

Make a Stand, not an Issue

Many arguments have been made on both sides of the casino issue. There was one letter in the Forum pages that drew my attention. The writer mentioned that gambling is an addiction and those who are addicted cannot actually control themselves.

This to me is the most fearful thing about gambling. If taking drugs would not cause you to be an addict, I am sure that it would be legalized. But the government knows that one can be addicted to drugs and cause many social and health concerns and so wisely made laws to prevent drug abuse.

However, I presume that the government does not view gambling as addictive and believe that gamblers can control their risk-taking

desires, thus their obvious stand on the casino issue.

A search on the Internet reveals that addiction arises out of a “feel good right now” mentality. In other words, the person is addicted to having an immediate “high” or “kick” from the activity, whether it is drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sex or gambling.

Thus the argument that gambling already exists in Singapore in the forms of TOTO or 4D may not be relevant because there is usually a time delay before getting the results. However in casino games, whether jackpot, blackjack or roulette, the result is immediate. You place the bet and you know the result immediately making you want to place the next bet and the next.

The National Council of Churches has made a stand against having a casino in



Singapore. Cain actually asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9) Are you going to wash you hands of this issue? Are we prepared for the backlash of gamblers who run into problems with loansharks approaching the church

for help? We'd better take our stand now and save ourselves and our fellow man from future problems that may be beyond our ability to help.

Pray that God will give the new government wisdom in making the right decision for our future.

Martin Cheah

Some interesting observations from Gamblers Anonymous website:

What are some characteristics of a person who is a compulsive gambler?

1. INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT REALITY. Hence the escape into the dream world of gambling.
2. EMOTIONAL INSECURITY. A compulsive gambler finds he or she is emotionally comfortable only when "in action". It is not uncommon to hear a Gamblers Anonymous member say: "The only place I really felt like I belonged was sitting at the poker table. There I felt secure and comfortable. No great demands were made upon me. I knew I was destroying myself, yet at the same time, I had a certain sense of security."
3. IMMATURITY. A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems to be the common character pattern of problem gamblers. Many Gamblers Anonymous members accept the fact that they were unwilling to grow up. Subconsciously they felt they could avoid mature responsibility by wagering on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card, and so the struggle to escape responsibility finally became a subconscious obsession.

Why can't a compulsive gambler simply use will power to stop gambling?

We believe that most people, if they are honest, will recognize their lack of power to solve certain problems. When it comes to gambling, we have known many problem gamblers who could abstain for long stretches, but caught off guard and under the right set of circumstances, they started gambling without thought of the consequences. The defenses they relied upon, through will power alone, gave way before some trivial reason for placing a bet. We have found that will power and self-knowledge will not help in those mental blank spots, but adherence to spiritual principles seem to solve our problems. Most of us feel that a belief in a Power greater than ourselves is necessary in order for us to sustain a desire to refrain from gambling.



NOT BY INTELLIGENCE ALONE!

First of all, I would like to tell you that a UFO flew over my house last week. It was shaped like a round disc with some jagged edges. Its flickering lights made it a beautiful sight.

You don't believe? It is ok; at least I have got your attention. ☺ Anyway, I don't expect you to believe. In fact, intelligent people do not simply believe whatever they pick up with their six senses. It is true - even our eyes can deceive. Without walking in a hot desert to see mirages, optical illusions are quite common in people's ordinary encounters with WYSINWIR (What You See Is Not What Is Real). Albeit seemingly unbelievable, you can believe that **a person of sound mind** can tell you seriously that he sees a woman in white floating in the air and a dead corpse in his living room when there is none. Less scary, perhaps, if he tells you that he sees birds and buildings in front of him when you do not see any. **It would have nothing to do with your eyes having some problem or his mind going nuts.** It could simply be due to his eyes suffering from some visual problems that lead to the rare medical condition called Charles Bonnet's Syndrome, which causes him to see the 'unseeable'. He doesn't have to be sent to a psychiatrist. He only needs to see an ophthalmologist to have his visual problems treated.

To believe or disbelieve hinges on the existence of a truth to be uncovered and falsehoods to be expelled. However, interest over the truth often wanes in the course of time after the initial fervour. As the Chinese movie "Al 头条" purports to portray, the reality of life is such that in the unfolding of events, people chase after news to seek the truth; but for all that people do as the heaven watches, the truth is nowhere to be found – only headlines!

Man may qualify as the most intelligent creature on Earth; yet, he has not known enough of his intelligence. From historical foundations (Plato, Aristotle) to current efforts (Robert Sternberg, Arthur Jensen), the studies continue. We don't need sophisticatedly calibrated studies, just plain daily experiences and common sense, to tell us that our intelligence is very limited. How else can we explain our frequent uncertainties about truths and falsehoods? We think of ourselves as

intelligent, but we often get cheated not merely by our acceptance of falsehoods as truths, but also by our rejections of truths as falsehoods. The following are a few facts that man is now intelligent enough to accept, but would regard as impossible were he to be transported back to the time when he was still ignorant:

- A 100 000-tonne object can float in the sea but a 1-kg weight will sink.
- Matter can expand at lower temperature and contract at higher temperature. (E.g. water expands at 0° C and contracts slightly above that temperature.)
- While water exists in three different states at three different temperatures, it is possible for the three states to co-exist in equilibrium at a single temperature point, called the triple-point.

While the list is not exhaustive, it still shows clearly that at some points in time, there were a lot of things man would think as impossible but now his intelligence “catches up” and he knows very well that they are possible. What is “present” was once “the future” and will become our “past”. Does human intelligence enable us to know the future with certainty? Our knowledge may grow, and what we deem as absolutely impossible will turn out to be unmistakable possibilities whereby our great power of hindsight will put our once-boasted foresight to shame. So what are you to believe and what not? Can you trust your intelligence?

You can trust your intelligence, but never 100%. You can safely believe in the incredulity of my story about the UFO flying over my house. If I tell you that **a chicken with its head chopped off may still walk about and live**, you can choose to call for my head to be examined; but, then, be prepared to be humbled by your belief in your intelligence vis-à-vis my ‘craziness’. In disbelieving me on the headless-chicken-still-able-to-survive claim, you prove the point that what is apparently a flawless application of your intelligence is never failsafe. In fact, it actually happened on a day in 1945 that a chicken with its head totally amputated survived to walk about as any other chicken, live and be fed for eighteen months, because by chance its brain stem remained intact. This was a true happening, not fiction!

(<http://www.miketheheadlesschicken.org/index.htm>)

Certainly, the headless-chicken disbelief on your part is harmless, not a big deal. Nevertheless, for every such matter that is of no great concern, how many consequential issues could there be that escape our intelligence to our peril? Physical realities are just one aspect of the universe for us to contemplate. If even these physical realities alone are beyond the limits of our intelligence to behold, how else can we hope to fathom the other dimensions? If we cannot visualize the space-time connection in Einstein's theory of relativity, no wonder we have a big headache trying to understand how opposites can co-exist in harmony.

You have already been introduced to the fact and an example that if matter exists in different states at different temperatures, the three states can still occur at the same time and the same temperature. In the aftermath of the tsunami, you must also have heard enough the question about God and the problem of evil. In other words, if God is good and all-controlling of the universe, why would he permit the tragedy? Conversely, does such malevolence of nature not point to the "fact" that God is either "not good" or "not almighty"? How can a good God and the presence of evil be concurrent? These are age-old questions that any amount of reasoning will never satisfy. Reasoning, necessarily by the application of intelligence that we ought to acknowledge having only a little of it, can never be adequate. The proof is in the numerous simpler stuffs that humble people can easily acknowledge having been floored by their intellectual reckonings. The inadequacy of our reasoning or intellectual power to satisfy, or the absence of a vivid answer for us to still our mind, does not automatically nullify the harmony of opposites (or contradictions) in life. Revd Dr Schroeder (who visited us in March last year) wrote thus:

"...I need to talk to more people and have them tell me what's Good and New about Jesus for folks hooked on "harmony" as the way of salvation. Diagnostically, of course, disharmony is the malady but, as I learned from my class that evening, there is no God-factor in the mix. Instead, the cosmic reality is bi-polar. Opposites abound throughout the universe and within each human being."

Being hooked on "harmony" was my bane, and is the bane of many, in obstructing the acceptance of the biblical truths. I demanded absolute clarity in order to believe and, since such clarity was never found to be existent in the cosmic reality, I rejected Christ until it dawned on me that I had to deviate

from my search path paved by logic and driven by brainpower alone. It was finally a path paved by both reason and faith that led me to behold the validity of the Gospel even though I might still not fully comprehend it. Comprehending and yet not comprehending – diametrically opposite sensations of the Gospel message; bipolar, yet fully in harmony with God’s way for His cosmos. Predestination (God’s will) and election (man’s choice) also frequently trouble our minds for their apparent dissonance, but in a way we could actually behold the two blending nicely in the birth of Jesus. It was man’s choice (by way of the Roman census) that saw the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and not anywhere else; and it was still the will of God, as was foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (See Micah 5:2 and check out other prophecies concerning Christ in the OT.)

In the article “The Cosmic Adventure: Science, Religion and the Quest for Purpose”

(<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1948&C=1818>), John F. Haught stated perfectly the cosmic reality that people often dismiss in favour of their own limited logical discernment:

1. *The search for clarity has been one of the obsessions of modern thought. On the surface this concern for clarity seems innocent enough. In fact it even appears noble.*
2. *However, the ideal of clarity is only a relative and not an absolute good. There are certain contexts where clarity is obtrusively out of place, and where the demand for absolute clarity is an obstacle to the growth of the mind and the promotion of life. It is a characteristic of wisdom to be able to distinguish between those areas where clarity is required and those where it would be a clumsy intruder.*
3. *The matter of clarity vs. obscurity may also be approached from the point of view of Whitehead’s philosophy of perception. (Note: Whitehead, Process and Reality) One of the most important axioms that I have found in Whitehead’s thought is that those things which are most clear and distinct are not necessarily the most real.*

I see in our daily dreams (when we sleep) a parallel with the last point above mentioned by John F. Haught. What pass through our minds in our dreams always seem very real. Have you ever experienced dreams within dreams, or layered dreams? I do frequently. For example, in a dream the

happenings and the scenes all seem to be very clear and real, but not to my liking; so I tell myself “Oh, it is just a dream” and try to wake myself out of it, only to find out later that I was actually in another dream dreaming of myself making the effort to wake myself up from the first dream. Sounds complicated, but such has been my real experiences of multi-layered dreams in which the unreal events, though incredible or impossible, all seem to be logically compelling until finally and actually waking up. What if as I am writing this article and telling myself that I am fully awake, it turns out that I am actually in a dream? ☺

God tells what the kingdom of heaven is like – a mustard seed, “which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.” (Matt. 13:31)

We are further told, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matt. 17:20)

God never tells us to abandon the intelligence that He has bestowed on us, so we need not be so foolish as to do so. But since God tells us the significant impact that faith like a mustard seed can have in our life, should we be so foolish as to ignore it in favour of a total embrace of intelligence alone? One day, when we hear of the ground somewhere suddenly opening up a sinkhole 1 km deep, we don’t need to query God about how and why it happens; we just need to know that it can happen and so it happens. Similarly, we need not be perplexed with news of a whole mountain having shifted position by hundreds of metres or a whole island being thrown into the sea (all literally)! How about the Earth being speeded up, slowed down or adjusted in some way in its orbit?

One more example: Mt Vesuvius split open in 79 A.D., burying the whole town of Pompeii in ash and preserving it almost intact (down to an oven with loaves of bread) for nearly 1600 years until its discovery by archaeologists. It was a demonstration of both the destructive power of nature and its protective power at work simultaneously.

In a lot of things, we don’t have to understand the HOWs or WHYs in order to believe, but we can apply the faith of a mustard seed and accept that they CAN BE. While we do not have adequate mental capacity for reason, the complement of faith will fulfill our needs to grasp what we behold and be

assured that our Father in heaven has oversight of all happenings. Let's read this passage from Habakkuk 2:4-5:

*“See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright –
but the righteous will live by his faith –
indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest.
Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied ...”*

It makes me think of the arrogance of man. Puffed up by his sense of intellectual greatness, he sees himself as the centre of the universe. In reality, his intelligence is but a sluggish mess that does not reach beyond a small circle; but, being intoxicated by overblown pride due to all his boasted achievements in science and technology, he happily lives in his delusional world, though never satisfied, as he puts God aside.

I also recall the story in Genesis 3 about how Eve was beguiled into eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and led Adam into the same folly. Alas, knowledge of their nakedness came upon them and they became ashamed and guilt-conscious when, in the beginning, it was all well with them without such knowledge! In today's world, as man is wont to celebrate his intelligence measured by the exponential growth of his knowledge spanning the distance from quarks to quasars, have we become better off being inundated by avalanche after avalanche of information with every purported leap in knowledge? Do we end up breathing more life-giving cool fresh air or does our life become more sizzling (and challenging?) being engulfed by hot steam in a pressure cooker? The more knowledge we have of new technologies or discoveries, the more ignorant and susceptible we become to new viruses of both the computer and biological kinds, just to give a proof positive of how we can succumb whereupon our knowledge is of little use. What a contradiction it is that man wears the title as the most intelligent creature with the most knowledge among all creatures, yet he is often found to be no match to the littlest and most non-intelligent individual – a virus that is just a molecule!

People who place too much faith in their intelligence instead of faith in God will one day find God astounding them with wonder upon wonder; “the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.” (Isa 29:14) So much for the value of human intelligence that there are people who would lay their whole life on!

John Lee

What is Missions? (And why does it matter?)

by David Mays, APMC

Some of the results of marginalization and dilution of missions may be observed as follows. Look down through the list below and check those things that may be occurring in your church.

- ❖ There is no clear understanding or appreciation of what a missionary is or does. A missionary can be and do anything.

- ❖ There is no career path to become a missionary.

- ❖ Individuals see themselves as missionaries when they serve or witness in their own culture.

- ❖ Individuals who have little training or experience believe they are serving as a missionary when they go on mission trips or get involved in local same culture ministries.

- ❖ Prospective missionaries assume they can go serve Christ effectively in other cultures with little preparation and experience.

- ❖ Missions funds are increasingly allocated where the greatest resources are already available.

- ❖ The proportion of church resources being used for local, same culture ministry expands as the missions budget is tapped.

- ❖ Social ministries are considered missions, whether or not there is a clear spiritual component.

- ❖ Church leaders assume they are investing more to reach the world

(based on the size of the missions budget) than they actually are.

- ❖ Our resources and attention are dispersed over such a broad territory that it is difficult to see progress anywhere.

- ❖ Because we see little progress, our church leaders may question the value, effectiveness, and priority of doing missions.

- ❖ Church leaders see the missions budget as a miscellaneous budget (because of the conglomeration of ministries) and subconsciously reduce its priority in favor of clear church purposes.

- ❖ The missions budget is a convenient source of funding projects and ministries leaders want to support but don't want to pay for from other budget categories.

- ❖ The congregation's commitment to global missions fades because of a weak and fuzzy image of missions.

Steps for Change:

Small step: Define missions. Draw boundaries around it. Put same culture ministries and social ministries in separate categories and fund and resource them separately so that it is clear what the church is doing with its resources.

Large step: Establish God's glory in all the earth as the overarching goal of the church and reform and redirect all ministries and programs to contribute to this greater goal.

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. Genesis 12 : 2

OUR YOUNG MISSIONARIES

Chih Qiang



I am excited for this trip because I will be reaching out to the Chinese in East Asia using the Chinese language and it will be my first time going overseas in my entire life! I can see that the Christians in East Asia have expanded and are expanding! I would want to reach out to the Chinese in East Asia so that they can share their Faith boldly to their families, neighbours and friends and be the Salt & Light God has chosen them to be. My main objective is to be a blessing to them, sharing Christ to them with Love and Joy and in return I will be blessed through them also. My greatest challenge is to remember and memorise the 4

Spiritual Laws that I will be sharing to the Chinese in East Asia and after the trip, to use what I have learnt to share the gospel to my family.

Joshua Lee

My reason for going for Gen12ii mission project is that I want to respond to the calling for labourers. As in Matt 9:37, it said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." My respond to this is that I hope to fill up the vacancies which God has set aside for us. I trust God that He will work through me; so I am willing to be part of this project, to be a labourer who sows the seed and reaps the harvest for Christ. God has shown his compassion to us through Jesus, and I have the desire to bring a message of hope to a searching world which is lost in sin, just that we were once lost, but now am found by Him. So when we share the gospel, we will win hungry souls for Christ.

" Why do I choose East Asia? " God has chosen me to go to this place. I think we should not limit our distance to share the love of God. As we are being made the light because of Jesus, we should go to every part or even to the end of the world, to bring light to the darkness. China is very different from Singapore, in terms of population, language and even living conditions. I need

to challenge myself to go outside our comfort zone to this faraway place, which is unfamiliar, unpredictable and unusual, to share the love of God.

Zhenglin



Even though Australia seems to be a Christian country, spiritually they are declining and most of their churches are quite 'dull' and mostly populated by the older generations. Our main focus of the trip is not the Australians. We will be targeting the international students in 1 or 2 campuses in Monash University.

Actually after missing the Gen12 last year, God has really encouraged me to go for one this year, and somehow I was also hoping to go to Australia. As such, I was very excited when I found out that there is this trip this year, and this is also the first time that there is an Australian trip in Gen 12. After praying for some time, it seems that God really wants me to go for a mission trip and also give me this chance to go Australia, so I signed up for it.

Stephanie Yeo



Reaching out to other nations has always been my passion and I am glad to be part of the Gen12ii project again. The difference from the last trip I went is that I will be co-leading the team instead of just being a participant. It will be another level of discipleship process for me, and I'm looking forward to all the planning we are doing now. I also hope to see students rise up to be future leaders through this mission trip. Actually, East Asia was not my choice in the Gen12ii project. I wanted to join the Pavement Project to reach out to street kids. However, the leadership team in

Campus Crusade decided to place me in East Asia as it will be a better exposure for me. Though I was disappointed in the beginning, God taught me a precious lesson through it. Basically, I will feel more adequate leading the team for the Pavement Project than for the other because I have more passion for street kids. However, God showed me that adequacy comes from Him alone and not myself. Not only that, He showed me that it is not about where I want to go, but where He wants me to go.

It was a humbling process and that helps me to see things in another perspective. I thank God for putting me in the East Asia team now as I am excited to reach His people who are more ready to receive the gospel but have not heard of it.



Samuel Tay



Missions have always been on my heart. My trip to Mongolia in June 2004 has allowed me to draw close to God in a much more experiential way than throughout my years of Christian life. The experience from the trip has also given me a changed perspective of life issues surrounding me. I want to be ready to answer God's call to me. "Here I am, send me"... I am also exploring the possibility of serving full time in a ministry when I graduate, and I believe the experience from these short-term trips will provide me the skills and exposure should I decide to pursue theological training in future.

Selling Pepsi

This morning when I drove into church there was a big Pepsi truck out front with its big red, white and blue logo. When I saw it, I assumed there was a Pepsi man inside, refilling the 5 new Pepsi machines that were installed last Friday.

Last weekend was Dedication Weekend for our new Church building and community center. There was an open house, a dedication service, Sunday morning activities and a huge concert on Sunday night. Perhaps total attendance reached nearly 4000 people.

I thought about the eight years of church start up in rented facilities, the energy expended to accumulate 600 plus people to form the nucleus of the new church, the time and effort and funding to design and build a big building, and the personnel and planning and administration it will take to develop and maintain a community center to influence this neighborhood for Christ.

And then I see one lone Pepsi guy trucking in crates of cola.

Pepsi didn't build the building or do the advertising or line up the speakers or learn the music or provide crowd control or clean up the mess. All they did was bring in the Cola. And the church provided the forum to expose 4000 people (or maybe 2000 people twice) to Pepsi.

It occurred to me that it's great to have a portable product like Pepsi, where you can do centralized advertising to represent all the bottling plants and all the sales reps

and then just send one man around to all the forums of life to offer the product. How much more efficient than if Pepsi had to build buildings and develop programs of music and athletics and recruit crowds in competition with every other stadium and music hall and program in life in order to deliver their product. It would take a long time to make a Pepsi drinker out of every human on earth if they had to get them into stadiums to experience their product!

Maybe the church could adopt some form of the Pepsi method. We could offer the services of itinerant chaplains who would provide Christian counsel for troubled workers. Or perhaps some church people could actually become employees of the various secular institutions to offer our product in their venue on an ongoing basis.

It makes me wonder if the church should consider offering chaplain service to all the local organizations and businesses. Every kind of human institution has personnel problems - weaknesses, failures, conflicts, and dysfunctions. Some have gone to the trouble to hire chaplains on staff. Maybe they would be open to calling on our church for chaplain service.

Going one step further, perhaps they would hire church people (Christians) to come work in their facilities as regular employees. These people could be the church's inside "Pepsi man" for those institutions. Perhaps the church's product could be effectively delivered in that manner.

Resurrection? Prove It to Me

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

"Raised from the dead? Sure. Right." That's how Thomas might have responded if he had lived in the 1990s. "*Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.*"(John 20:25) He'd seen dead people before. And Jesus was dead. He sounds like sophisticated rationalists of the Twentieth Century. "It isn't plausible," they would contend. "It didn't happen."

But what if it did happen?

Thomas was convinced when Jesus appeared to him, reached out his hands to Thomas, and said, "Put your finger here."

Thomas dropped to his knees. "*My Lord and my God!*" (John 20:27-28)

It was self-hypnosis, you counter. The disciples wanted to believe that their Lord was not dead, so they just invented it out of whole cloth.

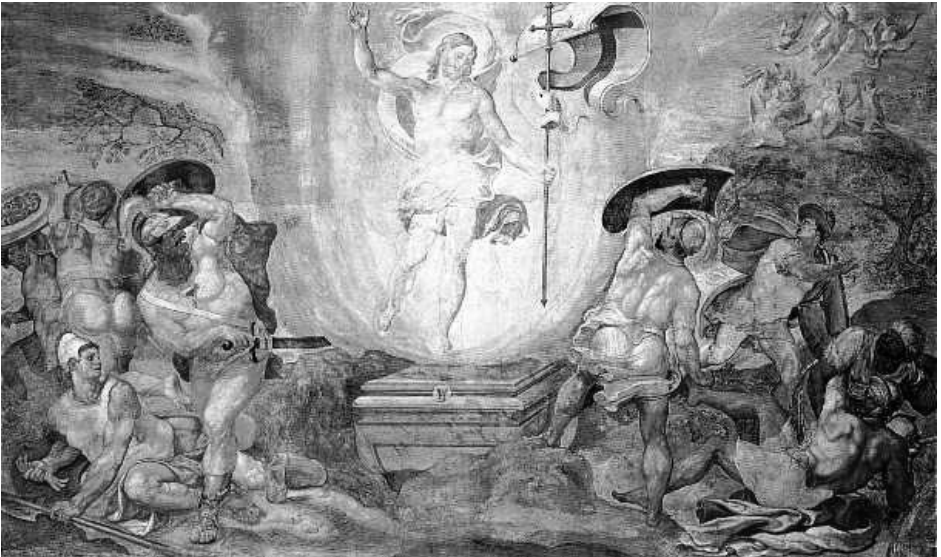
Really? Let's look at some of the evidence.

- First, Jesus' body was missing. If the Jews could have found it, they could have stilled the preaching of Jesus' resurrection that filled Jerusalem. But they could not.
- Next, the body wasn't stolen. The Romans had no motive. The Jews

had no motive. Ah-ha, you say, the disciples stole it. There is the matter of the Roman guards, and the disciples' initial disbelief when the women brought them the news early that Easter morning. This brings me to my third point.

- If the disciples had stolen the body, you wouldn't expect them to risk their lives. People don't die for what they know is not true. But the disciples put their lives on the line, and nearly all were eventually martyred for their faith. They certainly believed it.
- Followers of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem grew from a few dozen to thousands upon thousands soon after Jesus' resurrection. They believed it was true.
- Even contemporary documents refer to the event. Thallus the Samaritan, Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny contain references to Jesus. Jewish historian Josephus writes about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. They knew something had happened.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is actually more plausible than any other explanation. That's why we Christians make such a big deal



about Easter. That's why we celebrate.

Jesus' resurrection means that death is not the end. That though my body may lie moldering in the ground, Jesus, whom the Father raised from the dead, gives me eternal life. Ultimately, we Christians believe, our bodies, too, will be raised from the dead.

And since Jesus is not dead, people can encounter him today. You can know him through a personal relationship. I could point to lots of people who can testify what Jesus has done in their lives to bring them from the brink of disaster to peace and meaning and joy. He changes people for good.

If you're not sure can't really say you've met this risen Jesus, this Easter Sunday why don't you slip

into church to seek him. And perhaps in the midst of our celebration, you'll find him for yourself.

He's alive, you know. That's what Easter is all about!

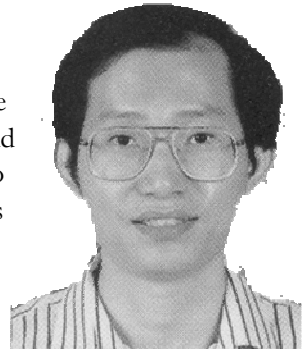
Error in The Vine

In the last issue of The Vine, I wrote that Christmas "was actually a pagan festival in the beginning". That statement is not correct. Pastor Samuel says that Christmas was a reaction against a pagan festival celebration established by the Roman Emperor Aurelian in 174 CE. The Roman Church set up their own celebration to prevent the faithful (the "people in the pews") from attending pagan sun-god celebrations. Christmas is a supplanting of the pagan festival, the church wanted to have Christmas so that Christians celebrate Christ and not the Sun.

PRAYER REQUEST

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Pastor Tan Juak How (Yishun Christian Church Chinese Section) was diagnosed with stomach cancer last year and after treatment was better. However, last week he had to go back for chemotherapy and it was discovered that his cancer cells had spread to the lungs. Medically he is in a critical condition, the cancer had spread all over and the doctors are not able to do anything. Now we are only able to pray and call on God to do a miraculous healing.



I knew him when he was serving in Bedok Lutheran Church Chinese Section. He is soft spoken and is married to a gentle sister from Bedok, who was from the English section, Mui Thiam. Pastor Tan suffered his battle with cancer quietly and not many people knew about it.

1. Please pray for Pastor Tan's recovery and if God willing to give him more years on earth.
2. Pray for Mui Thiam and her 3 children, ranging from primary to secondary school age (one of them is autistic).

Let us remember Pastor Tan as we fast and pray for him this Lent season.

Peace,

Pastor Samuel Wang

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. James 5:15

News from Thailand

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Blessed greetings in our Lord Jesus' Name!

It has been more than a month since the tsunami unleashed her rage in the Andaman coast. Although life may never be the same again for those affected by this disaster, life still will go on. There is hardly anyone who does not know someone, whether they are a friend or acquainted with their families who has died or been affected by the tsunami. Three of my Thai language teachers went to Phuket during the December holidays. All three were saved but one of them lost a mother to the waves.

Here in Thailand, the process of identifying the bodies, both foreign and local of those killed by the tidal waves is still being carried out. Many are still digging and clearing out rubbles to see if there are corpses underneath. The Thai authorities have erected a wall of remembrance in Phuket in memory of those killed by the waves. To-date, the figures show more than 5,000 people dead and more than 3,000 people still missing. While many hospitals in Bangkok have posted pictures of those still missing, many people I have spoken to have said it is unlikely they will be found alive or that their bodies will be recovered. But for some families, hope is all that they have in finding their loved ones either dead or alive. As a people belonging to the Lord, we have a sure hope that we will be with Christ when we leave this world. This is the assurance that we have in the Lord as He has promised us. While we may not understand why this happened, believers know that God is still in control over His creation.

Praise the Lord the exams equivalent to the Primary 6 level is over. About 200 students sat for this exam which is held once a year in December. The result, however, will be out at the end of January 2005. I felt such a sense of relief after the exam is over. I did have the opportunity to go back home for a short break at the end of the year enjoying time with family and friends. Next week I will take up the Bible Module. This will help me to know some of the biblical terminology.

I am now assigned to Ladprao Lutheran church. The church was established 21 years ago and has a membership of 200 although active worshippers number to 30 on Sundays. Neighbourhood children made up the Sunday school and there is Bible Study before worship on Sundays. There are 2 co-workers in Ladprao – Ps Preeda, who is the resident pastor and Jukka, who is a Finnish missionary. Basically, Preeda does everything. The church also employs Noi, who comes 3 times a week, taking care of the church as well as

visiting members. Together with Preeda and Noi, I've gone on many visitations to church members' homes and had the opportunity to witness a house blessing as well. And once a week, we visit the neighbourhood people, evangelising.

At the moment, I am still observing Ps. Preeda in his ministries and getting to know the church members. There are no ministries during the week, only visitations. Yesterday, we met 2 teenagers (twins) who wanted to believe in Christ. They read about Christ in a book called 'Phalang Chiwit' (Power of Life) which is given free to anyone who wants a life change in their lives. They seemed eager to want to know more about Christ. We talked, prayed and encouraged them to come to church. We also gave them a little book explaining more about Christ.

There are still many things that need sorting out in this church. One is to revive back the youth ministry and the women's ministry. Another area is to train worship leaders and encourages members to take up the challenge to teach in Sunday School. At the moment, we have only Yiam, a Bible student who is doing his Field Education in Ladprao. Ps Preeda however, have tendered his resignation, as he wants to further his studies and spend more time with his family.

As of February 2005, I've been given the responsibility of being LCS (Lutheran Church in Singapore) Field Representative in Thailand, as Rev. Terry Kee will be away to further his studies.

Please pray for: -

1. Ladprao will have a national co-worker
2. Preeda and his family as they prepare to leave for the province in mid February.
3. Tong and Toi, the twin sisters, that the Word of God be rooted in their hearts.
4. The spiritual life of church members. Pray for a visitation from the Lord in their lives.
5. Strength and His protection as I travel each day to Ladprao.
6. Wisdom in planning and carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to me.

Serving Him

Rosanna Hutagalung

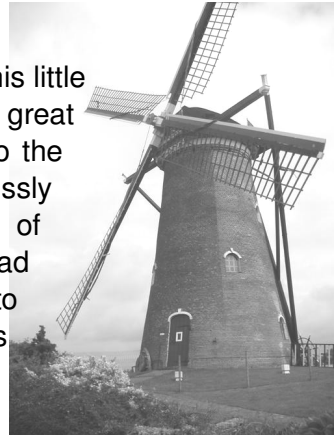
Thailand, 29th January 2005

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WINDMILLS OF THE MIND

This is a story of a little Dutch boy. This little boy's home was on a dike in Holland, near a great windmill, whose long arms swept so close to the ground as to endanger those who carelessly strayed under them. But he was very fond of playing under this mill. His anxious parents had forbidden him to go near it; and had sought to frighten him away from it by arousing his imagination to the terror of being struck by the arms and carried up into the air to have life beaten out of him by their ceaseless strokes.



One day, heedless of their warning, he strayed under the dangerous arms, and was soon absorbed in his play there—forgetful of everything but his present pleasures. Perhaps he was half conscious of a breeze springing up. At any rate, suddenly, as he played, he was violently smitten from behind, and found himself swung all at once, with his head downward, up into the air; and then the blows came, swift and hard!

O what a sinking of the heart! O what a horror of great darkness! It had come then! And he was gone! In his terrified writhing, he twisted himself about, and looking up, saw not the sky above him, but his father's face. At once he realized that he was not caught in the mill, but was only receiving the threatened punishment of his disobedience. He melted into tears, not of pain, but of relief and joy. In that moment, he understood the difference between falling into the grinding power of a machine and into the loving hands of a father.

That is the difference between fate and predestination.

PALM SUNDAY REFLECTIONS

Yesterday, while waving the palm branch, I felt a little embarrassed that a grown adult should be doing such an act. I believe that if you gave a palm branch to a child, he would wave it with so much enthusiasm that it would put all the adults to shame. Adults tend to rationalize and theologize everything until they lose the simple innocence of a child, which was commended by Jesus in Matthew 18:3, *"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Another thought came to my mind. What if we were in a Communist country and waving palms would land us in jail? Would we still dare to wave the palm branches? Since we are in a peaceful country which allows us to worship God in this manner, and we are in the company of the saints, why not? With these thoughts in mind, I held the palm branch in my hand and waved it, although rather weakly.

As we grow older, we tend to lose the innocence of a little child and the 'gung ho' attitude of a youth. As I see the five missionary candidates sharing their vision, I realize that the fire in me has dimmed or even died down. I have lost the desire to go out into the world, to bring the good news to the lost. What's left for me to do is to provide support for those who are still on fire for the Lord.



I pray that we will keep the fire burning for these young people.

Money is a major need but not the only way to support them. They will also need Moral Support; Logistics Support; Prayer Support and Communication Support.

Probably the only point here that needs a little clarification is Communication Support. By this I

mean that you can write to them, talk with them, in other words, lend them a listening ear. Share some of their burdens with them.

Martin Cheah.