

## from the president's desk



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The true riches of the understanding that the God whom we worship is Trinitarian were not appropriated until the time of the Cappadocian theologians in the fourth century. Mystic and visionary, they sensed that the being of God is more bound up with vitality and blossoming and endless creativity than it is with hierarchy and limits. The Trinity expressed more than a formula (three persons, one being) and much more than a sense that there is a top God and two derived ones. Looking for analogies to express what hitherto had not been spoken of, they thought of flame. As one flame, without diminishment of dignity or lessening of vitality, may lead to another, so it is with God. At a stroke, that notion rebuked hierarchies and any defensive attempt to bottle up energy. So it is in truly Christian life. And so it is with teaching.

We are trying, as a body, and with the involvement of our students, to look hard at what we teach, whom we teach, and what it is for. That makes us ask what we expect our students to know at the end, what we think they can do, and how they learn. My belief is that they will constantly surprise us. All this, in turn, raises questions about our identity in a different way. Whom do we really serve? Which culture are we addressing—the 1950s, the 1980s, or the third millennium? How has the world changed?

Individuals often respond to anxiety by closing ranks. Academic institutions do so by attempting to maintain standards. But ever more is to miss the point. It is an acknowledgement of our own ineffectiveness to attempt to cram two pints into a pint bottle. Education, and especially Christian education, is not about anxiety-driven overload, but about releasing creativity—about unjealously allowing a new flame to burn. Looking at our curriculum in terms of outcomes—what our students should know and what they can do—should shift the center of gravity from faculty teaching to student learning, and thus, I hope, more readily connect with a changing and exhilarating world and vocation. We'll report more as this proceeds, but a beginning has been made, and in the hands of the newly appointed dean, Darrell Guder, I am confident that we will serve both church and learning in faithful and exciting ways.

As I write, I have almost completed a year at PTS. It has been a time of making new friendships and rising to different tasks. The kindness of my colleagues and of members of the Board of Trustees has immensely helped me. Of course, I long to be joined by Morag, and she will come back with me at the end of July. Meantime, I am about to return to Rome (to meet the scholars with whom Jim Charlesworth of our New Testament faculty has been working), and will join in the 50th anniversary of the Haigazian University in Beirut where our graduate Paul Haidostian is president. Many groups of alumni/ae and other friends of PTS across America have welcomed me, and I look forward to meeting more of you. It has been a rewarding first year, and I look forward to the future.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Iain Torrance". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Iain R. Torrance



### An Ecumenical and Electronic Future

I am delighted to have read Barbara Chaapel's article on Iain Torrance (summer/fall 2004). He strikes me as ideally placed to lead PTS in the tough times immediately ahead. From his days on the Shetland Islands through his service as a military chaplain to his Aberdeen and homeland church successes, he is thoroughly prepared. His enthusiasm for the internet and the world church strikes just the right note. How fitting that PTS has reached into its 2nd millennium past to appoint a Church of Scotland moderator to lead it into a 3rd millennium's ecumenical and electronic future! We sing that the Lord moves in mysterious ways, and experience its truth often enough. My hunch is that God's hand guided the committee.

*Bob Meyer ('56B)*  
*Canberra, Australia*

Please write—we love to hear from you!

We welcome correspondence from our readers. Letters should be addressed to:

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Letters may be edited for length or clarity, and should include the writer's name, address, and telephone number.