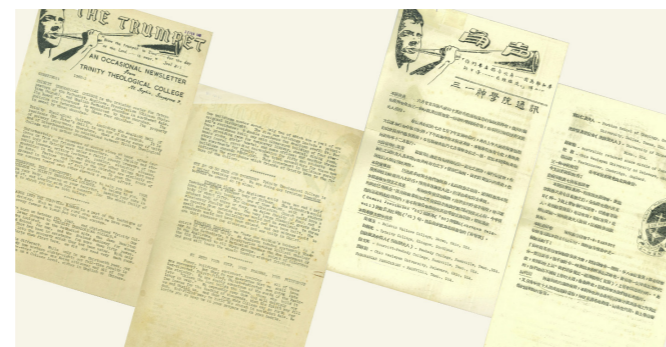


By Rev Dr Andrew Peh

The Trumpet was first published as an occasional newsletter in 1960 and the Chinese publication, 角声, debuted a year later. It became a regular publication from May 1965. The purpose for the publication was for the college to provide updates and information to the wider church to be acquainted with and participate in the life of the college. The name of the publication is based on the verse in Joel 2:1—"Blow the trumpet in Zion...for the day of the Lord is near".

This series of three articles provide snapshots from The Trumpet in 25-year segments of the college's history as captured through the articles. It is a reminder of what the Lord has done and what He continues to do in and through the college.



The Trumpet debuted in 1960, and the Chinese publication, 角声, a year later

tumultuous years that the idea of a union college was birthed. Amstutz had been the principal of the Jean Hamilton Theological School, which merged with Eveland Seminary to form the Malaya Methodist Theological College in May 1940. Together with Rev Canon Sorby Adams (Anglican) and Rev T Campbell Gibson (Presbyterian), Amstutz revived their discussions on an interdenominational theological college. The new college absorbed the existing Malaya Methodist Theological School and was named Trinity College, as suggested by Amstutz, who was appointed as its founding principal. The union college, Singapore's first seminary, was located at 7 Mt Sophia. In 1954, Trinity College was renamed Trinity Theological College (TTC). On Thu 1 Nov 1962, the Lutheran Church in Malaya presented the request to become an affiliate member of the body of churches supporting the college. The reasons for the establishment of a union college may have been numerous but the one published in the inaugural publication of The Trumpet, puts it well:

"I am addressing the future" were the opening words of Bishop Hobart B Amstutz as he spoke to the alumni gathered at the dinner of the Malaysia Chinese Annual Conference of The Methodist Church in 1962. These words from the founding Principal of Trinity Theological College serve as a signpost as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the college. It is a marker for us to remember God's past faithfulness and recall the purposes for which the college was founded, for "the future of the church in Southeast Asia depends very largely on the well-trained and creative leadership graduating from the halls of Trinity Theological College".

Amstutz, together with other clergy, was interned during the Japanese Occupation and it was in those

"Why do we do this together? . . . because we cannot do it alone!"

Amidst the context of decolonisation, the assertion of a national identity and the development of an indigenous church, ecumenism and the attendant ties with the colonial masters and former mission were not the priority. Yet TTC is evidence that the body of Christ can and must work as one.

In a sobering sermon at a chapel, the Rev T S Garrett shared,

Sometime ago there was a world conference of a particular denomination. The members were discussing church union. One speaker after another arose to stress the fact that, while church union is important, they must not fail to preserve the essential denominational contribution that their communion had inherited from the past. Finally, one member who had come from a far country, arose, marched to the platform and said, "My only comment is that if we continue to put up a few more red lights, God will by-pass our city altogether." He then sat down.... We must not forget that this is the rush hour in our world. Traffic is moving. We either awaken to the urgencies of this hour, God's hour, or history will pass us by. (The Trumpet, 1961-3)

This ecumenical partnership catalysed growth as the college welcomed scholars from various disciplines as it engaged in the theological equipping of the church in various parts of Southeast Asia and beyond. These included:

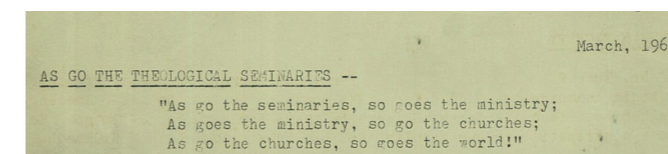
Dr D T Niles, Ceylon—lectures in Christian Ethics (Sep 62)

Dr Frank W Price, Nanking Theological Seminary, China—four lectures on the Rural Church in Asia (Jan 64)

Dr Wilbur C Harr, Evangelical Theological Seminary, USA—cultural anthropology and five lectures on Africa (May 1965)

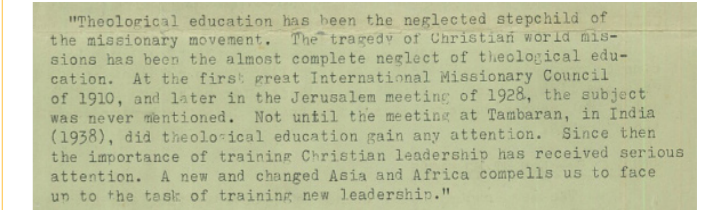
Dr Elmer Douglas, Hartford Theological Seminary, USA—lectures on Islam (Jun 1966)

This vital work of theological education in community (as a union college) continues to be a distinctive of Trinity Theological College. Dr Henry Pitt van Dusen, head of the accreditation team that visited



An extract from the Mar 1965 issue.

Trinity Theological College one February 1965, remarked (read on in the extract below),



An extract from the Mar 1965 issue.

His comment on the priority of building a solid foundation for theological education must not be overlooked:

He explained, "The three essentials of theological education are solid learning, vital godliness, and enlightened experience. We must have good education, true piety, and practical field experience."

Two snippets provide commendable testimonials to this fruitful collaboration in theological education:

A missionary from Sumatra reporting on a graduate from Trinity now serving a large Batak church, said: "We felt that he ought to have a car. He said he did not want one. We suggested a new bicycle. Again, he refused. He said, "I would like to have a second-hand bicycle. That is as good as my members have and that is sufficient."

A letter from New York read: "We have received correspondence from a Mr J. A. Johnson, of Sebree, Kentucky. Mr Johnson tells us that he is almost 95 years of age, and he would like to give a scholarship for a student studying at Trinity. He wants a beginning student. He says, 'I will try to make plans that this will be carried out on to the finish if I do not live to finish myself.'" (The Trumpet, Sep 1963)

This, again, is a reminder that as far as theological education is concerned, we cannot and must not do it alone! ❖

The defects in the images are inherent to the sources themselves.



Rev Dr Andrew Peh
Lecturer in Missions & Missions History



By Rev Dr Andrew Peh

The Trumpet was first published as an occasional newsletter in 1960 and the Chinese publication, 角聲, debuted a year later. It became a regular publication from May 1965. The purpose for the publication was for the college to provide updates and information to the wider church to be acquainted with and participate in the life of the college. The name of the publication is based on the verse in Joel 2:1—“Blow the trumpet in Zion...for the day of the Lord is near”.

This series of three articles provide snapshots from the Trumpet in 25-year segments of the college’s history as captured through the articles. It is a reminder of what the Lord has done and what He continues to do in and through the college.

very close to our target. If the college is going to pioneer the development in this region of a theology that is distinctively Asian and related to the events - past, present, and future - of this part of the world, a locally grounded faculty is a necessity and to this end we move” (June 1972).

The college leadership understood the significance of ensuring a more robust curriculum that engaged Asian theological perspectives. To that end, “recent revisions of the curriculum have seen the introduction of an important and new course, ‘Theology in Asia’, during which the writings of Asian theologians who have made significant contributions in this field are studied” (June 1972). The college has been conscientious in curriculum revisions in order to meet the needs of the churches. New programmes were introduced—Masters in Ministry (MMin) in Sep 1973, Bachelors in Ministry (BMin) in 1975, and a (full residential) Masters of Divinity (MDiv) in Sep 1977. In 1980, the MMin programme was further bolstered through the establishment of regional study centres in Malaysia, Indonesia and the then Burma. The growing demand for further theological education precipitated the establishment of TTC’s own graduate school, which included restructuring the existing MMin programme and offering the college’s own MTh course, with a new intake on 12 Jul 1992.

In 1975, one of the faculty members, Dr Karl Hammar, instituted a lay training programme, for which he would be the first chairman of the Committee on Continuing Education. Theological education was not to be confined only to those who were training

In 1972, the TTC Board of Governors announced the appointment of Rev George T T Wang as the sixth principal of TTC as well as the appointment of two other Asian faculty members, Dr Yeow Choo Lak and Dr Martin Wang. Rev George Wang’s appointment was opportune especially amidst the ebb of western colonialism and a rising consciousness to engage with the diverse cultural and religious contexts of Asia. At the onset of his appointment, Rev Wang noted,

“The policy the college is pursuing at the moment seeks to establish a ratio of 2:1 in the number of Asian faculty members over those from elsewhere. This term we have 13 full-time faculty members, 8 of whom are Asian, and thus we are already getting

for full-time ministry. The notion was—“Instead of asking church members to come to Trinity, Trinity will go to church members where they are.” This initiative attracted a total of 92 lay persons in its first session of five courses in partnership with four local churches. This remains the impetus for TTC’s EQUIP and *QiCheng* to persevere in providing lay theological education today.

Quite interestingly, the college similarly evidenced an expansion in the area of church music studies as there were plans in place for the establishment of a church music department. The programme was in some ways catalysed by the demise of Mrs Koh Geok Kheng on 13 May 1980. She had served more than two decades at TTC. The college approved the setting up of the Koh Geok Kheng Memorial Fund in order to build a music studio in the library complex in her honour for her contribution to music education at Trinity. Through the 80s, the college through the Continuing Education Music Programme (CEMP) offered courses for lay training, such as vocal methods and choral conducting. Additionally, through the 80s and 90s, the TTC choir made frequent choir tours in the cities of neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.



Mrs Koh Geok Kheng (1st row, 1st from left) with the choir.

Another significant and understated development was the formation of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Society (ISRS) by the faculty of Trinity College in 1969, with Rev Dr Ray Nyce as the first director. The role was to promote the study of religions in the Asian context and to better understand the role played (and might be played) by the religious communities in developing society. The establishment of such an institute predates the prestigious Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme offered by the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and is indicative of the foresight of the college leadership.

These developments attest to the fact that the college was unequivocal in ensuring that theological education must be relevant both to the local church as well as the regional context. By the time of the 40th anniversary celebrations, the focus was on “building for the future”. The college embarked on a comprehensive revision of the curriculum, plans for faculty development, which included both local as well as overseas teaching staff and the publication of the Trinity Theological Journal. At the same time, the college was planning a massive S\$4 million extension and renovation to meet with the increasing student enrolment and to better serve the local church and the wider context. In many ways this was an upgrade of the “hardware” as well as the “software”.

This second period of the next twenty-five years would culminate in the Jubilee celebrations, with the theme, “*Lux Mundi*—Our Heritage, Our Future”. As part of the celebrations, the new college crest was unveiled, and the Trumpet was published for the first time in bilingual format. But amidst the celebratory outlook, TTC was undoubtedly at a crossroads, in view of the government’s earlier announcement on the acquisition of the property at Mount Sophia. The estimated costs of relocation and reconstruction was between \$35-40 million. The Principal then, Rev Dr John Chew, wrote:

“Undoubtedly, we will always feel pain over the acquisition, but we must do all we can to continue what is clearly of God. This is all the more imperative when we consider that TTC has over the years established itself as the premier theological college with a strategic development of Asian national Christians for senior leadership and theological education in their respective countries”(Jul-Sep 1998). Just as the Lord guided His people in the dark periods in Changi Prison to found this college, the news of the acquisition would not in any way extinguish what He has lit—*Lux Mundi!* ❖

The defects in the images are inherent to the sources themselves.



Rev Dr Andrew Peh
Lecturer in Missions & Missions History



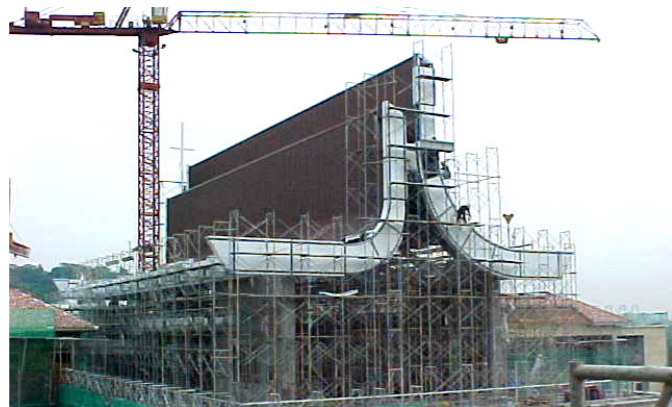
Trinity Theological College Trumpet

By Rev Dr Andrew Peh

The Trumpet was first published as an occasional newsletter in 1960 and the Chinese publication, 角声, debuted a year later. It became a regular publication from May 1965. The purpose for the publication was for the college to provide updates and information to the wider church to be acquainted with and participate in the life of the college. The name of the publication is based on the verse in Joel 2:1—“Blow the trumpet in Zion...for the day of the Lord is near”.

This series of three articles provide snapshots from the Trumpet in 25-year segments of the college’s history as captured through the articles. It is a reminder of what the Lord has done and what He continues to do in and through the college.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the building of the new campus was held on Fri 3 Sep 1999. There was a unanimous decision to ensure that the iconic design of the TTC chapel at Mount Sophia was retained at the new campus. The stained-glass centrepiece was to incorporate Asian features. A local, Ms Koh Bee Liang, was tasked with the project. It was also decided to “take the communion table and some bricks from the old campus for the new chapel in Bukit Timah. The bricks of the chapel



A view of the rear of the TTC chapel as it was being built at Upper Bukit Timah.

have a long history as some of them were taken from the “old No 7” Mount Sophia, which was built in 1840. The bricks were used to build part of the walls of the present chapel. This makes some of the bricks 160 years old! As Trinity moves, it will take with it the traditions and the history of the college.” (*Trumpet Jul 2000*) In Sep 2000, the Mount Sophia campus of TTC was declared as a historic site of Singapore by the National Heritage Board.

Amidst these developments, TTC’s primary call to serve the church is most poignantly evidenced in the election of the then principal to head the church.

The excitement for the golden jubilee of Trinity Theological College in 1998, when the current college crest was introduced, was palpable. The celebrations, however, were eclipsed by the news of the land acquisition of the Methodist-owned plot on Mount Sophia where TTC stood. Yet God continued to be faithful in the provision of the location for a new campus in Upper Bukit Timah Road. What was required was for the governing churches to work together again, to meet the financial and logistical challenges for establishing a new campus. The principal then, Rev Dr John Chew, reminded the community that “What is really being tested with the acquisition is our ecclesiology and our need for one another in a time like ours. Our Lord’s prayer for the unity of His church in the midst of the “world” (John 17) demands our close attention and prayerful reflection.” (*Trumpet Apr/May 1996*)

At the end of 1999, before leaving to assume the new appointment as the Bishop of the Diocese of Singapore, Rev Dr John Chew outlined “the hardware and software of ‘the quantum move of the college into the new millennium’. The hardware was the new premises at the foot of Bukit Timah while the software included the drafting of a three-pronged strategy of a new integrated Centre for Post-Graduate Studies, Mission Research and Asian Church Leadership Development. This was in tandem with the direction for TTC to be a training centre for national leadership throughout Asia”.

The “software” that is referred to is best enumerated in the development of the ways and means where TTC becomes the catalyst as well as the agency through which the equipping, enabling, and empowering of local and regional leaders is made possible. And to that end, TTC embarked on various dialogues, collaborative discussions, and academic exchanges, such as with other college and seminaries under the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA); the China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (CCC&TSPM); the Association of Theological Education of Myanmar; the Vietnam Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Evangelical Church in Vietnam (South). In 2014, TTC partnered with the National Council of Churches of Singapore and the Bible Society of Singapore to pioneer a think tank, ETHOS, in assisting the church in engaging with various societal issues in the public square.

TTC’s “software” engagement is also evident in the continuous development of the Master of Theology (MTh) courses, which has been a way of nurturing regional scholars and leaders. One of the more significant courses was the MTh in Asian Church History in 1997, which was attended by scholars from around the region such as Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. This perhaps helped to precipitate the establishment of TTC’s Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia to serve the churches in Asia by facilitating in-depth research in the identity and role of the church in the Asian context and the building up of library resources and archival materials so that TTC could become a valuable regional resource centre.

To date, the TTC library is perhaps one of the best equipped theological libraries in the region. It currently has approximately 21,500 items in electronic copies and 105,000 volumes in print, including materials published in 1738 and 1823.

Besides a significant number of Methodist archival material, the library was a recipient of four very

special Presbyterian collections. “The establishment of the Presbyterian Resource Centre Collection aims to promote studies pertaining to Presbyterian doctrine, history and mission, plus the preservation of important Presbyterian historical sources.” (*Trumpet Dec 2002*) Among its prized collections are a set of the Chinese Bible translated by Robert Morrison and William Milne of the London Missionary Society, printed in Malacca at the Anglo-Chinese College Press in 1823, as well as the *Sheng Nian Guan Yu*, a set of devotional materials compiled and translated into Chinese by Jesuit priest Joseph Anne Marie de Moyriac de Mailla, published in 1738.

It was also within this last quarter of TTC’s history where there was a succession of professorial endowments, which include the Chen Su Lan Chair of New Testament (2002), Earnest Lau Chair of Systematic Theology (2002), Chew Hock Hin Chair of Christian Doctrine (2008), Bishop William F Oldham Chair of Old Testament (2009), Lee Huai Kwang Chair of Religious Education (2019), and the ACS Chair of the History of Christianity (2023). These endowments are an essential step in financing further research and publications in these important disciplines of theological studies.

Amidst a rapidly changing context—the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and an increasingly polarised world—Bishop Emeritus Robert Solomon’s words when he was appointed principal, albeit for a short ten months, before he too was appointed as Bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore in Jan 2000, serves as a timely reminder: “Principals may change but our principles remain unchanged. TTC exists to serve the Church by training her pastors, church workers, missionaries and lay leaders.” Rev Dr Edwin Tay, the current Principal reminds us that as TTC, “we are committed to the church in Singapore, Asia and beyond”. And in order to do so, TTC’s 75th anniversary theme well articulates our continuing focus: “Changing World, Unchanging Light”. *LUX MUNDI!* ❖

The defects in the images are inherent to the sources themselves.



Rev Dr Andrew Peh
Lecturer in Missions & Missions History