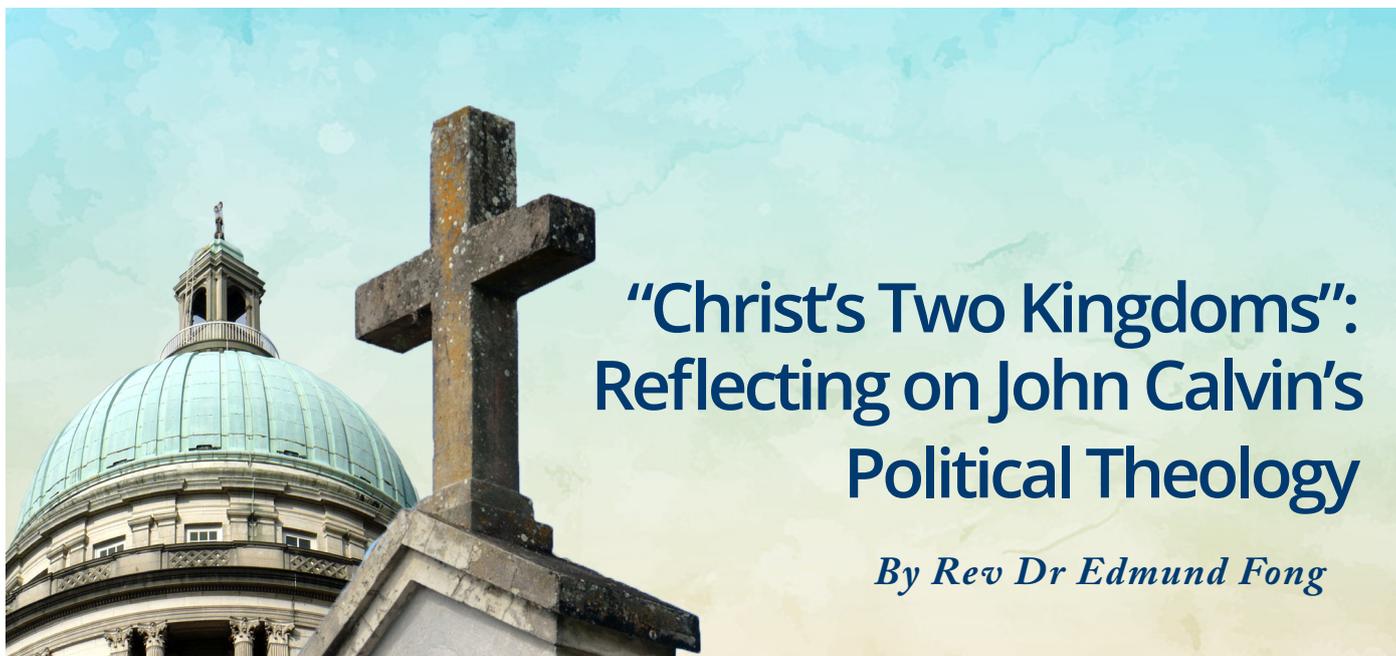


AUG 2019

# TRUMPET

VIEWS AND NEWS FROM TRINITY THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

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## “Christ’s Two Kingdoms”: Reflecting on John Calvin’s Political Theology

*By Rev Dr Edmund Fong*

When our Lord mentioned the words “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21), many wished that Jesus would have said more. What exactly are the things that belong to Caesar, and what are the things that belong to God? One valuable resource in answering this question flowing from the tradition of the church comes from John Calvin (1509–1564), pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation. To be sure, Calvin wrote in a political and social milieu markedly different from ours. He wrote within the context of the Christian commonwealth of Geneva, where civil and ecclesiastical powers work together in cultivating ‘true religion’ and promoting the welfare of the body politic; this is a context vastly different from our religiously and politically pluralistic societies today.

However, as Matthew Tuininga’s *Calvin’s Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church* has shown, the true value of what Calvin has to offer lies not in his political actions or opinions but in his political theology, that is, Calvin’s theological and ethical account of human life and society, and how that account shapes our understanding of the church, civil government and other social institutions. Calvin’s political theology, in turn, follows from and is a major expression of his two kingdoms doctrine.

Stated simply: the two kingdoms doctrine is Calvin’s distinguishing between Christ’s lordship over his eternal kingdom and the temporal affairs of this life. It is important to note that Calvin’s two kingdoms

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doctrine is first and foremost eschatological rather than spatial in nature. All the terms Calvin uses to describe the two kingdoms — spiritual/temporal, heavenly/earthly, soul/body, inward/outward, and ecclesiastical/political — are eschatological in his thought.

The eternal kingdom, for Calvin, is an eschatological reality concerning the restoration of the entire creation beginning with the regeneration of human beings through Christ's Word and Spirit. Where this restoration begins is in the church, and in this present age, Christ's kingdom is realised only through the spiritual government that the Lord exercises in the church through his ministers. Calvin thus distinguishes the church from the temporal and political affairs of life — the temporal kingdom — albeit not in a hermetically sealed fashion, but in a manner that accords to each sphere its own form of jurisdiction or government.

It is this fundamental differentiation between the two kingdoms of Christ that leads to Calvin's programmatic statement in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "[T]here is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men".

The chief utility of Calvin's twofold government concept arising from his two kingdoms doctrine is that the boundaries of each governmental realm, and consequently their function and role, become clearly defined. One is concerned with the restoration of true spiritual righteousness, virtue and eternal life in humanity, while the other with establishing civil righteousness and — within the context of the Genevan commonwealth — the outward worship and defence of true religion in accordance with love and prudence.

With these clearly demarcated boundaries comes the appropriate circumscription of authority. While temporal or magisterial authority through the office of the civil government is not meant and is not able to bring about a true inward righteousness and piety associated with salvation from sin, civil government is necessary to preserve outward piety and order while awaiting the consummation. Similarly, because spiritual or ministerial authority mediates the spiritual kingdom to believers in this time and age, the office of the pastor is to be focused on faithfully ministering Christ's Word and the sacraments, and in enforcing church discipline, while leaving the other area of how the church is to conduct herself as an institution in the political kingdom under the jurisdiction of the civil authorities. In short, as Calvin himself states: "The church does not assume what is proper to the magistrate; nor can the magistrate execute what is carried out by the church".

Having outlined the broad framework of Calvin's overall political theology, allow me to conclude by sharing two insights pertinent to our public engagement today.

First, Calvin's two kingdoms political theology provides a realistic picture of both church and state, and it grounds our political theology in a form of Christian realism deeply rooted in an orthodox and scriptural foundation. Civil government is not the kingdom of Christ, and it should not be rendered so. The civil law from which magistrates operate is not only unable to establish spiritual righteousness but often has to tolerate sin and sometimes even regulate sinful practices so as to mitigate their most destructive consequences. Civil government is not delegitimised when it fails to comply with the moral standards of God's law, nor should it be required to do so. Likewise, even as spiritual government leads to true inward righteousness, the church must refrain from dictating the way in which the laws of the land are to reflect that righteousness; spiritual or ecclesiastical government must not overextend its authority into that of the temporal or political government.

Calvin's two kingdoms political theology provides a realistic picture of both church and state...

Second, Calvin's preference in turning to natural law rather than the Law of Moses in framing moral discourse — even within a Christian commonwealth — provides a valuable insight as to how we can conduct moral discourse within pluralistic societies today. By his non-insistence on conformity to the Old Testament's civil law, advocating instead the rigorous use of reason, experience, pagan political philosophy and the laws of nations in tandem with Scripture as his mode of moral and political reasoning, Calvin not only rules out theonomy as a vision for societies, but upholds natural law — ultimately identified as the law of love and the rule of equity — as a basis by which Christians can participate in public engagement in our religiously diverse or otherwise secular societies. Using natural law need not mean that Christians have surrendered biblical norms and values, for the final authority concerning the content of natural law is still Scripture. But because natural law can be known through reason, the sciences, experience and conscience, it offers Christians a means of participating meaningfully in moral and political discourse without either preaching at nonbelievers or putting Christian confession as a prerequisite for discussion. It provides us with a common ground, a 'public reason' to further dialogue. ❖



**Rev Dr Edmund Fong**  
Lecturer in Theology  
Acting Associate Dean of Students



## Our Bicentennial Commitment

As we celebrate Singapore's Bicentennial this year, historians remind us that when the British first set foot on our shores, this island was already a thriving city of traders and people looking for a better life for themselves and their families. In the early days, the infrastructure for educating the young was not fully developed and denominational churches, which have a long history in the field of education, quickly engaged the local population. Missionaries who came to plant churches laid the foundations for our mission schools back in the 19th century and today, Singaporeans continue to hold these schools in high regard. Mission schools then were not dependent on state funds but, with private donations, were able to educate men and women who contributed significantly to society and nation for more than a century.

Some of the oldest schools began as early as 1842 such as St. Margaret's School founded by the Anglican Church. The Methodists then established Anglo-Chinese School in 1886. Shortly after, Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School was set up in 1889. Indeed, our mission schools continue to inculcate strong moral values and a sense of nationhood among the young and, with their commitment to quality education, are still appreciated by parents.

As the Christian community grew, it joined others in sowing seeds of goodwill among people of different races and religious faith. Christians also imbibed traditional Asian values, which provided social stability for a fledgling nation. While economic advancement may be foremost in the minds of many during Singapore's Bicentennial celebrations, we should not forget that without religious harmony, progress as a nation would have been hindered.

Indeed, we cannot take our peaceful state of affairs for granted. For this reason, the government, having consulted Singapore's major religious communities, decided to introduce the document, 'Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony' as part of Singapore's Bicentennial. It is an elaboration of the National Pledge

and is an affirmation of the values and norms we all seek to be firmly established in our nation.

In retrospect, we ought to acknowledge how our forefathers have helped lay the brick and mortar for a society based on mutual respect and trust with neighbours of other religions. Therefore, the Commitment should also be seen as a celebration of the achievements of religious harmony for the past 200 years.

'Dial a Religion' was set up for the public to ask questions about different religions... TTC lecturers participated as volunteers to receive questions about Christianity.

The 'Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony' was launched at the International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) held on 19 to 21 June. The ICCS brought together internationally renowned thinkers, policy makers, and practitioners for dialogue, "sharing invaluable insights for living together harmoniously and in solidarity in plural societies". Several TTC lecturers participated in the conference.

At the ICCS, a booth, 'Dial a Religion', was set up for the public to ask questions about different religions. We are pleased that TTC lecturers participated as volunteers to avail themselves via mobile phone to receive questions about Christianity from visitors.

It is our belief that theological educators have a role to engage society and count it a privilege to explain as clearly as possible the Christian message to enquirers. 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect". Through such involvement, our college also contributes to the improvement of interfaith relationships especially by clarifying any misinformation or misunderstanding people may have about Christianity. In these and other ways, TTC is ready to be of service to strengthen religious harmony, which is so vital for the future of Singapore and the region. ❖

# Exacting Discipleship

By Rev Dr Andrew Peh

**W**e live in a context where Christianity has become a global phenomenon, and it is true that not only has Christianity affected our world but that the world has also in many ways affected our faith. There exists a constant struggle to live in this world and not be conformed to it, and usually a very fine line separates the two.

Take the example of Jesse Duplantis, the prosperity gospel televangelist who told his followers that if Jesus was to descend from heaven and physically set foot on 21st century earth, he would probably pass on riding a donkey. According to Duplantis, Jesus would “be on an airplane preaching the Gospel all over the world”. He goes on further to add that he believes Jesus would not exactly settle for the regular leg room in the usual economy class airplane and further surmises: “Why would he choose anything less than the Falcon 7X, a private jet that nears the sound barrier but also has noise-limiting acoustic technology, a Bluetooth-enabled entertainment centre and an optional in-flight shower?” In asking his church members to generously donate to his latest wish list, he makes the audacious (and incredulous) claim that he is following in Jesus’ footsteps. And in a video, Duplantis said the planes get him closer to the Lord, both literally and figuratively, and he has had a divine conversation in which Jesus asked for the new aircraft by name.

Duplantis is not alone, as evidenced by similar appeals by other televangelists such as Crefo Dollar who initiated Project G650 as a means of getting a state-of-the-art Gulfstream G650 plane of his own, financed by his 200,000 followers. Accordingly, Dollar said he “needs one of the most luxurious private jets made today in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. More recently, an Instagram account PreachersNSneakers raised quite a few eyebrows and generated loads of discussions and questions when pictures of youth pastors wearing expensive shoes/sneakers were posted. The account featured posts of Christian mega church pastors wearing high-end sneakers and designer clothing, along with screenshots of their retail and/or resale price.

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What does following Jesus mean for us today? Can we follow Jesus on our own terms?

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These are but two examples of the many ethical questions that are raised for those who are in ministry and profess to follow after the Person who was born in a stable and had no place to lay his head. What does following Jesus mean for us today? Can we follow Jesus on our own terms?

In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus was headed in the direction of Jerusalem when he encountered three would-be followers, and he used the occasion to speak about discipleship and the implications of following him. Jesus was unequivocal — contrary to the claims of such as Duplantis, Dollar or various other prosperity gospel pedlars — Jesus makes it blatantly obvious that there is no guarantee of repute, remuneration,

respite or riches, but rebuke and rejection by the world for those who are intent on following him. The implication, of course, is that to follow Jesus is to experience life and death in the same way as he did.

We often think of discipleship as a response to Jesus’ call on our terms and we picture our giving up of our positions, possessions and prestige as a significant, if not tremendous, sacrifice. But Jesus’ call to follow him is not a call of conditional discipleship. Like one of the respondents in the passage, perhaps we seek to haggle with Jesus: “I will follow you but first let me get my university education”, “I will follow you Lord, but let me get my family settled comfortably”, or “I will follow you Lord, but first let me.....” Jesus had a response for these conditional disciples — we simply cannot follow Jesus on our own terms. We can only follow Jesus on his terms. The demands of discipleship are indeed exacting. Jesus was and is asking for unconditional total surrender of control. “First I’ll do this, and then I’ll follow You” would not work for following Jesus. When he calls, he makes a demand not merely for some ‘loose change’ that we can spare, but his call to follow him is an exacting demand on every single aspect of our life. Clive Staples Lewis stridently states:

*“Give me all of you! I don’t want so much of your time, so much of your talents and money, and so much of your work. I want you! ALL OF YOU! I have not come to torment or frustrate the natural man or woman, but to kill it! No half measures will do. I don’t want to only prune a branch here and a branch there; rather I want the whole tree out! Hand it over to me, the whole outfit, all of your desires, all of your wants and wishes and*

*dreams. Turn them all over to me, give yourself to me and I will make of you a new self — in My image. Give me yourself and in exchange I will give you Myself. My will, shall become your will. My heart, shall become your heart.”*

Cognizant of the fact that many Christians are still persecuted for their faith in Jesus all across the world and where their discipleship is marked by martyrdom, Christians must never forget that Jesus’ call to follow him is exacting — he calls us to follow him, in his life as well as in his death. Yet many have peddled a Gospel that has diluted the message of Christ to make it a little more ‘comfortable’, a little more ‘palatable’ and a little more ‘painless’. Discipleship is indeed costly and exacting. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in writing about the cost of discipleship puts it plainly, “When Christ calls a man (woman), He bids him(her) come and die”. It is a call to die to ourselves, our selfish desires and to find true life in Jesus and Jesus alone. Perhaps Christians in Singapore need to recapitulate the zeal of the bloodless martyrs, where their discipleship is marked by constant dying to one’s passions and desires. Only then can we sing without guile and with full conviction that “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!” ❖



Rev Dr Andrew Peh  
Lecturer in Missions & Missions History

## Spiritual Retreat For Lay Leaders



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“Reading the Bible changed from being informational to transformational.”

“I often did not give myself opportunities for silence. The retreat helped me to enter into silence so as to listen to the Lord.”

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# Robots, AI and Society

By Dr Roland Chia

On 23 Jan 19, Minister for Communications and Information, S. Iswaran, announced that Singapore has released a framework on how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used ethically and responsibly in businesses. Making this announcement at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, Mr Iswaran said that the framework is a ‘living document’ that will evolve as the technology develops and as its applications diversify.

From the second half of the last century onwards, computers, supercomputers, robots and AI have increasingly become part of our lives, signalling the dawn of what Byron Reese has described as the Fourth Age. From self-driving vehicles to the Internet-of-Things, these new technologies, enhanced by the ever-expanding capabilities of AI, have not only changed the way we live and work but also how we relate to one another.

While these game-changing technologies have no doubt benefited society in numerous ways, they have also generated certain anxieties and worries that previously did not exist or were not as acute. It should not surprise us that some writers have speculated about dystopian futures as autonomous machines with super-intelligences take control of society and subjugate their makers.

There is, however, no need to cast our eyes to such a distant future to note the ethical and social concerns surrounding these new technologies (even with their current capabilities). Much debate has already been generated in a wide range of issues such as job loss, privacy, safety, security, inequality and even discrimination (resulting from algorithmic biases). These are large and complex issues for which meaningful and constructive consensus is difficult to achieve.

Space allows us to briefly discuss only two of these concerns.

The first is safety. Already, there are many documented examples of people getting hurt or killed when a robot powered by AI (used for military purposes, for example) malfunctions. For instance, in 2007, a semi-autonomous robotic canon controlled by a computer and deployed by the South African army killed nine ‘friendly’ soldiers when it malfunctioned. Similar risks also present themselves if a robot in a factory or an autonomous vehicle were to malfunction.

Alongside the problem of safety is also that of security. Robots animated by AI, when hacked, can quickly become a security concern. As Patrick Lin points out: “What makes a robot useful — its strength, ability to access and operate in difficult environments, expendability, and so on — could

also be turned against us, either by criminals or simply mischievous persons”. And, when robots are networked with other machines and computers in the Internet-of-Things, the safety and security threats are multiplied many times over.

But quite apart from these practical concerns, the unstoppable march of smart machines also raises more fundamental philosophical questions that science is unable to adequately address — not to mention resolve — on its own. Debate on the philosophical, ethical and social challenges that AI-powered machines poses must therefore be truly inter-disciplinary. This means that it must also take seriously the contributions from religious thinkers.

One such concern, according to Joanna Bryson and Philip Kime, has to do with the ‘general confusion about humanity’ that this new age of intelligent machines can bring about. According to these authors, at the very heart of this confusion is our misidentification (or over-identification) with machine intelligence and how this can distort our ethical judgement resulting in serious consequences.

This misidentification is due to our conception of human nature, which, as a result of the influence of philosophers like Descartes and Kant, is focused mainly on capabilities like ‘reason’. As robots (enhanced by AI) acquire more ‘human’ capabilities like intelligence, memory, and, some would even venture to predict, consciousness, we tend to over-identify with these machines, thereby ‘humanising’ them.

As Bryson and Kime point out, by identifying with machines in this way, “we endow them with the rights and privileges of ethical status”. It is quite common to find in the literature, discussions on whether it is ethical to unplug our computers once it becomes ‘conscious’, or whether an ‘autonomous’ machine that has caused harm should be ‘punished’. The anthropomorphising of intelligent machines has profound cultural and social ramifications.

Additionally, scholars have expressed concern that over-reliance on smart machines can result in the phenomenon they describe as ‘technological dependency’. Taken to the extreme, this would lead to the gradual erosion of skills and knowledge across different fields. For example, as robots out-perform their human counterparts in surgeries that require a certain level of precision, the number of human practitioners with the requisite knowledge and skills to perform those surgeries will decrease drastically.



But technological dependency can also cause society and its institutions to become more fragile and vulnerable. One striking example is the worldwide panic that the Y2K problem caused because so many critical systems such as air-traffic control and banking were dependent on computers.

The Christian response to these unprecedented advances in technology must therefore be characterised by caution and responsible stewardship. Believing that both science and technology are made possible by God’s common grace in the world, Christians should encourage their development and proper use.

But the Christian’s welcome and embrace of these new technologies can never be uncritical or naïve. These cultural artefacts are fashioned by fallen human beings and are therefore in some ways marred by human sinfulness and the distortions and perversions that result.

Thus, due to human sinfulness, the very technologies that were created to benefit the human community can be used against it. To put this differently, these technologies, whose purpose is to serve humankind, can also quite easily become an idol that enslaves their human creators. ❖



**Dr Roland Chia**

Chew Hock Hin Professor of Christian Doctrine  
Theological and Research Advisor  
of the Ethos Institute for Public Christianity

# Faculty Retreat: Visiting Church and Institutional Partners in China

By Dr Leow Theng Huat, Lecturer in Theology

After a hectic 2018, when the College commemorated her 70th anniversary with a series of events and the publication of a commemorative magazine, the TTC faculty looked forward to a retreat, which was held in Shanghai from 20 to 24 May 2019. Besides giving a much needed time of rest and recreation, this retreat enabled us colleagues to cultivate our friendships in an informal setting, while deepening our knowledge of the rich history and culture of China and Chinese Christianity.

Sponsored by one of our wellwishers, this trip also gave us the opportunity to make informal visits to both church and academic organisations in Shanghai, renewing our friendship with our partners and deepening our ties.

On the second day of our retreat, the faculty was divided into three groups for our visits. The first, led by our Principal, Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian, paid a courtesy call to the office of the China Christian Council (CCC) and National Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (TSPM). The TTC team was hosted by Rev Xu Xiaohong, Chairman of the National TSPM, and Rev Shan Weixiang, Vice-President and General Secretary of the CCC. At the meeting, our principal reaffirmed the deep bonds of friendship between TTC and the church in China

where many of our Chinese alumni have returned to serve. He also acknowledged the significant role which the Chinese church plays within global Christianity, and indicated TTC's continued commitment to work with CCC/TSPM. Rev Xu reciprocated our principal's affirmation of friendship and offered an account of recent developments in the Chinese church. Rev Shan then shared some initiatives the Chinese church was undertaking in the area of publications.

The second group, led by our Academic Dean, Dr Tan Kim Huat, paid a visit to the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS). Prof Yan Kejia, the Director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the Academy, welcomed the group and gave a briefing on the history and role of the SASS. He then introduced a few scholars from the Academy, whose research focused on various aspects of the Christian faith. The group from TTC had an interesting discussion with these scholars on topics like religious violence and the effect of the rise of artificial intelligence and social media on religion. The visit ended with a strong affirmation of the friendship between SASS and TTC.

Our Dean of Students, Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun, led the third group on a visit to Huadong Theological Seminary. The members of this group were warmly

received by the Principal, Rev Xie Bingguo, and several of his faculty. After a short introduction to the seminary, the group was brought on a tour of the campus. Our faculty was especially impressed by the excellent facilities Huadong has for training in music and its special collection of over sixty thousand items left by missionaries to China. Rev Xie and Rev Dr Chiang reaffirmed the strong relationship between the two institutions. All three groups ended their visits around lunch time and were separately hosted to sumptuous meals which were deeply appreciated by the faculty.

After these visits, the faculty gathered at the historic Mu'en Church (also known as Moore Memorial Church), where we were hosted by Rev Guo Feng, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Shanghai Christian



Huadong's Rev Xie Bingguo presents a scroll



Rev Xu Xiaohong (TSPM Chairman) with a gift for TTC



The Faculty visits Mu'en Church

Council and TSPM, and Rev Jiang Qianli, the senior pastor of Mu'en Church. After an introduction to the life of Protestant churches in Shanghai, we had a dialogue on Christian ministry and its challenges. Rev Jiang then brought us on a fascinating tour of the church, highlighting its uniquely Chinese way of expressing the gospel.

In addition to these visits, Rev Dr Lim Teck Peng and Dr Chan Yew Ming called on Prof Wang Xinsheng from the School of Philosophy at Fudan University



Discussing Religious Studies Exchange Programme at Fudan

on 23 May. Also present was Ms Li Yijun, a doctoral student of the School of Philosophy, who spent a semester at TTC in 2018 as an exchange research student. The Fudan-Trinity Religious Studies Exchange Programme allows for such exchanges for students in both the English and Chinese departments.

Besides these informal visits, the faculty made an excursion to the historic Zhujiajiao Water Town and had ample opportunities for rest, meaningful conversations and visits to other places of interest. Grateful that the retreat has achieved its objectives, our faculty members returned refreshed and rejuvenated to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of another academic year. ❖



At Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

## More Than An Event: Celebration of Hope Continues

By Rev Dr Andrew Peh, Lecturer in Missions & Missions History

This year, 227 churches and 18000 volunteers came together in a united spirit to make Celebration of Hope possible, an event where 125,000 people gathered over seven rallies through 17 to 19 May 19. Almost 6,000 people responded positively to the message of hope in Jesus Christ, and many more were able to view the testimonies of everyday Singaporeans as well as household names through social media prior to and following the event. "I was especially touched by the efforts of the local churches to reach out to the migrant workers and to hear the testimony of how a group walked to the gathering where they all responded to the Good News," observed Chung Lai Mei.

Although the cost of organising mass rallies at the National Stadium is high, we are reminded of Mary's prodigal gift of lavishing on Jesus a whole pound of precious nard in anticipation of Jesus' obedience and costly sacrifice. "COH was a defining moment of our history," commented Rev Bernard Yee, "as the church responded to a renewed call for unity in the churches in Singapore to come together in prayer and the proclamation of the Gospel." Bishop Rennis Ponniah, the chairman of the event, reminds us, "The event is over but the work has just begun. Local churches and marketplace groups must now joyfully follow through. The people who have been touched by God at the rallies need to be personally and patiently disciplined so that they may become rooted in Christ and transformed by him. In this way, COH will be more than an event; it will be a step towards revival — a revival that will bless Singapore and the nations with the radiant light of a people transformed by the God of all hope." ❖



Photo credit: Celebration of Hope



### Evening Classes 2019

Details at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

The Divine Mission	Introduction to Christian Liturgy	Christian Doctrine	How Then Shall We Live?
Mondays @ Wesley Methodist Church	Tuesdays @ Trinity Theological College	Wednesdays @ St Andrew's Cathedral	Thursdays @ Trinity Theological College
Rev Dr Andrew Peh (Instructor)	Rev Dr Jeffrey Truscott (Instructor)	Rev Dr Edmund Fong (Instructor)	Ps Nathanael Goh (Instructor)
Dates : 16 Sep - 4 Nov Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 17 Sep - 29 Oct Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 18 Sep - 30 Oct Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 19 Sep - 31 Oct Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm

## 2019 Trinity Lectures St Paul on the Absence and Presence of Jesus

By Dr Tan Kim Huat, Chen Su Lan Professor of New Testament and Academic Dean

The recently concluded 5th biennial Trinity Lectures (29 July – 1 August) featured Professor Markus Bockmuehl, who is currently the Dean Ireland Professor of Biblical Exegesis at Oxford University.

The topic attempted is at once simple and profound, exploring and probing what is often taken for granted. How can Jesus as a historical person who lived, died, rose again and ascended to heaven be described in the New Testament as being both present — something many Christians do not need convincing — but also absent in a way that makes us long to depart and be with him? More importantly, what may this paradox mean for our understanding of who we are as the people of God and what God has astonishingly done for our redemption?

Taking us through the data offered by Paul's letters, Professor Bockmuehl set out the paradoxical phenomenon and teased out its theological meaning. The fact that Jesus may be present with us through the Spirit does not exhaust all that may be said of Paul's

teaching about the presence of Jesus. There is an absence that can only be rectified by his coming again and visions of him in bodily form in the interim, something which Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. So where Jesus is now is a valid question and needs clarification. That we find it so hard to offer a full account is due to our incomplete grasp of the structure of reality, the significance and permanence of the incarnation of God, and our present state of being saved and yet awaiting our full redemption.

The chapel where the lectures were delivered was packed and although there was much to chew on, I am certain many were also edified. This is what the Trinity Lectures seeks to do: to stretch us with faithful but original lines of thinking, and point the way to a proper and thankful walk with God in this world, where Jesus, though bodily absent now, may nevertheless be experienced through the Spirit and his community, propelling us forward to the day when he comes again. And for this, and much else besides, we thank God for Professor Bockmuehl's lectures. ❖



Dr Bockmuehl expounding various Pauline texts



Fielding questions from the floor



An engaged audience in a packed chapel

## Joyous Harvest: Graduation 2019

By Elena Yeo, MDiv 2019

On 11 May 19, the 69th Graduation Service of Trinity Theological College was held at Wesley Methodist Church. Elena Yeo, who graduated with a Masters in Divinity, is our valedictorian from the English department. Her exhortation during the ceremony, which we share here, captures the effervescent spirit of the Class of 2019:

“This year’s theme, ‘Joyous Harvest’, describes this big cohort graduating today. Three years ago, we were introducing ourselves to one another. Among us were doctors, lawyers, civil servants, designers and chefs — all harvested from previous vocations and planted into new soil — the TTC community. As young ‘saplings’, we



Dr Chan Yew Ming with graduates from China (Mainland), China (Macau), Malaysia and Myanmar

were initiated into this ‘strange new world’ of theological education; dominated by discussions, debates and jargon. The learning curve was steep.

But we were not alone — our lecturers came alongside to guide and assure us; wives tended the children so their husbands could cram, and friends always lent a listening ear.

To our teachers, loved ones and friends — we are deeply grateful for the sacrifices you have made for us, for believing in us, encouraging us, and praying for us.

To my fellow classmates, let us remember our amazing shared journey — packed with story after story of selfless love shared amongst us; two viral attacks, a knee replacement surgery, a pneumonia attack, a case of appendicitis, and even a heart attack. Amidst busy



Elena Yeo (front row, second from right) with her cohort behind her

schedules, we made hospital and home visits, boiled soups and wrote notes — I was among many recipients. We grew in understanding; our learning took root and our character was pruned; we watched each other mature, and bear fruit.

Today we stand to be harvested again, ready to be transplanted from the TTC community into various ministerial vineyards. Our shared memories of TTC propel us forward: Should we begin to neglect our physical health, remember our weekly sports sessions. When we feel inadequate to lead in song, remember the ‘shimmers’ we mastered in the choir. When we find it difficult to love, remember God’s love freely poured out on us as we huddled together and prayed in tears. And when we grow weary, remember that it is the LORD who has never failed to bring us through our assignments and exams.

To my graduating brothers and sisters, let us be reminded that our learning does not stop here. Let us continue to spur each other on, reminding each other to abide in the True Vine, to remain connected to each other and to stay sharp in our biblical and theological competencies.

Finally, let us always fix our eyes on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith, the LORD of the harvest.

Soli Deo Gloria, Amen.” ❖

## A Celebration to Remember

By Kjelti Koh, MDiv 2019

The Graduation Dinner of 2019 was held at the Jubilee Garden Restaurant at SAFRA Toa Payoh on 9th May.

Bishop Chong Chin Chung set the tone for the evening with prayer. Following the Principal’s, Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian’s speech, we graduating students stormed the stage to dance to a song, aptly titled, “We’re All in This Together”. The audience roared in approval as faculty members, Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun and Rev Dr Edmund Fong, gamely put on their dancing shoes and joined in. With hearts filled with gratitude, the graduating class also distributed tokens of appreciation for lecturers and administrative staff.

It was indeed in line with the graduation theme of “Joyous Harvest” that conversations, sprinkled with laughter,



Students from the graduating cohort

flowed freely. Bishop Terry Kee closed the evening with a prayer of blessing for the graduating students. Indeed, the dinner was a wonderful opportunity for graduating students to appreciate the many stalwart friends, pastors and family members who had stood by us through our significant years in theological education. ❖

## Friends Forever

By Charlotte Ng, MDiv 2019

“Connectedness” was the theme of our graduation retreat, held in Batam, Indonesia, from 6-8 May 2019. Dr Mark Chan, our Homiletics lecturer, helped to unpack this theme, and guide our reflections through his thought-provoking messages.

During our years of spiritual formation in TTC, there were difficulties in relationships and hurtful words exchanged. The final Holy Communion we shared as a graduating class with celebrant, Associate Chaplain, Rev Dr Wilfred Ho, gave us the opportunity to share peace and to reconcile with one another.

On our final night, led by Esther Moses, our classmate from India, we joined our voices to sing Michael W. Smith’s ‘Friends’. We were uplifted by the lyrics. Indeed, “friends are friends forever, if the Lord’s the Lord of them”.

We left Batam with a calm assurance that the special friendships formed at TTC would carry us into our next season of life as we partner with Christ in reaping a joyous harvest! ❖



Go Kart racing before parting ways

# First Steps on the TTC Journey

By Rufus Chan, a 3rd year MDiv student

TTC welcomed almost seventy new students from various parts of East and South-East Asia, and even Turkey, during the college orientation on 1 & 2 Jul 19. New students were briefed by various faculty members and staff on academic requirements and the significance of spiritual formation. Orientation group leaders, seniors and alumni rallied around to offer advice about community life. They also had the opportunity to bond as a cohort through class group time and managed to tour the school through fun and games. Additionally, every student had to go through the choir audition, which turned out to be a highpoint for many. Poignantly, the orientation ended with a rite of passage that saw students laying down their burdens, represented by physical stones, at the cross, before they penned their aspirations for their time at TTC and committed them to the Lord. The day ended with a word of encouragement from our Vice Principal, Rev Dr Edwin Tay. ❖



Icebreaker activities



Choir audition

# Setting Sail at TTC Retreat 2019

By Aldran Wong, a 2nd year MDiv student

This year's College Retreat was held on 3 & 4 Jul 19 on campus, with the theme 'Set Sail', complementing the Council President's theme, 'Building Each Other Up'. This theme was aptly reflected in the Retreat pack which contained an anchor-shaped page holder, an unfinished hand-held wooden cross and some useful stationery items. The talk by Acting Associate Dean of Students, Rev Dr Edmund Fong, on Day 1 reminded us that as we prepare to set sail, we need to know our destination. He went on to exhort the student body to love God and His people. Guided by a set of carefully-crafted questions, the participants were given time for reflection at their preferred quiet spots within TTC. Each participant also wrote a letter to themselves, sharing personal expectations and reflections or prayer. This letter would be returned to the participants on the college Day of Prayer about six weeks later, as a reminder of their initial thoughts at the beginning of the semester. The day ended with bonding time with our Family Groups (FGs).



Acting out the theme "Set Sail"

The speaker for Day 2 was Associate Chaplain, Rev Dr Wilfred Ho, who reminded us of the importance of community in a journey; that while each of them are unique in their own way, God has arranged for this journey of ours together. There was more time for reflection before bonding over inter-FG games. After lunch at the Dining Hall, the FGs left for a Prayer Awareness Walk that heightened participants' awareness of the various communities in and around TTC. The FGs gathered back in the Chapel for a final address by the Council President, Daniel Lee, before ending the College Retreat with the TTC anthem. ❖

# TRINITY NEWS

## Congratulations to...

The following alumni on their ordination by the Diocese of Singapore on 7 July 2019.

*To the Diaconate:*

- Mr Glenn Chan Jian Wen (MDiv 2017)
- Mr Ian Chew Houng Meing (MDiv 2017)
- Mr Ezra Sivakumar S/o Sathiasillan (MDiv 2016)
- Mr Ian Dudley Dierden (MDiv 2000)
- Mr Thomas Jacob S/o Isaac (BD 2015)
- Mr Lew Kiat Lern (MDiv 2017)

*To the Priesthood:*

- Rev Adrian Chong Kum Cheong (BD 2014)
- Rev Hambali Leonardi (MDiv 2005)
- Rev Calvin Wee Eng Huat (BD 2016)
- Rev Tay Hong Ern (MDiv 2014)

Joint Ordination with The Church of the Province of Myanmar

*To the Diaconate :*

- Mr Moses Israeli (MDiv 2019)

Lam Wee Kian (MDiv 2) on the celebration of his marriage to Li Ying Le on 8 Jun 2019.

Cecilia Pek Hui Ling (MDiv 2019) on the celebration of her marriage to Joshua Ong (BD 2018) on 18 May 2019.

Moses Ajay Patras (BD 2019) and his wife, Serena Jabamani Caldwell, who were joined in holy matrimony on 15 Jun 2019.

Liu Wisda (MTh 2019) and Hendry Bunarta who were joined in holy matrimony on 17 Jun 2019.

Nandin-Erdene Nyamkhuu (MDiv 2019) and Nyamdorj Amgalanbaatar on their marriage on 22 Jun 2019.

Elijah Chek Jia Jun (BD 2017) and Ye Can Can (MMin 2017) on the birth of their son Chek Yu on 17 Jul 2019.

## Condolences to...

Isaac Tan (MDiv 2) on the demise of his grandmother, Mdm Teng Teo Huay, on 30 Apr 2019.

The family of the late Sam Goh Choo Peng (BTh 1971) who has returned to our Lord Jesus on 15 May 2019.

Dr Douglas E Wingeier (missionary lecturer in Christian Education (English and Chinese), Jan 63 – Aug 70; visiting professor, 1993) on the passing of his beloved wife, Carol, on 4 Jul 2019. She was 89.

Dr Tan Loe Joo and his wife, Nyeo Hon, on the passing of her beloved father on 11 Jul 2019. He was 79.

Philip Poh (MDiv 2006) on the demise of his beloved wife, Theresa Tan, on 31 Jul 2019.

## We Invite you to Support the Ministry of Trinity Theological College

Your support will enable our college to :

- be equipped with a competent and dedicated faculty
- keep tuition fees affordable
- offer financial subsidies to less fortunate students
- house an outstanding theological library in the region
- organise workshops and conferences at minimal cost
- furnish and maintain our 18-year-old campus

Here are some ways you may contribute to our ministry:

- By Cheque to 'Trinity Theological College'
- By Bank or ATM transfer to our DBS current account 033-017261-3
- By scanning this QR code or <PayNow> to UEN No. T01CC1488C
- By Way of Bequests to TTC. We shall be pleased to discuss this plan with you. You may email the principal@ttc.edu.sg or call 6767 6677



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)



# Upcoming Ethos Events

ETHOS ANNUAL SEMINARIES CONFERENCE 2019

## Dei Verbum: THE BIBLE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Date: Saturday, 28 September 2019

Time: 9am - 5pm

Venue: 7 Armenian Street, Bible House, Level 5, S179932

### THE ROLE AND RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

This year, in collaboration with eight seminaries and Bible colleges, the Ethos Annual Seminaries Conference features a panel of four distinguished speakers comprising Dr Lee Chee Chiew (SBC), Dr Lai Pak Wah (BGST), Dr Scott N Callaham (BTS) and Rev Dr Lewis Winkler (EAST). Join our speakers as they explore topics such as Scripture as God's Word, Scripture and Tradition, Scripture and Worship and Scripture and Society. For more information, please visit our website at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

### ETHOS ANNUAL LECTURE 2019

## The Internet Age and the Plastic Self: Reshaping Identity through Christian Practice

Date: Thursday, 24 October 2019

Time: 7.30pm - 9.00pm

Venue: 7 Armenian Street, Bible House, S179932



### Speaker Profile

Rev Dr Simon Chan is the former Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College. He has authored several books on theology including *Spiritual Theology* and *Liturgical Theology* (both from IVP Academic). Currently, Rev Dr Chan is Editor of the *Asia Journal of Theology (AJT)*, the academic journal of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia.

More information will be available at [www.ethosinstitute.sg](http://www.ethosinstitute.sg)

**TRUMPET EDITORIAL:** Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian (Editor),  
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