



newsletter

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

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Return to Spain

In the middle of May I had my first speaking engagements in Spain for many years. I had been invited to be the speaker at the Ninth Annual Conference of the Spanish publishing house Editorial Peregrino. The company was pioneered in 1979 by Evangelical Press (hence the same initials!) with Bill Clark spearheading the vision. The work made steady progress and in 1985 became independent from Evangelical Press while maintaining very close ministry and personal links.

The present Director of Editorial Peregrino is Matthew Hill, a missionary worker from the north-east of England, who is supported by EMF (European Missionary Fellowship). ‘Peregrino’ (in Spain it is often called just that) now has some 200 of its own titles in print and distributes some 400 others, mainly originating from the United States. It has four of my own books in Spanish—*Right with God*, *Whatever happened to Hell?*, *Ultimate Questions and Evolution: Fact or Fiction?*—and if funds allow would love to publish *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Heaven*, especially as Spain is blanketed with Roman Catholicism’s false teaching on the subject.

The conference was held in Valdepeñas, and believers came to it from many different parts of the country, including Madrid, Alicante, Malaga, and even Barcelona, which meant a 16-hour round trip. I had been asked to speak on ‘Evangelism: A Defence of the Faith’ and ‘Evangelism—A Declaration of the Faith’, and it was a privilege to do so, especially with many pastors there. The Question and Answer session was exceptionally challenging and included a young boy



asking, ‘Is sin necessary?!’ I was also able to film a number of clips for showing on YouTube.

There were many encouragements during a weekend that included preaching in a church near Madrid. I was told of a pastor who recently bought several copies of *Right with God*. When asked why he wanted so many he said that some time ago he had been converted while reading it and now wanted other people to know its message. Another pastor spoke

of his enthusiasm for the Spanish translation of *Whatever happened to Hell?*, which had stabilized his thinking on the subject. He had long conversations about hell with three people, including two Seventh Day Adventists who began by strongly disagreeing with him, but they had eventually been persuaded by what the pastor shared from *Whatever happened to Hell?*—and had now joined his church.

I left Spain thankful for many tokens of God’s grace. Editorial Peregrino’s website is www.editorialperegrino.com, and readers wanting to support the work can contact Matthew Hill at director@editorialperegrino.com



Ultimate Questions

First published in 1987, my evangelistic booklet *Ultimate Questions* has generated some 14 million copies in well over sixty languages, and the publishers long ago lost count of the number of people who have testified to having been brought to faith while reading it. There is continuing demand for the booklet from missionary agencies, and this request is typical:

‘We are supporting pastors and missionaries who are ministering in the conflict zone of Eastern Ukraine. We have Russian copies of *Ultimate Questions* and *Where is God when things go wrong?* but we would also like to have copies in the Ukrainian language to pass out to those whose primary language is Ukrainian. Could you direct us to where we could purchase or print mass quantities, perhaps around 3,000 to 5,000 copies?’

I would like to add that I have greatly appreciated *Ultimate Questions*. I have read it through on more than one occasion when I have needed to be reminded of the Gospel. I have also given it to many others. Aside from the Scripture, I know of no better resource which clearly, simply and systemically lays out who God is, who we are and what Christ did to reconcile us to God.’

... also

For many years now, Tricia Rubens has replied to correspondents who

have asked for a free copy of *Read Mark Learn* after being converted or significantly helped through reading *Ultimate Questions*. Tricia recently told me that *Read Mark Learn* is being sent out ‘at a steady rate’. We also send four free books a year to those joining a scheme that offers these, and Tricia reports ‘many letters coming in, especially now from Ethiopia’. She adds, ‘The Lord has certainly blessed many ministries since the beginning of *Ultimate Questions* and I feel privilege to have been a small part of these.’



After a months-long saga that is the norm when buying and selling houses, Pam and I finally moved in to our new home in July. It is about a mile from where I previously lived, but is much more suitable for the shared ministry in which we look to be involved. The new address is 22 Beechfield, Banstead, SM7 3RG. Our new telephone number is 01737 903715 My email address remains jbsarnia@gmail.com, while Pam's is robertson@redimension.com.

the story goes on

✨ Miles, Meetings and Memories ✨

For several years now, June has signalled a Popular Christian Apologetics tour in Scotland, and 2015 was no exception. The added factor this time was that Pam joined me and Howard Williams, so a team of three headed north of the border.

On the way, we had engagements in the north-west of England, at Emmanuel Church, **Workington**, whose South African pastor Tony Pietersen has become a good friend. Pam and I stayed at the home of Fiona Jarman (who was her Matron of Honour on 11 April) and her husband John, and as Howard had been my best man, the weekend was something of a wedding reunion! The church has made solid progress since Tony joined it five years ago, and it was a privilege to support him. Two Sunday services were followed by a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting on the Monday, which had the largest attendance of our time at Emmanuel. Several Goths were in the audience, but had nothing to say when the meeting was opened for questions.

On the following day we had our longest travelling day of the tour, over twelve hours to take us by road to Ullapool on the north-west coast of Scotland, then on a 2½ hour ferry to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. Iain Campbell, one of the island's Free Presbyterian ministers (who recently joined the Board of EP Books) had prepared the ground for three engagements, the first two of which were held in the Free Church in **Stornoway**. A lunchtime meeting drew a number of the island's church leaders, ranging from those with long experience in

the ministry to some in their first charge. My informal talk touched on my own testimony, comments on evangelism and thoughts on the present religious scene in the UK, and there was helpful interaction following questions that were asked. There were hundreds at the evening meeting (the first Popular Christian Apologetics event featuring the singing of unaccompanied metrical psalms!). Many people joined afterwards in a time of refreshments and fellowship in the church's magnificent M.A. Macleod Memorial Hall, where Howard's book table was well patronized and I was interviewed by Iain Campbell. It was also a special joy to meet someone who had been a fellow member of Guernsey NYLC over fifty years ago and had since served in the Red Sea Mission.

The third Hebridean engagement was in **Tarbert** on the Isle of Harris (which is not an island!). The Free Church membership there left the Church of Scotland because of their concern about its drift from biblical teaching on homosexual issues, and their pastor, David Macleod demitted from his charge in Lochcarron for the same reason.

The church has no building of its own and meets in the local Community Hall, and for our meeting two or three rows of extra chairs needed to be brought in to seat those who came, some on a ferry



*Caledonian McBrayne
Ullapool to Stornoway ferry*

from North Uist. I had been asked to speak on 'Meet the real Jesus,' and the title had attracted a number of atheists. There were good conversations with some of them afterwards, and it was also a great encouragement to have a man say to me, 'God came into my life tonight!'

On the next day we returned on the ferry to **Ullapool** in time for a meeting arranged by the splendidly named Lochbroom and Coigach Free Church of Scotland. The meeting was held in the excellently equipped MacPhail Centre. Ullapool, with a resident population of just over 1,500, is said to be spiritually very dark, with specific hostility to the gospel. This was reflected both in a small attendance and in directly critical comments during the Q and A session. Nevertheless, Alasdair Macleod, the church's enthusiastic minister, has since written to say, 'While the numbers attending were significantly lower than I expected I was particularly pleased that a number of unbelievers did come along, and were spoken to superbly on the night. Your message flowed well, and was understood. We do pray that the seed sown will grow into a life of faith for all who were present.' There was also great encouragement in meeting someone converted while studying *Read Mark Learn*.

An hour's drive on the following day took us to Inverness, where we had the pleasure of being the guests of two very special friends, Scott and Lizann Lauder, whose hospitality was all that I expected and better than we deserved. The fact that Scott is a corporate member of the wonderful Castle Stuart Golf Links was definitely a contribution!

Scott is an elder at Smithton Church, **Inverness**, a Reformed evangelical Presbyterian fellowship at which I always feel at home. There were large congregations at morning and evening Sunday services, and warm appreciation for the ministry the Lord enabled me to bring. The week of this tour marked the release of the updated and revised publication of *Truth for Life*, my devotional commentary on The Epistle of James, and after the morning sermon's overview of the epistle Howard was swamped with so many people wanting copies that he quickly ran out of supplies and Scott Lauder had to take additional orders. Meeting another person who came to faith reading an earlier title added to the blessing of a very special day.

Monday saw us in the Highland town of **Alness**, some twenty miles north of Inverness. Alness is renowned for its floral displays, winning Britain in Bloom awards five times and Scotland in Bloom awards four times in recent years. Of greater interest to us was Alness Capstone Centre, superbly situated at the top of the town's High Street. Previously a Co-op supermarket, and gifted to Rosskeen Free Church, Easter Ross, by an anonymous donor, it has been transformed into a multi-purpose community church centre. A comfortable café at the front and a surprisingly large auditorium at the back

make it ideal for many of the church's projects, which include alcohol and drug addiction support, counselling and a food bank. The church's minister, Iain Macaskill, sees the Centre as a vital link with the community, and Gerry Dolan,



Howard on duty

the café manager and his wife Fiona Dolan, the church co-ordinator, provide dynamic drive to the entire project.

I had not expected a large attendance at our meeting, but the auditorium was virtually packed, and Iain Macaskill

introduced me to a man who told me he was converted when I preached at the Strathpeffer Convention many years ago. My subject in Alness was 'Anyone for Heaven' (which I had spoken on only once before) and very close attention was followed afterwards by a number of helpful conversations. One lady told Pam, 'I am going to hell', and when asked why she knew that, the lady (not knowing Pam's link) replied, 'Because that man said I was!' Pam took it from there, focussing her attention on God's rescue plan, pointing her to Christ, and giving her name to Iain Macaskill. I had a stimulating conversation



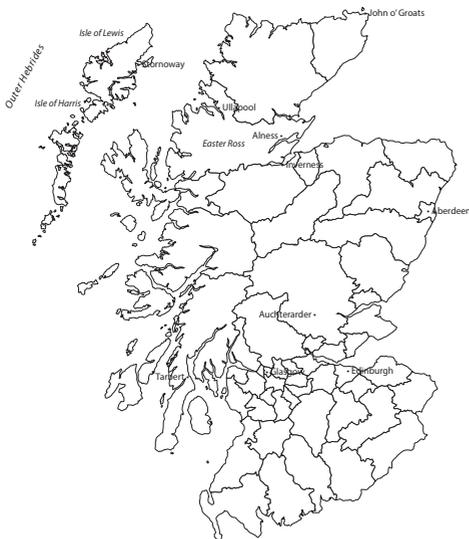
With the Lauders

with an atheist who was totally baffled by the concept of heaven, and gave him a copy of *Meet the real Jesus*. Other good interaction helped to make Alness a highlight of the tour.

We next began to head south,

first to **Aberdeen**, where our meeting was in Gilcomston Church, which has left the Church of Scotland and is greatly blessed by having the gifted Dominic Smart as its minister. The Gilcomston Trust provides the legal umbrella under which the church now operates, and arrangements have been made for it to continue using its excellently located building in Union Street. The Q and A time was again helpful in backing up the message which examined the constant question as to how a sovereign, all-loving God can oversee such global sin and suffering.

Our final stop was in **Auchterarder**, in Perthshire, home to the famous Gleneagles Hotel, and whose 1.5-mile-long High Street led to it being called 'The Long Town'. The minister Rob Barlow and his wife Gwen had previously served on the Hebridean island of Islay, and talking with them about the Christian scene there stirred up memories of my years on the island as a wartime evacuee from Guernsey. Auchterarder Parish Church has made fine progress since our visit last year, and it was good to build on that in a meeting in its excellently appointed multi-purpose hall. We left Scotland grateful for this and for all the other opportunities to meet with God's people, preach the gospel, challenge sceptics and equip Christians to share God's truth with others.



✨ Pam's Page ✨



Having left John at Heathrow Airport bound for Spain, I drove to Torquay for the 50th Anniversary Conference of Transform Europe Now (TEN), formerly known as Eurovangelism. It has been a privilege to be involved with the organisation for over 40 years, for half of that time as a Trustee. Eurovangelism was founded by Dave Foster at a time when Christians were struggling under Communism in Eastern Europe and totalitarianism in some parts of Western Europe. In those days, to be an evangelical Christian in parts of Europe often meant oppression, persecution and loss of freedom, and many paid the ultimate price. Christians generally became prisoners in their own country and were allowed little or no fellowship with others. Dave often made hazardous journeys into Communist countries to support, encourage and equip believers there. He also encouraged Christians in the UK to support and pray for them. John was one of the Bible teachers Dave arranged to go to countries such as Czechoslovakia and Romania. These were difficult at times, but greatly appreciated by those on the receiving end, giving them strength to carry on when they might otherwise have struggled.

One of my tasks at the conference was to interview two of the previous Directors, Dave Foster and Gary Cox, and they vividly remembered some of the difficult situations they faced when visiting Eastern Europe. Dave was the first Westerner allowed



to visit a prison in Siberia. When he asked why there were so many Christian there he was told they were kept there as a stabilizing influence, as they were the only ones who showed love and care for the other prisoners.

Communism fell in 1989, so Europe has changed a great deal, and the next part of the conference looked at how TEN now works in the same countries but with very different needs. There is much poverty,

unemployment, secularism and corruption. In some countries people trafficking has become a way of life but God has raised up many outstanding Christian Pastors and leaders that TEN has been able to help.

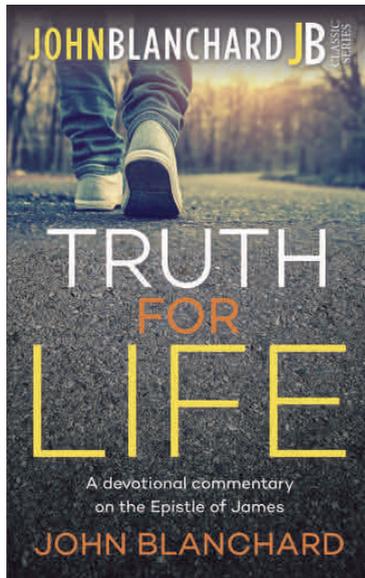
The conference was a great encouragement and we gave God the glory for what he had done. I have now stood down as a Trustee, but remain committed to the work of TEN, with a passion to see the gospel preached across Europe. I took an outstanding Serbian pastor and his wife back to Heathrow, where I met John on his return from Spain. For both of us it had been a truly European weekend for which we thank God.

✚ James Still Speaks ✚

The Epistle of James, one of the smallest books in the New Testament, can be read right through in less than eight minutes, yet its message is still powerfully relevant nearly 2,000 years after it was written. I first 'discovered' it soon after I became a Christian in 1954, and four years later began teaching it to a Bible Class at Holy Trinity Church, Guernsey, little realizing how dramatically it was to affect my life, or that sixty years later I would still find it so powerfully relevant to contemporary life that I would return to it again and again, every time unearthing more truth from these five chapters.

In the course of time, my studies were reflected in a four-volume series of paperbacks called *Not Hearers Only* (three words taken directly from at least one version of James 1:22). After further study these gave way to a much larger single volume titled *Truth for Life*, which was first published in 2002. Yet even this is not the end of the story, as I have worked through the entire text again, this time using the excellent English Standard Version of the Bible, and earlier this year EP Books released an enlarged, revised and improved edition of *Truth for Life*, which is already going very well.

The book has attracted very encouraging reviews, including the following:



'If Christianity can become as real and refreshing to the many who will, I hope, read this book as it is to the author, then this ought to be a best-seller,' *Word in Action*

'A veritable feast of good things. It cannot help but profit the diligent reader.' *English Churchman*

'You will not find the Letter of James made plainer or more applicable to life.' *Evangelism Today*

'Concise, contemporary and incisive, with vivid illustration and anecdote.' *The Christian Record*

Truth for Life retails in the UK at £12.99, but readers of *Newsline* only may get copies at £8.00 by ordering directly from EP Books on +44 (0)3337 720214 or from sales@epbooks.org. The United States retail price is \$18.99, but readers there can order it for \$13.00 from JPL Fulfillment, 3741 Linden Ave. S.E., Wyoming, MI 49548 — Office (877) 6873 6935; Cell (616) 808 6268 or from order@jplbooks.com.

COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2015

At the time of going to print these are my engagements for the next four months. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you. It would be good to meet you and to thank you personally for your support.

September

- 3–6 BELGIUM: International Baptist Church, Brussels [Info: roland@ibcbrussels.org]
17–30 SOUTH AFRICA: Popular Christian Apologetics tour in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal [Info: janet@christianbooks.co.za]

October

- 1–7 SOUTH AFRICA: Popular Christian Apologetics tour in Gauteng [Info: jjoub@global.co.za]

November

- 1 REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Drogheda Presbyterian Church [Info: 00353 419802860/862320488 or jwoodside@presbyterianireland.org]
2 N.IRELAND: First Coleraine Presbyterian Church [Info: 02870 342703 or pfleming@presbyterianireland.org]
3 N.IRELAND: Knock Presbyterian Church, Belfast [Info: 02890 709489 or dmoore@presbyterianireland.org]
4 N.IRELAND: Sloan Street Presbyterian Church, Lisburn [Info: 02892 663837 or afaulkner@presbyterianireland.org]
5 N.IRELAND: Mourne Presbyterian Church, Kilkeel [Info: 02841 762264 or wbingham@presbyterianireland.org]
6 N.IRELAND: Waterside Presbyterian Church, Londonderry [Info: 02871 329561 or 07709 225559 or kjones@presbyterianireland.org]
8 N. IRELAND: Radio Ireland 'Sunday Sequence' Blackstaff Studio, Belfast.
First Presbyterian Church, Antrim [Info: 02894 463289 or bparker@presbyterianireland.org]
The rest of November is reserved for writing.

December

- 6 WOKING, Surrey: Emmanuel Chapel, 18 Portugal Road [Info: 01483 800 429 or richard.j.barwick@gmail.com]
27 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]
The rest of December is reserved for writing.

JOIN THE TEAM

Thank you for reading Newsline. If you would like to receive future issues (by post or email) please let me know at jbsarnia@gmail.com