

## Preface

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Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology (TTGST) celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2008. What the Lord has done in ten short years is more than remarkable. In August of 1997, the Presidents and Academic Deans Congress (PAD) met in Pretoria, South Africa, where some three hundred leaders from seminaries around the world came together for a week of consultation on theological education in order to prepare Christian leaders for the twenty-first century. The Torch Trinity catalog was prepared and distributed to the participants in attendance. As the founding president of Torch Trinity, I served as the chairman of the PAD Congress and Dr. Bong Rin Ro, then Torch Trinity's academic dean, played a key role in the leadership of the Congress and with Dr. Robert Coleman of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in the process of formulating the PAD Declaration. Even before the first classes commenced, Torch Trinity was known to the world through the PAD Conference. It was a small beginning but the Lord has proved faithful beyond our imagination.

The initial preparation for founding Torch Trinity actually goes back further to 1991 when Dr. Kenneth Meyer, President and later Chancellor of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) in Deerfield, Illinois, began to visit, at least once a year, the Korean Center for World Mission (Torch Mission Center) in Seoul. His purpose was to persuade the Torch Mission Center to open jointly a branch campus of TEDS. Encouraged by his regular visitations, the Torch Mission Center opened a continuing education program with TEDS, offering nine modular courses for Korean pastors. From November 1992 through August 1993, TEDS sent its leading professors to Korea for eight weeks. Each professor taught a one-week class, and the Korean pastors who completed their courses were awarded certificates and TEDS admission privileges. This program was so popular that a thousand pastors from all over the country registered for each session, taking all of us at the Torch Mission Center by surprise. At that time, TEDS was practically unknown in Korea because only a handful of Korean ministers had attended TEDS as compared to other major evangelical seminaries in the USA and because the denomination affiliated with TEDS had no presence in Korea, either through mission activity or church affiliation.

By 1993, however, TEDS became a household name in Korea due in part to the great success of the TEDS continuing education program through the Torch Center. On the success of this program, Dr. Meyer's

desire to establish a TEDS branch at the Torch Mission Center increased. In 1996, the Uruguay Round was signed and the world opened up to trade and mutual cooperation; Korea was no exception. Along with this change came an opportunity for TEDS to pursue more actively a branch campus in Korea. In that year, the Torch Mission Center finally agreed to cooperate with TEDS to open a branch school, thus starting the long and arduous process of consulting with the Korean Ministry of Education for permission. However, a newly enacted Korean education law was particularly unfavorable and required TEDS to invest a forbiddingly large sum into this project. We decided then to apply as an independent seminary under the name of Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology, with a separate board, administration, and faculty. From its inception, therefore, TTGST existed as a sister-school in relation to TEDS rather than as a branch campus.

At the beginning of the government approval process, prospects looked hopeful, but the application was twice rejected by the Korean government for two reasons. The Ministry of Education disallowed both the sharing of the campus with the Torch Mission Center and the counting of four TEDS professors as part of the initial eight-member faculty. All eight professors had to reside physically in Korea. While TTGST still hoped that all four would be sent, only one was able to come on a full-time basis. Other TEDS professors were invited as modular course lecturers during the winter and summer breaks.

To resolve the campus issue, TTGST received the partial donation of the Torch Mission Center property so that the school could form a legally independent entity. Further, TTGST and the Torch Mission Center were required by the government to split the entire campus into two by a two-meter-high wall with separate entrances and even separate parking spaces. For an aesthetic building that does not easily lend itself to being split in half, the walls and dividers throughout the campus were rather unsightly and impractical. Looking back, we now laugh at how the laws at the time were so inflexible and how our solutions were so accommodating.

After two years of intense effort, the Korean Ministry of Education finally granted accreditation to TTGST, allowing an initial enrollment of three hundred students for four degree programs: the Master of Arts, the Master of Divinity, the Master of Theology, and the Doctor of Philosophy. In 1998, Torch Trinity opened as the first English-language graduate school in Korean history, and admitted one hundred top-notch graduate students for masters-level degrees. The classes were held in the current campus at Yangjae-dong, Seoul, while students and international faculty were housed in a newly-acquired apartment building in Kiheung, Yongin City. In three years, TTGST was expected to enroll fully three hundred

students. Many Koreans seriously doubted whether theological education could be successfully conducted in English in Korea. Their doubts, however, quickly began to fade when TTGST proved itself.

It has already been ten years since the birth of Torch Trinity, and more than three hundred students from some thirty-nine countries around the world have graduated from TTGST, serving the Lord in their respective countries. Some of our graduates have now earned Ph.D. degrees from respected postgraduate schools in the USA and Europe, and are now involved with teaching ministries. In December of 2008, TTGST saw its largest graduating class with eighty-eight students from thirteen countries. Three years ago, the Korean Ministry of Education increased TTGST's enrollment cap to include one hundred more students. TTGST now operates a Korean language track in addition to the main English language program.

The Lord has prospered Torch Trinity beyond the expectations of its three presidents: first myself as the founding president; Dr. Kenneth Meyer, the second president; and the school's current president, Dr. Yong-Jo Ha. Dr. Bong Rin Ro served as the first academic dean, and is now enjoying his retirement in Hawaii. Dr. Glenn A. Jent, who is still teaching at Torch Trinity, served as the second dean. Dr. Jung-Sook Lee serves as the current dean. The school has twenty-two full-time faculty members; their cultural and educational backgrounds include Asia, Eastern Europe, the UK, and the USA. In addition to master's-level degrees in theology, Christian education, and Christian counseling, Torch Trinity also offers two PhD degree programs in Christian counseling and in intercultural studies.

The Angel Project offers professors opportunities to serve in mission fields during breaks or through a semester. Praise and worship is dynamic in chapel. Student fellowship is strong. Academic excellence is pursued with vigor. Mission-mindedness has continued to be central to the school since its conception. Character building is emphasized. Well-rounded international spiritual leadership is being formed for the 21st century at Torch Trinity.

The theme of the present journal is "Theological Education in Asia." This is the first time that an Asian theological journal includes diverse articles that focus on theological education in Asia. I would like to especially recognize Dr. Bong Rin Ro's long awaited article, "A History of ATA: 1970 to 1990." Dr. Ro served the Asia Theological Association as general secretary for twenty years from its inception in 1970 until he returned to Korea in 1990. His article covers the history of the ATA from 1970-1990, which surveys the growth of theological education in Asia and shows its progressive development. I believe this is the first official journal publication of the ATA's history in English. Theo-

logical education came a long way in Asia. The name of the Lord is to be praised; through ATA-affiliated seminaries, Asian Christians are being trained in Asia.

Korea alone has more people who hold Ph.D. degrees in theological fields than the rest of Asia combined. Young, capable theologians are coming up from Asian countries. We are also seeing the rise of capable women theologians as well, which is a very welcomed and relatively recent phenomenon. In previous generations, most Korean Christian women scholars taught in the field of Christian Education. However, today, they are teaching in all of the major theological fields that have traditionally been dominated by men. The wall of prejudice and discrimination against women in theological education is coming down for good.

One future challenge is to write the rest of the ATA's history. From 1990 to 2000, Dr. Ken Gnanakan of India served as ATA general secretary; from 2000 to 2007, Rev. Derek Tan of Singapore served; and from 2007 to present, Dr. Joseph Shao of the Philippines serves as the current general secretary. We need to see a whole history of theological education in Asia presented. It is my wish that *Torch Trinity Journal* dedicates itself to pursue this worthy project in the near future. I am grateful to all the contributors, reviewers, and editorial staff of the journal.

Sang-Bok David Kim\*  
Hallelujah Community Church, Korea

\* Rev. Dr. Sang-Bok David Kim (ThD, DD, DLitt), senior pastor of Hallelujah Community Church near Seoul, is currently chairman of the World Evangelical Alliance. He is the founding President of Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology and currently serves as President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology. Dr. Kim also served for many years at chairman of the Asia Theological Association.