

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

March 2010



Our year is off to a great start, with one international trip already under my belt and the publication of two new books!

### SPEAKING MINISTRY

I spent two weeks in January teaching my annual inter-term course at Talbot School of Theology. The class this year was on debate, so I taught the students all I could about debating effectively. After I lectured for several days, we then watched recordings of a few of my debates to see these techniques in action. Finally, the students participated in mock debates in class, and after each debate I gave them a critique, much as a coach would do. This part of the course was the most fun, and I was very impressed how quickly the students progressed in their ability! It was a strategic investment in them and their future ministries.

In February I embarked on a ten-day speaking trip to India, my first visit to that country, funded by one of our longest supporting churches, Northwest Community Church in Phoenix. Tom and Vicki Gender from the church accompanied me. Our itinerary included two cities in India. First we flew via Dubai into Hyderabad, the fifth largest city of India, in south central India in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The area has a significant Muslim population and so presents an interesting cultural mix of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. From Hyderabad we flew to Visakhapatnam on the east coast of India. After a couple of days there, we flew back to Hyderabad to finish out the trip before flying back to Dubai.



Charminar, Muslim Mosque

My first speaking engagement, on the day after we arrived, was at the University of Hyderabad on the topic “Can We Be Good without God?” This topic is especially interesting in a Hindu context, since one of the main schools of Hindu philosophy (Advaita Vedanta Hinduism) holds that the distinction between good and evil is ultimately illusory and so *agrees* with my contention that in the absence of God there are no objective moral values. The audience was, as you would expect, largely non-believers, and I had a good Q & A time with the students.

My next event was at Andhra University in Visakhapatnam. The university really rolled out the red carpet. The Vice-Chancellor of the university showed up to introduce me, bringing with him his Hindu guru, a little man with a white beard and a white robe, who sat in the front row. After all the dignitaries were introduced and invited to sit on the platform, I was presented with flowers, a shawl was placed over my shoulders, and a metal insignia of the university was given to me. After endless formalities, I finally presented my lecture on “Beyond the Big Bang.” Again, in a Hindu context this material is dynamite because all the major

schools of Hinduism hold to the eternity of the universe and of matter, so that an argument for God from the beginning of the universe is a radical challenge to Hindu thinking. We had a great Q & A following the talk, and I presented copies of my book *Creation out of Nothing*, which happens to be co-published in India, to some of the key faculty members. It was a great testimony to the credibility of the Christian faith and a wonderful encouragement to those Christians who were there. That evening I also gave a public lecture on the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. I'm grateful to James Stephen, the Christian professor who set up these events.



University  
Seal

The next day we flew back to Hyderabad, where Sudhakar and Shanti Mondithoka, former Talbot students, had arranged several events under the auspices of their newly founded ministry the Hyderabad Institute for Theology and Apologetics. I gave an evangelistic public talk that evening at a boy's college auditorium on "The Evidence for Christianity." The talk, which concluded with my personal testimony of coming to faith in Christ, seemed to connect with the people.

The next day we had a morning seminar for Christian leaders during which I spoke for two one-hour sessions on the historicity of Jesus' resurrection and then fielded questions. The participants said that they had never heard such an in-depth historical treatment of Jesus' resurrection before, so it was a real strengthening time. It became clear how the historicity of Jesus' resurrection sets him apart from all the myths of Hindu deities and avatars (incarnations of gods).

Finally, that evening I spoke evangelistically on "Five Reasons to Believe in God" at a special outreach at a local country club. To attend this slightly more upscale event, any Christian had to bring a non-believer along as his guest. This audience was remarkably friendly and receptive, even applauding the ontological argument (that's got to be a first!)- It was a wonderful evening to close out our trip.

So it was a very exciting week. All the talks were recorded on DVD and will be available in India. May the Lord use what was done to encourage and extend His Church in India! If you'd like to read more about the week and see some photos, check out our newsletter at [www.ReasonableFaith.org](http://www.ReasonableFaith.org).

After a week or so back home recuperating, on the last day of February on a spectacularly clear day I flew over the Rockies, past Mt. Rainier and Mt. Hood, and into Portland, Oregon. A two-hour drive brought me to the small university town of Corvallis, where the local Socratic Club had arranged a debate between me and the atheist physicist Victor Stenger at Oregon State University on the existence of God.

Stenger and I had debated several years ago at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, so to avoid a re-hash of our previous contest, I decided to stir things up a bit by substituting some new arguments. Encouraged by the positive response in India, I decided to go with the ontological argument (the first time I've ever used it

in a debate!) and to add Leibniz's argument from contingency in place of the design argument. Meanwhile, I studied Stenger's more recent writing supporting atheism.

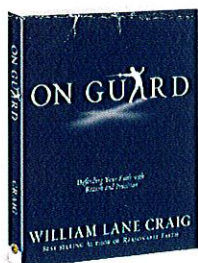
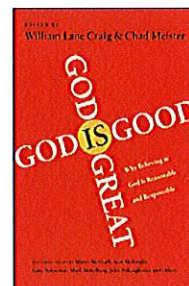
The next evening around 1,100 people showed up for the debate, including several who had driven long distances to attend. I was thrilled with how the debate unfolded. Dr. Stenger presented basically only one argument for atheism: that if God existed, He would provide good, objective evidence of His existence, which He hasn't. The problem for Stenger was that he was utterly incapable of refuting my arguments showing that there *is* good, objective evidence for God's existence, so his contention wound up looking pretty lame. I'll post a fuller account of the arguments next month on our Reasonable Faith website in our newsletter. It was a really fun debate, and my hosts said it was one of the best they've ever sponsored. PTL!

On March 9 Jan and I flew to Boston, where I had the privilege of speaking to professors at the Harvard Faculty Club and the MIT Faculty Club. The format for these evenings included a brief statement by each speaker, followed by a roundtable discussion over dinner and questions afterward, followed by closing statements. These ongoing events are well-attended by non-Christian professors, who enjoy the interaction. The first night at Harvard was on the topic "Can We Be Good without God?" and I was paired with a female philosophy professor named Rae Langton. Now an atheist, she was raised in India as the daughter of missionaries. As she spoke, inveighing against the pernicious influence of religion on moral motivation, it was evident from the anger in her voice that she has a lot of emotional scars from her childhood in boarding school, where she was raised from the age of five. She came with blood in her eye and was ready to argue. Predictably, she presented Plato's Euthyphro argument against morals grounded in God, along with a defective analogy, which I answered. We had a good exchange, but the tone of the evening was emotionally charged. Listening to the questions raised by the professors afterward, I was struck once again at how most of these brilliant scholars are just ignorant laymen when it comes to matters of theology.

The next night at MIT was on "Does the Universe Provide Evidence of God?" and I was on a panel with Harvard and MIT cosmologists Howard Smith and Avi Loeb. Smith is Jewish and so sympathetic to evidence for God; Loeb is agnostic but open and congenial. The atmosphere was completely different from the previous evening—very collegial, open, inquiring. I presented the *kalam* cosmological argument for God from the beginning of the universe, and I was pleased that no one had any correction at all to offer of the physical evidence I provided from contemporary cosmology. Indeed, the physicists in the audience loved my talk (especially Hilbert's Hotel, with its infinite number of rooms!). One especially touching moment was meeting a man named Lee who had submitted a Question of the Week to our website a little while ago and who describes himself as "an aspiring believer." Not a faculty member, he asked to attend the dinner anyway, and our host Dave Thom gave him permission. He so enjoyed the evening and is on the verge of making a commitment to follow Christ. So it was really a wonderful evening and testimony to the credibility of the Christian worldview.

## WRITING MINISTRY

In case you haven't heard, Chad Meister and my new book *God is Great, God Is Good* has won *Christianity Today's* Book of the Year award in the category of apologetics and evangelism! PTL! This came as a complete surprise, and I hope the book's impact will be even greater as a result. Meanwhile, my newest book *On Guard*, a sort of layman's manual for defending your faith, has just been released by David C. Cook. If you've tried reading *Reasonable Faith* and found it too hard, then *On Guard* is just for you! It's intended to be a book for the beginner who wants to learn to defend his faith. It includes arguments for God's existence, an answer to the problem of suffering in the world (especially on people's minds as a result of the recent terrible earthquakes!), evidence for Jesus' radical personal claims and resurrection, and a defense of Christ as the only way to God. It's filled with lots of side boxes, pictures, and talking points, and includes a Glossary of terms and proper names. We'll soon be releasing a Study Guide for the book, which we hope will facilitate its use in small groups.



**Jan's Corner:** When I can, it's always good to get out on the road and travel with Bill to his speaking engagements. So last week I accompanied him to Boston where he spoke at the Faculty Club on Harvard's Campus and then the next night at MIT. Most might be nervous at such venues, but Bill always studies hard, is well prepared, and we never go alone—knowing the Truth is *always* with us. I usually expect Bill to do well, and I am never disappointed, and neither are others—whether they know him or not. The second night at MIT, I was seated between two professors—one from Harvard and the other from MIT. Bill was one of three speakers—the other two presenters were physicists teaching at Harvard. When Bill, who spoke last, was done with his presentation, the MIT professor leaned over to me and said, “Bill was the best presenter!” The Harvard professor on my left leaned my way and said, “That was really good! Bill was so clear and he spoke without notes!”

In these places of higher learning, especially Harvard, having been founded for the glory of the Lord, it is a privilege to be an ambassador for Him. Thank you for partnering with us in this most unique, strategic ministry.

“To God belong wisdom and power;  
counsel and understanding are his.” Job 12.13

**For Christ and His Kingdom,**

Bill & Jan

REASONABLE Faith