



# A Vision For Our Times

*By Rev Dr Mark Chan*

**I**mages are powerful. They capture our attention. Once we have seen something, it is hard to un-see it and flush the picture out of our mind. As the philosopher Wittgenstein observes, “a picture holds us captive.” Images captivate.

Marketers know this. Push a picture into the heads of people, and you are halfway to winning the battle for attention. Advertisers spend big bucks to conjure up alluring images to seduce consumers into parting with their money. Images persuade.

Modern day terrorists too know the power of the image, and they exploit it for their wicked ends. It is not enough that they mutilate and decapitate; they make sure that their sick acts of violence are uploaded on social media for the world to see. A picture is worth a thousand words, we are told. An image of terror is apparently worth a whole lot more. Who can forget those horrifying images of airplanes ploughing into skyscrapers?

Visions of terror are not the only ones that trouble us. We are haunted by the doleful eyes of starving kids on television. We are greeted by images

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of drowning refugees, traumatised citizens, bombed-out cities, angry mobs, melting glaciers, smog-covered metropolises, and so on.

Graphics of bleak economic forecasts and signboards of businesses going bust depress both the markets and our spirits. Our anxiety level shoots up as the economic outlook nosedives. What we see affects how we feel.

And it disturbs us to see crude and crooked politicians outdoing each other to see how low they can sink to get to the highest office. It makes you wonder how safe our world really is when people with big egos and bankrupt morals get their hands on the levers of power. The prognosis is not exactly cheery.

Pictures of gloom and doom attack our senses and assault our sensibilities. Even a cursory look at the world today gives us reasons to despair. Anguish mounts as we ponder the dangers unleashed by human folly. It seems like our world is careening hopelessly out of control.

But is it?

If all we see are death, doom and destruction, and if salvation depends on people making sane decisions, then yes, we have every reason to be despondent. But as followers of Christ, we do not merely take our cues from what our eyes tell us. Rather, we look at life from the standpoint of what God has revealed.

If any picture should hold us captive in our troubling times, it is the vision John was given in Revelation 4 and 5. At the outset of this book written to Christians in trying times, we are ushered along with John into the heavenly throne room. The curtains of time and space are drawn back, as it were, and we are given a dazzling vision of God upon His throne.

Glittering gemstones, lightning flashes, thunder claps, fire-blazing torches, prostrating elders in white robes with their golden crowns, and fantastic flying creatures with all-seeing eyes greet us in this kaleidoscopic and awe-inspiring spectacle. The stunning visuals are matched by the sonorous song of praise that resonates around the throne: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev 4:8).

This vision comes before the vivid descriptions of cataclysmic upheavals, political convulsions and worldly carnage. It invites John (and the modern reader) to look beyond the intimidating realities of life to see our majestic God on His throne. This is not a preview of something that will happen one day in the future; it is about God's supremacy right now in the present.

Such a vision is sorely needed today to steel our nerves. In a world rocking from political unrests and

violent outbreaks, God remains firmly on His throne, in charge and in command. Through the eyes of faith, we see the calming and controlling hand of God in the midst of the chaos of life.

The words of an old chorus come to mind: "God is still on the throne/and He will remember His own/ Though trials may press us and burdens distress us/He never will leave us alone." Or as another hymn-writer puts it: "Under the shadow of Thy throne, thy saints have dwelt secure." Here is a powerful antidote to the fears that grip us. In this we take heart.

We can take heart because the God enthroned in heaven is also the God who is at work on earth. He is not the detached deity of the deists. He upholds creation and gets himself redemptively entangled with the human race. First with Abraham and Israel, and then at the Incarnation and on Calvary.

Christmas and Good Friday are more than just holiday interludes. They point to historical events that are the means by which God redresses all that is wrong with the world. And that divine work of restoration is centred in Jesus Christ.

John saw in his vision, "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). At the heart of the throne of God is the Lamb of God slain for the sin of the world. This is the grand paradox at the very heart of the universe: the sovereign God who rules over all

is also in a profound sense the Crucified One on the cross! The coming together of throne and cross spells the defeat of the sinful creaturely uprising against the authority of God.

In John's vision, "before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal" (Rev 4:6). To the ancients, the raging sea with its churning waves is home to malevolent forces. The vision of a crystal-like sea of glass before God's throne points powerfully to the vanquishing and stilling of all the forces of rebellion.

To see the world for what it is, we need to appraise it from the perspective of the throne of God and the cross of Christ. May this picture of God triumphant hold us captive and steady our hearts! ❖



**Rev Dr Mark Chan**  
Director, Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia (CSCA)  
Lecturer in Theology

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## Co-dependence and Collaboration the Way Forward

At the 68th Anniversary Thanksgiving Dinner of our college on 7 October, I shared with the gathering that theological education in the West is facing difficult times. Student enrolment has been falling over the years, impacting the financial viability of smaller theological schools or seminaries (used interchangeably), which are now exploring several options for their future. Some are stepping up online degree programmes and downsizing their faculty to reduce costs, while others are considering merging with another seminary. In fact, the oldest theological institution in the United States will be closing its doors this year.

Those involved in theological education know that the survival of seminaries is often related to the state of the church. When the church is healthy and growing, so will seminaries. Much has been written in the West about the aging population in the pews, whose numbers have not been renewed by new or younger worshippers. When church membership declines, it has direct bearing on the student enrolment of the seminary because of fewer employment opportunities in church ministries. When the decline is not reversed, more seminaries will have to face re-structuring or cease operations.

It is clear, therefore, that the partnership between church and theological school is an intimate one, which may be described as co-dependent. When the church is vibrant and growing, it will necessarily require more of its members to be trained for full-time Christian service. Thus, the role of the seminary is first and foremost to nurture the spiritual life and to focus on vocational formation through its curriculum and community life. In that sense, theological institutions exist to serve the church in fulfilling its mission.

Correspondingly, when the seminary trains students well, and they graduate to serve as clergy persons or pastoral staff, the competence of their preaching and ministry will impact the church positively. Theological graduates who provide responsible leadership to guide the congregation often set the tone for spiritual and numerical growth. For that reason, theological institutions must

realise that they have a vested interest in the steady and continued development of the church's life and ministry.

Like many churches in Asia, the Singapore church remains healthy and is still growing, albeit at a slower pace. Hence, the role of seminaries here is not diminishing. In fact, more lay people are seeing the need for in-depth studies in a seminary in order to deepen their faith. Surely, God is working amongst our laypeople, who, despite working hard at earning a living in the marketplace,

are eager to be theologically educated. This encouraging development can only contribute positively to Christian discipleship in our churches.

Today, there are eight degree-granting theological institutions in Singapore. We have sufficient capacity to equip those who are preparing for full-time service as well as laypeople interested in theological studies. However, it is my hope that there will not be a proliferation of seminaries in Singapore because it will only lead to the replication of limited resources on our small island. Some may think that overcapacity can be easily filled up by admitting more overseas applicants but it is not a long term solution since our neighbouring countries are presently quite adequately served by their own seminaries.

We thank God that our home-grown theological schools are not facing challenging times in terms of student enrolment, and have not reached a point when they are forced to collaborate or merge in order to survive. Yet, while we celebrate the healthy state of the church here, we do recognise this opportune time to cooperate in a way that will optimise the huge resources committed to theological education. Indeed, seminaries in Singapore are already at the threshold of new beginnings as they explore ways of working together.

Our churches are more united than ever, and the spirit of Christian unity is palpable. Therefore, alongside our churches, theological schools do have the obligation to exercise good stewardship through collaborative efforts. So we look to the future with the reassurance that God is with us as our Emmanuel ushers us into another year of faithful service in theological education. ❖

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# Inter-Religious Dialogue: Compromise of Faith or Expression of Conviction?

By Dr Leow Theng Huat

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to engage in several inter-faith activities, often as a representative of the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS). A few well-meaning Christians have privately expressed to me the discomfort they feel: Was I compromising my Christian faith by participating in these activities? This concern stems from a particular perception of inter-religious dialogue, one based on a model promoted, perhaps most prominently, by the phi-

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losopher of religion John Hick. Hick teaches that the major world religions all point to the same reality, which the various religions have described using different terms (e.g. “God”, “heaven”, “nirvana”). In the end, “all roads lead to Rome”, and we end up at the same destination, whichever religious path we follow.

Inter-religious dialogue, for Hick, is therefore an exercise which seeks to uncover common features in our various faith traditions, which will help us see more clearly that we

are ultimately on the same journey. It is also needful, during such dialogue, to downplay the distinctive teachings of each religion, as these tend to drive a wedge between the various faiths and blind us to the fact that, at the core, we are all identical.

Space does not allow us to engage in a comprehensive critique of Hick’s position. But one thing we can say is that it demonstrates very clearly the arrogance of the modern age. What Hick is effectively telling the followers of the major world religions (many of whom have studied and practised their faith the whole of their lives) is that he understands their faith better than they do. Religious practitioners are severely limited by their religious blinkers, but Hick (the modern philosopher) is somehow able to rise above all of them and see things from a truly transcendent perspective. He is therefore able to reveal the true nature of their religion to them. Hick’s approach exemplifies the myth of modernity: That we can arrive at an absolute and objective truth by utilising supposedly neutral means like human reason or experience.

In many parts of the world, the modern age has given way to the postmodern. While postmodernity has its harmful excesses, it has helpfully exposed the myth of modernity by showing that all human beings (even the modern philosopher) have our own blinkers. The supposedly neutral status of human reason and experience has been undermined, as we realise that we reason and interpret our experiences in ways significantly influenced by our particular cultural presuppositions.

These developments have major implications on how we view inter-religious dialogue. When followers of different religions speak to one another, there is, in a postmodern environment, no longer the pressure to discover that, at the root, we all believe in the same reality. Instead, postmodernity gives space for each religion to assert its uniqueness. We acknowledge that we hold views which cannot, at the end of the day, be reconciled with those of the other faiths.

But this frank acknowledgement of our differences does not spell the end of dialogue. On the contrary, it sets the stage for genuine dialogue to take place. As theologian William Placher observes (in *Unapologetic Theology*, p. 146): “Once we recognise that we are not all trying to say the same thing, then we can recognise that some of the things that other people are saying seem to be genuine insights which we can appropriate for ourselves...”

Being set free from the strictures of modernity also allows inter-religious dialogue to take on a more pragmatic tenor. We talk to one another to see if there are areas of overlapping concern where we can work together. This kind of cooperation can take place on the level of individual issues, without being encumbered by unrealistic attempts to achieve uniformity in the way we perceive and respond to everything.

In my limited involvement in inter-faith activities here in Singapore, I find this second view of inter-religious dialogue to be the one undergirding our activities. I take as an example the series of “Building Bridges” seminars held in the years 2012-2013, which focussed on the topic of “Religious Tradition and Authority in a Post-modern World”. Representatives from the NCCS and the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) took turns to share perspectives from their own faith on the topic.

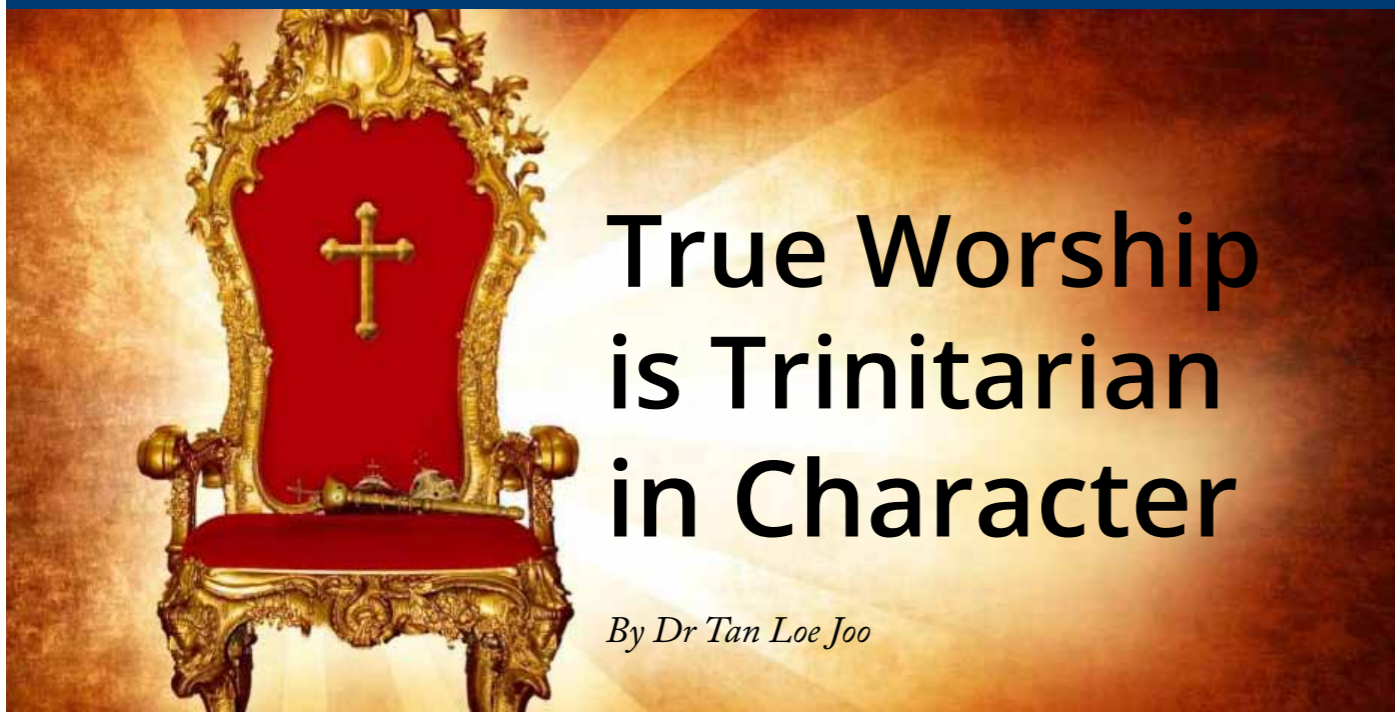
There was no attempt by either side to water-down our beliefs or downplay the significant differences which exist between both faiths. We shared how things appear to us as Christians or Muslims, listened respectfully to the perspectives offered by the other side, and gained valuable insights which helped illumine our own situations. We also identified common areas of concern, like the difficulty faced by both faith traditions in combating the pervasive notion of individualism and the consequent disregard of religious authority.

More than that, these seminars represent a precious opportunity for followers of different religions to meet face to face. Through the process, unhelpful stereotypes were dispelled, trust was built up and friendships were formed. As religious tension and conflict fester in our increasingly polarised world, these achievements should not be underrated. ❖

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Dr Leow Theng Huat  
Lecturer in Theology



# True Worship is Trinitarian in Character

By Dr Tan Loe Joo

In the previous two parts of this series, I have tried to show that (1) authentic worship is “useless” and, (2) it is not found in this world. In this concluding piece, I will expand upon what should be familiar to most Christians; that worship is Trinitarian in nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the core beliefs of the Christian faith, and distinguishes Christianity from other religions. The conventional dictum used to describe this doctrine, i.e. “One Being Three Persons” is a direct translation of the Greek phrase, “*μία οὐσία τρεις ὑπόστασεις*” (*mia ousia treis hypostaseis*) formulated by three Cappadocian Fathers during the 4th century. Among them, Basil of Caesarea (AD 330-379) was the first to realise that while the three Persons of Father, Son and Spirit are co-divine, they should be distinguished in worship by recognising that we relate to each Person in a different way. In his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* (c. 375), he writes,

*The way to divine knowledge ascends from one Spirit through the one Son to the Father. Likewise, natural goodness, inherent holiness and royal dignity reaches from the Father through the Only-Begotten to the Spirit.*

[Chap. 18 Sect. 47]

In brief, patristic Trinitarianism understands that worship to the Persons is distinctive though not separate. Based on this, I would like to make two points of observation regarding our worship today.

(1) Many current expressions of worship are directed solely to Jesus without any reference to the Father or Spirit, which belie the Trinitarian nature of worship. While Christ should be worshipped, we need to be careful not to become Trinitarian nominally. I do not mean to suggest that each and every worship song and prayer should mention all the three Persons, but there is a tendency for contemporary Christocentrism to lapse into Christomonism where worship is focused solely on Christ. Jesus himself instructs us to pray to “Our Father in heaven”. The apostle Paul tells us that in the end times, Jesus will “hand over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” (1 Cor 15:24) which demonstrates that he regards the Father as the *telos* (end) of all things.

(2) Much of our worship today is marked especially by confusion between the Father and the Son, such that they are conflated. Taking praise and worship songs as examples, here is one popular song I grew up with,

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This does not mean that every worship song and prayer should mention all the three Persons, but there is a tendency for contemporary Christocentrism to lapse into Christomonism

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For I am Building a People of Power

*For I'm building a people of power, And I'm making a people of praise  
That will move through this land by My Spirit, And will glorify My precious name*

Chorus:

*Build Your church, Lord, Make us strong, Lord,  
Join our hearts, Lord, through Your Son*

[a] *Make us one, Lord, In Your Body*

[b] *In the kingdom of Your Son*

A closer examination of the chorus shows that there is confusion between the Father and Son. Taking line [b], the songwriter speaks of “Your Son” which suggests he was referring to the Father. Yet in the previous line [a], he asks the Lord to make us one in “Your Body”. If the referent “Your” in both lines is the same, then there is an error here because the bible does not call the Church the Body of the Father. Rather, we are the Body of Christ who is head of the Church (1 Cor 12:27).

Similar imprecision in terms can be found in another popular contemporary song,

Before the Throne of God above,

*Before the Throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea,*

[a] *A great High Priest whose name is love -  
Who ever lives and pleads for me!*

[b] *My name is graven on His hands,  
My name is written on His heart,*

*I know that while in heav'n He stands - No tongue can bid me thence depart!*

*No tongue can bid me thence depart!*

Here, line [a] is explicitly a reference to the majestic theme in Hebrews that Christ is our great high priest before God (Heb 4:14-16). However, the reference for line [b] is not as clear as there is no



New Testament reference to our names being engraved on Jesus' hands. Rather, Isaiah 49:16 speaks of Yahweh who rebuts the claim of the Israelites that he has forgotten them with the promise, “See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” If the object of reference in both lines is the same, then the song has erased any distinction between Jesus and Yahweh, the latter of which is the Old Testament name for the Father. Some may suggest that since there is only one God, the engraving of names on the Father's hands is the same as on the Son's. But by the same logic, one

could argue that because Jesus is God and came in the flesh, then since the Father is also God, he must have come in the flesh. We need to be careful when referencing biblical verses and distinguish between Jesus and God the Father. At the same time, there are indeed Old Testament references to the Father that have been explicitly appropriated by Jesus. The clear identification made by him with the Father when he said “Before Abraham, I am” (John 8:58), as well as when he describes himself as the good shepherd (John 10:11), which harkens back to Psalm 23 with its imagery of Yahweh as the shepherd of Israel are two prime examples.

In summary, patristic Trinitarianism helps reminds us that the Son is not the Father and the Father is not the Son, and will avert us from the danger of being Christocentric in intention but ending up Trinitarianly confused. This also goes to show the importance for Christian songwriters to be equipped and grounded biblically and theologically. ❖

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**Dr Tan Loe Joo**  
Lecturer in Theology



# The Truth about Hostel Living at TTC

By Seth Tan, a 1st year MDiv student

**D**o you really know what goes on in TTC hostels? Students who stay in hostels are given the endearing term “hostelites”. While some imagine TTC hostelites as unsociable recluses, confined in a claustrophobic room with stacks of books, others imagine hostelites as energetic fun-lovers who go out for late night suppers daily. Although to a certain degree true, neither of these scenarios provide a complete picture. It is so much more than studying or having fun. Hostel liv-

ing engages every part of your life. How so? After collecting the responses of hostelites, I have distilled hostel living to four key elements: Focus, Fun, Fellowship and Formation. Let’s explore what really goes on in the TTC hostel.

## Focus

Having a room on campus helps you focus on your studies. As Hannah Lasco (*MDiv 1*) acknowledges, “it is really convenient to stay in a place which is just

a three-minute walk to class.” Hostelites who oversleep (God forbid!) are able to rush to class in time too. Occasionally, commuting students look on in envy when hostelites are able to take a quick siesta in between classes. Moses Ajay (*BD 1*) makes an interesting comparison of hostel living to a “modern monastery” where one can be devoted to studying. The lush green environment also aids focus. TTC is blessed to be flanked by tranquil forests rather than noisy, bustling streets. Sean Tan (*MDiv 1*) adds that “walking around the campus is so beautiful and relaxing.” Indeed, hostelites wake up to fresh cool morning air that rejuvenates them for another day of studies.

## Fun

As the axiom goes, “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. TTC hostelites are no exception. You may not know that TTC is equipped with a myriad of sport facilities for students to exercise in a gym or sweat it out in a futsal or table tennis match. There is also the weekly captain’s ball game, a perennial favourite, which adds to the mix. Joshua Ong (*MDiv 2*), a regular captain’s ball participant, is amazed by “how intense our casual captain ball games can be sometimes.” As games are often peppered with laughter and excitement, bonding among hostelites are spontaneously formed. For those not so keen on sports, fun can be derived from eating at the many food junctions in close proximity to TTC. A favourite haunt among hostelites (including myself) is Springleaf Prata, an Indian restaurant within walking distance. Elena Yeo (*MDiv 1*), for instance, loves the idea of having “impromptu suppers whenever someone gets hungry.” These times of fun fosters camaraderie.

## Fellowship

I have a confession: I wanted to fly low under the TTC radar but soon discovered that it was near impossible. TTC hostel living almost forces you to fellowship through the weekly vespers and community dinners. Firstly, vesper is a casual gathering of hostel cluster members to share and pray for each other. As Wisda Liu (*MTh 1*) points out, “the memorable things are laughing together during our vesper, sweating as we do our duties, and sharing food on weekends.” Fellowship is crucial especially

for international students to combat loneliness and homesickness. Even a simple act of kindness goes a long way to making international students feel welcomed in Singapore. Noom (*MDiv 1*), a Thai student, is grateful for the useful welcome pack on the first day he arrived. Secondly, the community dinners on Tuesdays and Thursdays allow hostelites to fellowship over a sumptuous meal together with the Dean of Students, Rev Dr Edwin Tay and his family. Linberg Wong (*MDiv 3*) recognises with appreciation that the community dinners “provide more opportunities to interact with hostelites whom we seldom hang out with.” Much learning also takes place outside the classroom through relaxed conversations with other students and lecturers.

## Formation

Living in hostel isn’t always a bed of roses. As hostelites interact, there is friction and sometimes sparks can fly. Conflicts could be precipitated by ear-piercing laughter at night, pungent smells emanating from rooms, or the details of cleaning duties. However, hostel conflicts are part and parcel of our spiritual formation where we learn to show care and concern for others who are struggling physically, emotionally or spiritually. Mutual respect for each other’s habits and cultures is important to create a friendly atmosphere. “I’ve learnt to love my neighbour despite the details that I can’t stand, by recognising the log in my own eye,” Clara Loh (*MDiv 1*) frankly admits. Informal interactions are key to shaping our character because how we handle differences and conflict have a bearing on our spiritual formation and maturity.

## In Summary

Hopefully, some light has been shed on TTC hostel living. It is a well-balanced experience with times for serious studying and fun. But above all, what makes the hostel experience invaluable is the TTC hostelite community. It is a community where loving support allows hostelites to mature holistically. Nandia (*MDiv 1*), a Mongolian student, sums it up perfectly when she says, “It is wonderful to have people with shared joys and struggles that lead to times of prayers, laughter and tears. Even very simple things like cooking and eating together make hostel living special.” ❖

## Ethos on SG Secure

On 14 October, Ethos Institute for Public Christianity conducted a closed-door meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Minister Tan Chuan-Jin on the topic of terrorism and national security. About 180 key clergy and leaders from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches attended the

meeting. Also in attendance were leaders from major Christian organisations and principals of theological colleges and seminaries. Ethos Institute for Public Christianity is a think tank of the National Council of Churches in collaboration with Trinity Theological College and Bible Society of Singapore. For more information, please visit [www.ethosinstitute.sg](http://www.ethosinstitute.sg). ❖



Ethos Steering Committee with Cabinet Ministers (left – right) Rev Ezekiel Tan, Bishop Rennis Ponniah, Minister Tan Chuan-Jin, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, Bishop Dr Wee Boon Hup, Bishop Terry Kee, Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian, Dr Roland Chia

## An Invitation to Retreat with Spiritual Directors

### The Spiritual Retreat for Lay Leaders

seeks to meet a pressing need among ministry leaders in our Singapore churches. The third retreat held on 4 - 5 November once again attested to the fact that many of our leaders need guidance for their prayer lives and spiritual direction for their ministries. Many leaders confessed that when they do not seek first the Lord, their love for God grows cold and they lose their sense of direction for their lives and ministry. It is with these needs in mind that Trinity Theological College began offering these retreats as a way of blessing our lay leaders. ❖

We invite you to join us for a retreat in 2017

- 3 - 4 March
  - 25 - 26 August
  - 5 - 6 May
  - 3 - 4 November
- Sign up now at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

### What some retreatants say:

- *"It helps me take my mind off the hurried life...and makes me realise that my relationship with God is above all else."*
- *"It was a meaningful experience that reminded me that my relationship with God should take precedence over all things. Resting in God is crucial and an important discipline."*
- *"The retreat experience drives me to focus on God instead of my own questions or situation. The internalised practices will surely improve my walk with God."*

## CDCM Evening Classes

### Ecclesiastes: The Paradoxes of Life

Dates: 4 Jan – 1 Mar (8 Wednesday evenings)  
Time: 7:30pm - 9:30pm  
Venue: St. Andrew's Cathedral

### Church in Mission: Lessons from the Book of Acts

Dates: 5 Jan – 23 Feb (8 Thursday evenings)  
Time: 7:30pm - 9:30pm  
Venue: TTC Lecture Room 2

*Details are available on our website [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)*

## The Trinity Lectures 2017

# Job and the Question of Unjust Suffering

Date: 24 - 27 July 2017

Time: 8.00pm – 9.30pm

Venue: TTC Chapel

Speaker: **Professor Seow Choon Leong**

Vanderbilt University Divinity School

**MARK THE DATES**

### Lecture I: 24 July 2017 In the Cradle of World Literature

The issue of unjust suffering was addressed at the dawn of civilisation, in the great cultures in Egypt and Mesopotamia some 5000 years ago. Justice was an integral issue in the cosmologies of these cultures, where order on earth mirrors the order in the cosmos. Unjust suffering was a mark of the triumph of chaos and hence regarded as a religious problem.

### Lecture III: 26 July 2017 Jewish and Christian Interpreters

Interpreters have read the story of Job in radically different ways. Even within each religious tradition, there have always been conflicting views of the story. What are the sources and contexts that generated these different readings and why does it matter that one should understand this history on interpretation?

### Lecture II: 25 July 2017 The (Hebrew) Book of Job

The book of Job, as it has come down to us through the Hebrew Bible, reflects not a single view on the question of God's role in unjust suffering but three: (i) the theodic perspective of Job's friends, who defend the justice of God in Job's suffering; (ii) the antitheodic perspective of Job, who calls into question God's justice in the face of unjust suffering; and (iii) the atheodic view of God, who reframes the question as one pertaining to divine sovereignty and freedom.

### Lecture IV: 27 July 2017 Job in Asia

As elsewhere in the world, there are many faces of Job in Asia, vast and culturally and religiously diverse. Job is mediated not only through centuries of Christian exegesis, but also through Islam, particularly on the question of unjust suffering. Job is featured not only in commentaries and theological writings, but also in literature, visual and performing arts, and music.

## Faculty Renewal: New Lecturers Join TTC

Trinity Theological College's commitment to theological education entails long term planning for the renewal of faculty members. Ensuring younger lecturers join its ranks on a periodic basis, it is confident that the church will be well served into the future. TTC is also grateful to several churches who are committed to a special partnership of full or partial faculty support. Here we introduce three new lecturers and the churches supporting their ministry at TTC.

**Rev James Lim** is an alumnus of Trinity Theological College and faculty-in-development jointly with the Synod of The Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Ang Mo Kio Presbyterian Church (AMKPC). James graduated from NUS with a degree in Mechanical Engineering (BEng) and worked at Hewlett-Packard Singapore for several years before responding to God's call to full-time ministry. He obtained his Master of Divinity at TTC, before serving as a pastor in AMKPC.

In 2011, with the encouragement and support of TTC, the Presbyterian Synod Leadership and AMKPC, together with scholarships from the Council for World Mission and Brash Trust, James went to Durham University to study for his PhD, researching on the topic of "Glory as Power in Paul's Epistle to the Romans", under the supervision of the Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, Professor John Barclay. James will be teaching New Testament in Chinese at TTC from January.

He is married to Beng Kwee, who is also an alumnus of TTC, and they have an 11-year-old daughter, Alethea. James' research interests include Pauline theology, Pauline churches, biblical hermeneutics, Second Temple literature and the social world of the New Testament.

On joining TTC, James says, "I am honoured to be part of a team of lecturers and staff who are committed to the training and equipping of pastors, missionaries, leaders and lay Christians for the Church to be a witness for Christ in the marketplace. I look forward to participating in the family life at my alma mater and contributing to the students' spiritual formation and equipping for ministry". ❖



**Rev Edmund Fong**, Associate Pastor of Adam Road Presbyterian Church (ARPC) is joining TTC as a full time lecturer in January 2017. Edmund shares that "God convicted me of the reality of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in my university days, and has led me on this journey of experiencing his grace and mercy. God led me to join ARPC, where I met my wife, Mei Ying Liu, whom I have been happily married to for the past 13 years and whom God has blessed us with 3 wonderful children — Phoebe Fong (11 years old), Chloe Fong (8 years old) and Jonathan Fong (6 years old). His gracious hand also led me to join ARPC as a pastoral intern (2004–2005)".

Edmund studied for his Bachelor of Theology at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia (2006–2008), and then returned to ARPC where he would serve as a pastor in a full-time capacity for the next 5 years. During that period, he completed a Master of Theology with Trinity Theological College in the area of Theological Hermeneutics. In October 2013, he started on the PhD programme with the University of Otago, New Zealand, researching within the orbit of Systematic Theology and exploring the theology of the pre-eminent German theologian Karl Barth. His dissertation is well underway and is expected to submit for examination before the end of the year.



Of his new ministry as theological educator, Edmund says "I am truly excited to join the team at Trinity Theological College, and I am thankful to our Heavenly Father for the unprecedented and generous partnership – in both prayer and full financial support – of my home church, Adam Road Presbyterian Church, in enabling this arrangement. Together with my family, we are glad to be able to share in the TTC community life. I look forward to partaking and contributing to the robust theological engagement that happens here, and building good friendships with both esteemed colleagues and students alike along the way. Soli Deo Gloria!" ❖



**Rev Samuel Wang** has been assigned by the Lutheran Church in Singapore for the ministry of theological education. His journey with Trinity Theological College started many years ago when he attended night classes at the Mt. Sophia campus. He was then a secondary school teacher and recalled juggling between school, TTC and marking students' assignments late into the night. However, as the lectures were rather stimulating and thought provoking, he was motivated to attend every week despite his tiredness.

Samuel was also exploring the pastoral calling, having been encouraged by Lutheran pastors. Before long, he took a big step and decided to quit teaching to enroll for full-time studies at TTC in 2000. He graduated with the Master of Divinity in 2004.

Married to a school teacher, Caroline in 1997, the couple has four daughters: Sarah (18), Rebekah (16), Hannah (14) and Anne (12) and a cat, Robyn. Samuel feels fortunate that "my family members have been very supportive towards my pastoral

work and recent overseas studies". A faculty-in-development, he has completed his PhD studies at the University of Divinity (formerly Australian Lutheran College) in North Adelaide, Australia.

Samuel commences teaching at TTC in January 2017. He has fond memories coming back to his alma mater. He shares that "my theological interest lies mainly in the sacraments, church doctrines and Martin Luther's theology. As I embark on teaching, I will still be learning along with the students. I hope to be a facilitator and not just a lecturer, and I will indeed look forward to 2017"! ❖

## A Milestone in Inter-Seminary Collaboration

On 1 November, we celebrated a milestone in inter-seminary collaboration. Trinity Theological College (TTC) and Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to offer the joint-Diploma in Theological Studies (DipTS).

Both seminaries will be collaborating to better serve the Christian community in Singapore as they tap into each other's unique role in theological education. The DipTS is intended to equip laypeople who will remain in their occupations and professions for Christian witness. Classes will commence in January 2017. ❖



Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian (TTC) and Dr Philip Satterthwaite (BGST) exchanging MOUs

# Another Perspective of Life at TTC

Although about one third of our students are from overseas, they are mainly from South East Asia and the region. But from time to time, we welcome exchange students from the West who spend one semester experiencing life at TTC. Trumpet interviews two ladies, Lydia Morey and Hannah Malcolm, who were here from July to November.

## Q: What made you decide to come to Singapore?

**Lydia (L):** I wanted to study in an institution that would help me improve my Chinese, but as I am doing this as part of my Anglican training, I also needed to be in an Anglican college. TTC fitted the bill.

**Hannah (H):** I'm currently doing a post-graduate course with Yale with a focus on South East Asia and have an interest to see cross-cultural work being done in Asia. Singapore has been very influential in this respect. On a personal level, I have Singaporean friends and it was less of a culture shock coming here as compared to going to the US!

## Q: How has your overall experience been like in TTC?

**L:** I have really enjoyed the camaraderie of being part of a class taking the same courses. Back in England, we attend different courses and don't get together as much. Living with others here and hearing their stories have expanded my views on alternative ways of doing things as well as informed me on how to pray with greater insight and understanding in the future.

**H:** I enjoyed approaching theology through a more pastoral lens in TTC as compared to a more academic approach in Yale. The Pan-Asian ethos as well as the inter-denominational nature of TTC were also really refreshing for me.

## Q: Tell us some of your most memorable experiences.

**L:** I thoroughly enjoyed the Cultural Night, seeing how everyone from different countries worked hard to present the unique aspects of their own culture. Living together with others has also been an eye-opening experience for me. Once, when it was our turn to clean the common toilet, my partner from China led in an extended "pre-cleaning" prayer asking for God's help for us to reflect theologically. We subsequently spent the next three hours cleaning three cubicles. It certainly gave me a new perspective to our work for God!

**H:** I was overwhelmed by the hospitality shown to me when I first arrived to Singapore, having been picked



Hannah Malcolm (left) and Lydia Morey (right), from Yale University Divinity School and Diocese of Oxford respectively

up by a student at 4am in the morning and subsequently given a basket of goodies as a welcome gift! These small gestures really made me feel welcomed!

## Q: What are some things you have learnt here?

**L:** The priority and passion on mission in TTC – how everyone here seems to live and breathe mission and outreach as a routine part of their Christian lives. I hope to emulate that.

**H:** I enjoyed seeing up front the process of the Asian contextualising of theology here by the lecturers in TTC. There is much scope for exporting this work back to the West.

## Q: And your future plans?

**L:** I'll be going back to England to continue my theological education and become a curate after that. I might also want to continue my studies.

**H:** I'll start work immediately after this in Hilfield Friary, an Anglican-Franciscan community in Dorset, UK with a focus on environmental issues. ❖



The Trumpet is published in English and Chinese. To view the Chinese edition, please visit our website [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

# TRINITY News

## Congratulations to...

**Rev Dr Chong Chin Chung** on his election on 13 September by the General Conference of the Methodist Church in Singapore as its next Bishop. Bishop Dr Chong is an alumnus (*MDiv 1981; DTh 2008*), and served for two terms as the President of the Chinese Annual Conference. He has also been a guest lecturer at TTC since 1996, teaching Worship and Liturgy in Chinese.

**Retiring Bishop Dr Wee Boon Hup** (*MDiv 1984*) a former Chairman of TTC's Board of Governors, who has been conferred the title of Bishop Emeritus.

**Rev James Poona Sami Nagulan** (*BTh 1997*) on his election as President of the Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference of The Methodist Church in Singapore.

**Rev Dr Gregory Goh Nai Lat** (*MDiv 1992*) on his election as President of the Chinese Annual Conference of The Methodist Church in Singapore.

**Rev Dr Jeffrey Kuan Kah-Jin** (*BTh 1980*) who has been elected to Chair the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (FTESEA). Dr Kuan is President and Professor of Hebrew Bible at Claremont School of Theology, California, USA. FTESEA is involved in collaborative relationships with theological schools, leaders of churches, and ecumenical theological networks especially in China and South East Asia. TTC was a beneficiary of FTESEA funds in its early years of development.

The following alumni on their Ordination by the Methodist Church in Singapore:

• Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference (12 November)

Deacon

**Rev Saravana Kumar Chennakesavan** (*MDiv 2014*)

• Chinese Annual Conference (17 November)

Deacon

**Rev Patrick Chen Guek Fah** (*BD 2011*)

**Rev Simon Cheo Hsun Shen** (*MDiv 2014*)

Elder

**Rev Irman Halim** (*MDiv 2005*)

**Rev Edmund Koh Lik Hng** (*MDiv 2012*)

**Rev Tack Ng Lai Chun** (*BD 2011*)

• Trinity Annual Conference (24 November)

Deacon

**Rev Adrian Ng Han Boon** (*MDiv 2013*)

Elder

**Rev Benjamin Lee Shang Ching** (*MDiv 2012*)

**Rev Gladwin Lee Khian Guan** (*MDiv 2012*)

**Rev Khoo Kay Huat** (*BD 2005*) and his wife, Rachel on the arrival of their baby, James, on 22 October.

**Zhang Li** (*MDiv 2009*) and her husband Jiang Wei on the arrival of their newborn, Jiang An Ran, on 26 October.

**Choo Xianjie** (*MDiv 2014*) and Kareng Bu Lu on their marriage on 12 November in Singapore.

**Linberg Wong Joon Yong** (*MDiv 3*) and Belinda Yeck Ju Hui on their marriage on 19 November in Sibul, Sarawak.

## Condolences to...

The family of the late **Rev Dr William J Dumbrell**, aged 90, a former lecturer of TTC who was living in Australia. Dr Dumbrell was called home to the Lord on 1 October.

**Chek Jia Jun** (*BD 3*) whose mother passed away on 20 October.


The family of the late **Bishop Chiu Ban It**, aged 98, a former member of TTC's Board of Governors who was living in London. Bishop Chiu was called home to the Lord on 9 November.

## Thank You for Your Partnership in Theological Education

TTC depends fully on the generosity of well wishers. Your gifts will be used to train men and women for Christian outreach and ministry in Singapore and the region. We invite you to consider the following ways to contribute to our ministry:

- **By Cheque** payable to "Trinity Theological College". Mail to: 490 Upper Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 678093
- **By Bank or ATM transfer** to our DBS current account 033-017261-3
- **By way of Bequests** to TTC. We shall be pleased to discuss this plan with you. You may email the Principal at [principal@ttc.edu.sg](mailto:principal@ttc.edu.sg) or call us at 67676677.





*An Invitation*

Trinity Theological College 三一神学院  
cordially invites you to an 敬邀您参加

**OPEN HOUSE 开放日**

18 Jan 2017, Wed, 8.15am - 2.00pm  
TTC Campus @ 490 Upper Bukit Timah Road  
2017年1月18日, 星期三, 早上8点15分至下午2点  
三一神学院校园@490武吉知马路上段

“This seminary surpassed my expectations through its comprehensive curriculum, supportive faculty, vibrant student body, excellent library resources and conducive environment for holistic development...a delightful community to get equipped to serve in God’s Kingdom”

- *Adrian Chan (1st year MTS student)*  
*Covenant Evangelical Free Church*

“I truly appreciate the honour TTC accords to the different denominational distinctives not only in understanding the nuances in theological perspectives of students’ various church background, but the practical demonstration of Christian union in the faculty and college life.”

- *Rev Fredric Lee (BD 1979; MMin 2006)*  
*Senior Pastor, Queenstown Lutheran Church*

“Here and abroad, I come across fellow alumni of TTC, who are heads of their theological schools or churches, theologians and pastors. The brilliant pool of faculty encourages students to appreciate the values of research and of constantly challenging and updating oneself theologically and pastorally.”

- *Rev Dr Gloria Lita D. Mapangdol (DTh 2010)*  
*President and Dean, Saint Andrew’s Theological Seminary*  
*Quezon City, Philippines*

To register, email [openhouse@ttc.edu.sg](mailto:openhouse@ttc.edu.sg) or do it online at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg) (deadline: 13 Jan 2017)

## APPLICATION OPEN for academic year starting July 2017

<b>DIPLOMA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Diploma in Theological Studies</li> </ul> <p>Joint Programme with Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST)</p>	<p>Only available to applicants residing in Singapore</p> <p><b>15 Mar 2017</b></p>	<b>Application deadlines</b>
<b>BASIC DEGREE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bachelor of Divinity</li> <li>■ Master of Divinity</li> <li>■ Master of Theological Studies</li> </ul>	<p>Singapore/Malaysia :</p> <p><b>15 Mar 2017</b></p> <p>Others: <b>31 Jan 2017</b></p>	
<b>ADVANCED DEGREE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Master of Ministry</li> <li>■ Master of Theology</li> <li>■ Master of Letters</li> <li>■ Doctor of Theology</li> </ul>	<p>All applicants :</p> <p><b>31 Jan 2017</b></p>	

For more details and financial aid, please visit [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg) or email [registrar@ttc.edu.sg](mailto:registrar@ttc.edu.sg)

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Ms Dawn Lee, Ms Nie Yicong

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