



THINKING POINTS

by Mickey Chiang

One of the most remarkable things that non-Christians find when they visit our churches is that Christians are a singing people. Half the Sunday worship service is devoted to singing hymns, carols, songs of praise, of thanksgiving and of worship, and even catchy childrens' songs, all related to God. Everyone sings, even the children. There is a lovely bouncy Indonesian Christian song that I love, about King Kong [the gorilla] having a big body and short legs, but even more strange are animals with a long neck and short legs. The song goes on to praise the almighty God who made all these wonderful creatures. All this singing can be a cultural shock to non-Christians, because in their religions it is only, or mainly, the priests or monks or clerics who sing, or chant.

Why do Christians sing so much? Well, we have of course the example set by Jesus. After the Last Supper, Jesus and eleven of his disciples, "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" [Matthew 26:30 and corroborated in Mark 14:26]. They sang....and it is comforting to remember, when we sing Christian songs, that we are connected to them in this special way.

But look at the Psalms. Weren't they religious songs too? Indeed they were. The psalms of King David are familiar to many of us. But the Psalms go back much further than King David. Take a look at the introductory remarks of Psalm 90, which says: "A prayer of Moses, the man of God". Man, that's a song that is some 3,500 years old! Believers of Yahweh have been singing to Him for at least that long, and probably much longer. How many human traditions have lasted that long?

Now, why do Christians sing? Apart from tradition, that is. Since we spend so much time learning Christian hymns and songs and singing them, it would be good to be clear about why we do it. And why we sing is put very appropriately in a song: Psalm 95.

Psalm 95 begins with an exhortation, "*Come let us sing for joy to the LORD!*" The underlying assumption in this is that we Christians would be full of joy, so much so that it comes flowing out of us as song. Before I became a born-again Christian sometime around 1980, my life was full of trouble, worries, sin, guilt and problems. However, after I came to know God in a new and personal way and to obey Him, I can honestly testify that I have never

been happier in my entire life than in these last 20 or 25 years. Sure, there have been some problems, but in comparison the joy has been overwhelming. So I sing, for joy, to my Lord. And I sing about Him so that my neighbours may know Him too. Call it Bathroom Evangelism.

Ps 95:1 continues: "*Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation!*" Isn't shouting already loud? Should we shout doubly loud? And what have we to shout about? I think the answer is in the key word "salvation". Salvation is the most precious gift anyone can give you, for it comes packaged with eternal life in Heaven, with God. It is worth more than all the diamonds and gold on earth, for all the material wealth and treasures of the earth cannot buy you eternal life through salvation by the Rock, that is, God. If you suddenly won not one but all the lotteries in this world, on the same day, would you not be dancing in the streets and shouting for joy?

Yet we hold our salvation, worth more than all the lottery prizes on earth, in such poor esteem that we do not shout for joy at our salvation when we are baptized. At the very most, we see some sheepish, or even happy, smiles. Where are the tears of joy and the spontaneous laughter and shouts of pure joy and the feasting? Perhaps pastors, elders and other church leaders have not been putting the matter of salvation in the correct light so that baptism candidates will realize the greatness of the wonderful gift of eternal life they are receiving. If so, churches may need to take the necessary steps. Then we will shout aloud to God for our salvation, worth more than diamonds or platinum or gold.

"Let us come before Him with thanksgiving", verse 2 urges. Think about it, don't we have *anything* to thank God for? Come to think of it, we have *everything* to thank God for. A few months ago, as I watched my mother lying in a hospice, unable to even drink, I realized how even the simple act of drinking without choking, without the water entering the lungs, is a gift from God. But because we do it everyday, we hardly ever think of it, and take it for granted. We practically never think of drinking as a miracle and a gift, which it is. We don't thank God for the ability to walk and run and jump--until we suffer a back problem and cannot even sit without pain. Every ability we have, every thing we own, everything we enjoy, they all come from God. We have so much to thank God for. In fact, we need to thank God for everything.

The second half of Ps 95:2 tells us one nice way in which we can thank God: "Extol Him with music and song", it says. And that is what we Christians do every Sunday, and hopefully, throughout the rest of the week as well, as we remember our almighty

God, and all that He is, all that He has done, and all that we owe Him.

COURSES COMMENCING IN TERM 3

- ◆ **Counsellor Development: Personal Framework for Biblical Counselling** (CO210, 3 credits), starting Jun 30. Lecturer: Mr Yam Keng Mun.
- ◆ **NT Greek II** (BG112, 3 credits, *video class*), starting Jul 2. Lecturer: Dr Quek Swee Hwa.
- ◆ **Greek Exegesis II** (BG212, 3 credits, *video class*), starting Jul 2. Lecturer: Dr Quek Swee Hwa.
- ◆ **Tentmaker & Ethical Issues (Tent module)**, Jul 5, 12, 19, 26; 7.30-9.30pm.
- ◆ **The Educational Ministry of the Church** (CE101, 3 credits), starting Jul 5 [new date]. Lecturer: Dr Ng Peh Cheng.
- ◆ **Biblical Hermeneutics & Interpretation** (HE101, 3 credits, *video class*), starting Jul 11. Lecturer: Dr Mark Chan. Facilitator: Dr Philip Satterthwaite.
- ◆ **NT Greek I** (BG111, 3 credits), starting Jul 14 [new date]. Lecturer: Dr Aquila Lee.
- ◆ **Interpreting Judges** (OT355, 1.5 credits), starting Jul 14. Lecturer: Dr Philip Satterthwaite.
- ◆ **Romans: The Gospel According to Paul** (NT311, 1.5 credits, with Chinese translation), starting Jul 18, 7.30-9.30pm, at Zion BP Church, 4 Bishan St 13, Room 302. Lecturer: Dr Quek Swee Hwa. Translator: Mr Yong Teck Meng.
- ◆ **The Christian Faith** (TS101, 3 credits, *video class*), starting Jul 23 [new date]. Lecturer: Dr Quek Swee Hwa.
- ◆ **Counselling Skills: Dealing with Stress & Fatigue** (CO232, 1.5 credits), starting Aug 10 [new date]. Lecturer: Mr Song Cheng Hock.
- ◆ **Theological Foundations II** (TS212, 3 credits, *video class*). Lecturer: Dr Douglas Milne. Facilitator: Dr Quek Swee Hwa. Dates will be announced. This is a required course for MDiv students.
- ◆ **A Philosophy of Christian Ministry** (CM101, 3 credits). Dates will be announced. This is a required course for MDiv students.

Intensive Courses

@ **Biblical Theology of Mission** (ME103, 3 credits) Dates: Jun 27 & 29, Jul 1, 4, 6, 8, 11 & 13
Time: 7.15 - 10.15pm.

@ **Asian Religions III** (ME357, 1.5 credits)
Dates: Jun 28, 30, Jul 5 & 7
Time: 7.15 - 10.15pm.
Guest Lecturer: Mr Martin Goldsmith

@ **Lessons From Mission History**
(ME326, 1.5 credits)
Dates: Jul 2 & 9; 2.30 - 5.30pm.
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Guest Lecturer: Mrs Elizabeth Goldsmith

@ **Culture Research** (ME257, 3 credits)
Dates: Jul 25, 27, 29, Aug 1, 3, 5; 7.15-10.15pm;
Jul 30 & Aug 6; 2.30-5.30pm.

@ **Leadership Through Writing**
(GS120, 1.5 credits)
Dates: Jul 26, 28, Aug 2, 4; 7.15-10.15pm.
Guest Lecturer: Dr Miriam Adeney

Call 62276815 or email bgst@pacific.net.sg to register
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NEWS BITS

1. **Logos Bible Software - Academic Discount Program for BGST Faculty, Staff and Students.**
Logos is offering Biblical Graduate School of Theology the largest discounts possible on the Series X Libraries: 50% off the normal price! This discount is only available at the website from May 20 - July 31, 2005. Thereafter the Academic Discount Program offer twice a year will be set at 40%. For more details, please email to Kok Weng at leongkw@bgst.edu.sg. To watch an online DEMO, go to : www.logos.com/demo
2. Chapel speaker on 29 June will be **Dr Steve Chang** from Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology in Seoul, Korea.

A Blessed Birthday to ...



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Dr Ng Peh Cheng 29/6
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Mr Walter Edman 2/7
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