, and the response to these has been very encouraging. Two more titles have now been released and EP have kindly agreed to make an exclusive offer to *Newsline* readers.

In the United States, Moody has called *Does God believe in Atheists?* 'A feast for the mind and heart', while in the UK, David Jackman, founder of the Cornhill Training Course, says that *Whatever happened to Hell?* is 'as extensive a treatment of the biblical doctrine of hell as is ever likely to be written in our contemporary climate'.



*Does God believe in Atheists?* retails in the UK at £16.99, and *Whatever happened to Hell?* at £12.99, but readers of *Newsline* only may get copies at £8.00 and £6.00 respectively by ordering directly from EP Books on 01325 380232 or from [sales@epbooks.org](mailto:sales@epbooks.org). The United States retail prices are \$26.99 and \$19.99, but readers there can order them for \$13.00 and \$10.00 respectively from JPL Fulfillment, 3741 Linden Ave. S.E., Wyoming, MI 49548 — Office (877) 6873 6935; Cell (616) 808 6268 or from [order@jplbooks.com](http://order@jplbooks.com).

## 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.

# 'The best laid schemes...

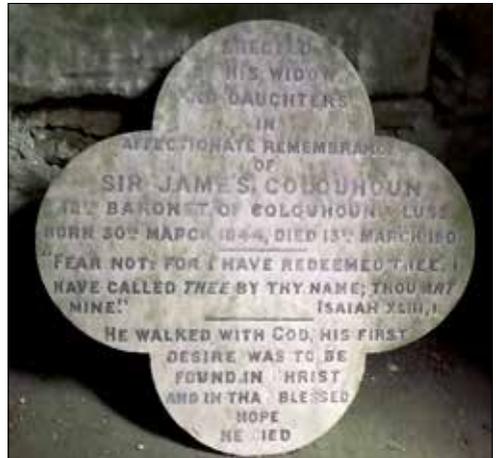
... o' mice an' men gang aft a'gley' are some of the best-known words written by the eighteenth-century Scottish poet Robert Burns. They are part of a piece he called, 'To a mouse', intended as an apology by Burns for upturning its nest while ploughing a field. In modern English the meaning is 'The most carefully prepared plans go wrong', words that struck home during a Popular Christian Apologetics tour of Scotland that began within twenty miles of where Burns was born.

On the way to Scotland, Howard Williams and I stopped off in **Workington**, Cumbria, where we had an excellent return meeting in Emmanuel Church. It is enthusiastically led by Tony Pietersen, who moved to Workington from South Africa in 2010. Since then, the church has grown steadily, and is now looking for an Associate Minister to be responsible for youth work and other duties. The Q and A session was enlivened by a young man whose convictions did not exactly coincide with mine! After the meeting there were long conversations with him and with several other people, including two Roman Catholic teachers, and Tony's invitation for us to return was an encouraging endorsement of the evening's impact.

Our first meeting in Scotland was in Trinity Church, **Dalry**. Membership in the Church of Scotland has dropped by over 90,000 in the last sixty years and there is a shortage of at least 100 ministers, with only two of its present incumbents under thirty years of age. It is also embroiled in the controversy over same-sex relationships, leading *Evangelicals Now* to call it 'a house divided'. However, the church in Dalry continues to flourish under the faithful leadership of Martin Thomson. This was our fifth meeting in Dalry, and with two meetings in his previous church in Wigtown, this increased Martin's lead as our most frequent host. It is always a pleasure as well as a privilege to serve him, and recent refurbishing of the church provided a fine setting for an evening that drew a very warm response.

A generous invitation to Loch Lomond Golf Club gave an opportunity to see the 15<sup>th</sup> century St Mary's Chapel, built for the Colquhoun family, and in which one member's clear testimony is still preserved in stone.

A second visit to Sandyford Henderson Church, **Glasgow**, came next. The church was anticipating the arrival of a new minister in September, and in the meantime has continued to do well. It is right in the middle of 'student land' and is looking to increase its impact on



A telling testimony

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those at university. Another beautifully refurbished building and new leadership will hopefully contribute to this, and it was good to challenge non-Christians and equip believers with evidence for God's existence and relevance.

A very long drive took us to **Poolewe**, in Wester Ross in the North West Highlands, and renowned worldwide for Poolewe Garden, with its amazing collection of subtropical plants. Our meeting was organized by our good friend Donnie MacRea, from Gairloch, and was supported by a number of churches in the area. A Popular Christian Apologetics meeting in a rural area seems to be more of an 'event' than one held in the centre of a city or town, and this was borne out in Poolewe, where extra chairs needed to be added right up until after the advertised starting time.

We next headed south for a weekend in **Auchterarder**, in Perthshire, where it was a special joy to serve Rob Barlow, the minister of the local Parish Church. After a career as a biochemist, Rob had an influential ministry on the island of Islay, where last year he took

part in the filming of *Going strongly for the Summit* and gave me opportunities to preach on Islay and on the neighbouring island of Jura. Since their move to Auchterarder, Rob and his wife Gwen are proving an effective team as they develop the depth and width of the church's ministry. With 500 new homes about to be built close to the church, the opportunity for



outreach will be much greater. Speaking on 'Has science got rid of God?' on Saturday and preaching on Sunday in the church (yet another one splendidly refurbished, and with the addition of a superb leisure centre) gave me a privileged input into a work that has great potential in days to come.

We then moved on to **Banchory**, just west of Aberdeen. Banchory Christian Fellowship Church, pastored by Stuart Keir, has a hugely encouraging story to tell. In the mid-1990s, attendance at Deeside Christian Fellowship Church in Milltimber (we have been there several times) was outgrowing its premises, and some members who lived in Banchory began holding services in a school there. This gathering grew to such a point that a church was officially established and excellent new premises were opened debt-free in March 2011. A large membership is steadily growing and (as in Auchterarder) 500 new houses to be built nearby will give great opportunities for outreach. During the day we were able to

spend time with Sinclair Ferguson, a long-time friend who exercises such a significant ministry and who has moved back to Scotland from the United States. Our meeting that evening was well attended and warmly received, but towards the end of the presentation a sore throat I had been developing began to prove very troublesome. Robert Burns' mouse was on the prowl...!

The next day we paid a return visit to Gilcomston South Church, **Aberdeen**, but by now it was obvious that I would not be able to speak. At the last minute it was decided to show *Going strongly for the Summit*, which was so well received that I felt it had taken nothing away from the event. I croaked out a two minutes at the end of the evening, but it was clear that the die for the rest of the tour had been cast.

We drove on to **Inverness** the next day, where we stayed in the home of our magnificent hosts, Scott and LizAnn Lauder. It was evident that I would not be able to speak at the



remaining three engagements due there and in Alness, and Scott alerted those concerned. LizAnn arranged for me to see a doctor, who diagnosed laryngitis and a fever; she also arranged with an airline for me to fly home that afternoon. Our 'best laid schemes' had come unstuck, but we all looked to God to overrule the situation to his glory.

Three days after the end of this tour I was due to start another in the south-east of England, arranged by Baptist Gospel Partnership. Barry King, the General Secretary of BGP, was kept in touch as soon as I was taken ill, and eventually took my place on the tour. I have promised to 'replace' this tour next year. Barry's daily reports spoke of great encouragement, and of good interaction with enquirers every night. BGP had bought hundreds of copies of *Is God past his sell-by date?* from EP Books and these were offered freely to all who came to the meetings. This showed great enterprise, and it was good to know that in my absence I was still able to 'speak' to those who came. May the Lord make these books a means of great help to all who read them in the coming days!

# COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2014

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For news of any additional meetings, visit [www.johnblanchard.org](http://www.johnblanchard.org). Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

## SEPTEMBER

- 2\* WOLVERHAMPTON: West Park Chapel, Connaught Road, Wolverhampton, WV1 4PN [Info: 01902 723927 or 07460 595881 or [adrian@sargent.org.uk](mailto:adrian@sargent.org.uk)]  
3\* BIRMINGHAM: Monyhull Church Centre, St Francis Drive, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 3PS [Info: 07806 079057 or [colintamplin@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:colintamplin@blueyonder.co.uk)]  
4\* CHELTENHAM: Cheltenham Evangelical Free Church, rear of Claremont, Whaddon Road, Cheltenham, GL52 5LZ [Info: 0784 6858766 or [drpfeiffer85@hotmail.com](mailto:drpfeiffer85@hotmail.com)]  
5\* LOUGHBOROUGH: East Leake Academy, Lantern Lane, East Leake, Loughborough, LE12 6QN [Info: 01509 852133 or [paul.brunning.elec@gmail.com](mailto:paul.brunning.elec@gmail.com)]  
6-7 BROMSGROVE: Church Anniversary services. Welcome Hall Evangelical Church, 34 Woodrow Lane, Catshill, Bromsgrove, B61 0PU [Info: 01527 758609 or 01527 570029 or [rjeremybrooks@gmail.com](mailto:rjeremybrooks@gmail.com)]  
25-30\* SOUTH AFRICA: [Info: 021 674 6931/2 or [janet@christianbooks.co.za](mailto:janet@christianbooks.co.za)]

## OCTOBER

- 1-13\* SOUTH AFRICA: [Info: 021 674 6931/2 or [janet@christianbooks.co.za](mailto:janet@christianbooks.co.za)]  
29\* AHOGHILL, Co. Antrim: First Presbyterian Church, Calgorm Road, Ahoghill, BT42 2HZ [Info: 02825 871245]  
30\* NEWTOWNABBEY, Co. Antrim: 'Theatre at the Mill', Mossley Mill, Carnmoney Road North, Newtownabbey, BT36 5QA [Info: 028 9034 0202 or [kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk)]  
31\* CARRICKFERGUS, Co. Antrim: Oakfield Community Centre, Oakfield Drive, Carrickfergus, BT38 7SP [Info: 028 9336 4747 or [kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk)]

## NOVEMBER

- 1\* NEWTOWNABBEY, Co. Antrim: Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, 560 Doagh Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, BT36 5BU [Info: [kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kenjnelson@hotmail.co.uk)]  
2(am) DROMARA, Co. Down: First Dromara Presbyterian Church, Church Road, Dromara, Co. Down, BT25 2NS [Info: 02897 533 023 or [shaw.thompson@btinternet.com](mailto:shaw.thompson@btinternet.com)]  
2(pm) CARRICKFERGUS, Co. Antrim: Carrickfergus Baptist Church, 3 Northland, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, BT38 8ND [Info: 028 9336 9070 or [palawther@gmail.com](mailto:palawther@gmail.com)]  
3\* ESKARAGH, Co. Fermanagh: Stonepark Baptist Church, Fivemiletown Road, Eskaragh, Co. Fermanagh [Info: 02889 531773 or [harry@studydesk.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:harry@studydesk.fsnet.co.uk)]  
4\* BANGOR, Co. Down: Bethany Baptist Church, 23-27 Gransha Road, Bangor, Co. Down, BT20 4TN [Info: 028 9145 9211 or 028 9147 9112 or [steven@bethanybaptist.co.uk](mailto:steven@bethanybaptist.co.uk)]  
5\* ANTRIM: Antrim Baptist Church, 3 Greystone Link, Antrim, BT41 1QW [Info: 028 9446 5775 or [neilw667@gmail.com](mailto:neilw667@gmail.com)]  
15 (3pm) KESGRAVE, Suffolk: 60<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary, Kesgrave Baptist Church, Cambridge Road, Kesgrave, IP5 1EW [Info: 01473 631508 or [a1thomson@aol.com](mailto:a1thomson@aol.com)]  
16: IPSWICH, Suffolk: Bethesda Baptist Church, 9 St Margaret's Plain, Ipswich, IP4 2BB [Info: 01473 255035 or [terrygreen56@talktalk.net](mailto:terrygreen56@talktalk.net)]  
23(pm) CHEAM, Surrey: 152<sup>nd</sup> Church Anniversary services. Cheam Baptist Church, 4 Park Road, Sutton, SM3 8QB [Info: 020 8642 5070 or [tim.saunders@cheambaptist.net](mailto:tim.saunders@cheambaptist.net)]

\* Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting