



Yale Divinity School



CONVOCATION 2004

Heard In and Around the Quad

“In my view, just about the worst thing that could happen to a Christian theologian is for any of us to be taken too seriously. I don't mean to imply that you and I are farcical figures, of course. Perhaps we could be better compared to children wading, studiously cautious, not intending to get wet, but magnificently upended by the vast, joyful rolling of the tide. The tide pulling at theologians is God, trying to get us to float, even swim, or at least admit that we have no business floundering along on two feet in such a current. I picture theologians this way (myself included) because we are essentially hapless folk, ever prone to manage and clarify what remains, mercifully, beyond our grasp.”



Mark McIntosh, associate professor of theology, Loyola University, Chicago, 2004 Cheney Lecture

MY
SOUL
FEELS
BETTER!

J. Kenneth Kuntz enjoyed a 9 a.m. course he took with Norvin Hein, professor emeritus of comparative religion and religious studies. The only problem, he told Hein and classmates at the 1958, 1959, 1960 cluster gathering, was that class invariably let out late. Kuntz and his roommate had an idea. They would get an alarm clock, set it to go off when class should end, and put it in the desk Hein taught from. “All of a sudden, the darn clock rings,” Kuntz recalled. Hein reached into the desk drawer, brought the clock out, and calmly announced, “I don't know who put it here, but whoever did can pick it up later.” Looking over to the table where Hein was seated more than four decades later, Kunz confessed, “I was the one who put it there. My soul feels better!”

J. Kenneth Kuntz, B.D. '59, at cluster gathering of Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960

“I was like a highly trained racing horse ready to run in the ministry who couldn't get out of the box.”

Elizabeth Dodson Gray, B.D. '54, feminist theologian and author, recalling her struggle to balance obligations to family and professional aspirations, at 50th Reunion Panel Discussion “In Light of 50 Years of Ministry”

“So Manette and Harry, all Hail!
As they toast you with bench and with ale,
Thanks for doing your parts
With your minds and your hearts
For God and for Country and Yale.”

From a poem written by **Penelope Laurans** on behalf of **Yale University President Richard C. Levin**. The poem was read at the dedication of a bench and section of Sterling Divinity Quadrangle honoring Harry Adams, the Horace Bushnell Professor Emeritus of Christian Nurture, and his wife, Manette.



“The prophet must be a voice of peace... In so doing, if we are to speak, live, act and move in the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we find it necessary to speak truth to power, and some people find this rather difficult because we are razzled and dazzled by power.

“The prophet has the responsibility of speaking truth to power, never being seduced or intimidated by it. The prophet comes in many apparels, sometimes in rags, but seldom in royal robes. God has to hide us when we are called to prophetic ministry before God reveals us. When God calls us, there is no turning back.

“Judging by today's standards, Jesus failed. He didn't get called to any church, didn't get a professorship, and certainly didn't get tenure. Be he passed through the midst of them and went his way.

“Evaluate what you have counted a failure. It might be your most magnificent moment—if you are speaking truth to power, reaching out to connect with all the agonies and needs and sufferings of the world, and if you are on a bold adventure because the spirit of the Lord is upon you.

“Our ministry must be a ministry of love, to the extent that you're willing to die practicing it... It is not safe to love in the way I'm talking about... The kind of love I am talking about will not prevent you from being crucified, but it will enable you to pray, ‘Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”

Otis Moss, Jr., Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland, OH, 2004 Beecher Lectures

Bob Grant once delivered a practice sermon in Browne Barr's class that he had prepared in the wee hours of the morning. Partway through the sermon, said Grant, Barr stood up to say, “Bob Grant, if you don't wake up you're going to put all of us to sleep.” That's just what Grant needed. “Needless to say,” he recalled, “I woke up.”

Robert Grant, B.D. '59, at cluster gathering of Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960

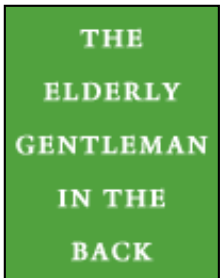
I DRAW
UPON YDS
RESOURCES
EVERY DAY.

“I draw upon YDS resources every day. Two current and critical topics illustrate the need for these resources, issues that engage me in my job, as I know they engage you. One is the unprecedented blurring of the Constitutional distinctions between church and state, and the manner in which religion is being inserted into our current election cycle by the Christian right. The other is the significant role religion plays in the fight against terrorism, our involvement in Iraq, as well as the continued violence in Israel and Palestine. I commend each of you for the leadership role you play in your own communities in the advocating for peace and justice, both at home and around the world.”

Lois Capps, '64 M.A.R., U.S. Representative, 23rd Congressional District, in letter to alumni acknowledging her selection for the 2004 Alumni Award for Distinction in Community Service

“I find myself as one of the obscure laborers... in the front lines of pastoral care in a more obscure and silent place.”

A **member of the audience** at 50th Reunion Panel Discussion “In Light of 50 Years of Ministry,” noting that the panelists all seemed to operate at “high levels of visibility.”



David Krehbiel recalled how delighted he was when the Williams College chaplain called on him and a couple of Krehbiel's YDS buddies from Williams College to drive up to Massachusetts and pick up a special guest who was scheduled to give a talk at Yale-Paul Tillich.

Classmate Dave Loomis was driving, said Krehbiel, and got stopped by a policeman on the way up to Williamstown. He got off with a warning.

They picked up Tillich, and the ride back was going marvelously, to the point where one of the students at one point got up the courage to say to the legendary theologian, "I totally disagree!"

It wasn't long before the carload of YDS students and Tillich were back on the same stretch of road where Loomis had been stopped on the way up. They were stopped again, this time by a different officer, who asked Loomis, "Have you ever been stopped on this road before?"

Loomis acknowledged that he had. "The policeman became rather philosophical," recalled Krehbiel. Spying Tillich, the policeman asked, "How would you feel if the elderly gentleman in back were injured or killed?"

After they drove away, "the elderly gentleman in back" commented wryly of the policeman, "How righteous he became!" It was a trip Krehbiel and his buddies would never forget.

David Krehbiel, B.D. '59, at cluster gathering of Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960

“It's so different from when we were here; it was really a strong community... I think that's the (lack of) housing, the buildings.”

Susan Klein, M.Div. '77, at Alumna Board Convocation Meeting

“Christians have always worked to constrain the meanings of their sacred texts. This is not a new insight, but possibly it's one of those old insights that we need constantly to reassert for ourselves.

“It is relatively easy to see how Christians of earlier periods worked to make the texts speak to their own situations, sometimes using interpretive strategies that today strike us as alien, or bizarre, or wrong-headed... it is important for us to realize that we are all children of our own age. The methods we learn in exegesis classes and apply to these texts are so logical and persuasive to us that they appear natural and obvious. So did the methods that earlier Christians used in earlier ages. These Christians were not less intelligent than us. Yet their approaches, and the resultant interpretations, were quite different



“If nothing else, this should teach us that despite our claims as historical critics, interpretation is not a matter of letting texts speak for themselves. Interpreters necessarily view texts in a certain light, whether they want to acknowledge it or not, and constraints are placed on our reading—on us—by our methods and approaches to texts. This is neither a good thing or bad, it is simply the reality of our, and everyone's, situation....



“Who is Christ? Is he human? Is he divine? Is he Jewish? Is he anti-Jewish? For most of us, the answers have been given to us in our traditions and we have clear views about them, even if they are not the most pressing of our concerns. But we do have other concerns, other salient issues that disturb us and drive us to consider the options provided us by our traditions. The texts of Scripture continue to speak to these issues. For that reason if for no other, it is important for us to recognize the nature of these texts and to take care in how we approach them in our own attempts to constrain the ways they are read.

Bart D. Ehrman, James A. Gray Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2004 Shaffer Lecture

“So when the shadows lengthen
 Across the landscape of my soul,
 And doubt draws near, I will seek the light.
 I will recite the creeds, receive the sacraments,
 Search again the scriptures, sing the hymns,
 Hear the Word brought forth.
 And in the end, if it does all come to naught,
 And I am the one deceived,
 It will have been a glorious deception.”

Bud Hayes, B.D. '58, selection from his poem *A Confession of Faith*, read at the cluster gathering for the Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960

“I think we have to adapt to the kind of community we are... We need to create both temporal space as well as physical space... We are recognizing we're not the kind of community we were 50 years ago.”

Dean Harry Attridge, comments to the Alumna Board on steps YDS is taking to nurture a sense of community at a time when there is no longer student housing on the Quad—including after-chapel gatherings in the Common Room, retreats focused on community life, and subunits of denominational, ethnic, and interest-based student groups that interact with one another and the broader YDS community.



“I see a continuity between your presence here and what we are trying to do today... a legacy that includes loyalty and a kind of presence that you might not realize... Your time years ago is part of our time at YDS now... We have great students, great faculty. We have great administrators... We have a great dean. A dean who is an efficient administrator and who is personable and an advocate for the faculty.”

Margaret Farley, Gilbert Stark Professor of Christian Ethics, speaking to alums about life at YDS in 2004, at cluster gathering for the Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960

“Jonah might have been changed if he had prayed for Nineveh as fervently as he prayed for himself. How shall we pray, you and I, sitting here in this chapel in the belly of the Empire?”

(to the music of “God Bless America ”)

“God bless the world we love,
Stranger and friend;
Go before us, restore us
With a hope that despair cannot end.
Ev'ry people, ev'ry nation,
Mighty ocean, heaven's dome.
God bless the world we love,
Our fragile home.
God bless the world You love,
Our fragile home.”

Barbara Lundblad, M.Div. '79, Oct. 13 sermon at Convocation

“(There is) a real feeling that the school does need to be more cross-culturally sensitive... (there is) a Western Christian emphasis, but a large segment of Christians are outside the Western world.”

Gwen Alexis, M.A.R. '98, at Alumna Board Convocation Meeting



On one particularly cold day, Robert Croskery was invited to the home of Roland and Ruth Bainton on Long Island Sound. To Croskery's great surprise, Roland Bainton at one point asked, “Bob, how would you like to go swimming in the Sound? If you haven't, you haven't lived.” As much as he wanted to please the great teacher, Croskery wasn't so anxious to get wet in the cold. He had a ready excuse: he had not brought a bathing suit. But Bainton, with a ready answer for everything, was prepared. He just happened to have a suit that fit Croskery perfectly. Recalled Croskery, “He had a bathing suit of every size.”

Robert Croskery, B.D. '59, at cluster gathering of Classes of 1958, 1959, 1960