

FROM THE DEAN

Dear Alumni and Friends of Yale Divinity School,

What an extraordinary year it has been for all of us! The seemingly endless presidential election resulted in an historic change of the political and social landscape. That political change came at a time of economic turmoil that is affecting everyone in this country. International challenges continue to haunt us. Encompassing all the economic and political strife is the global environment, which continues its rapid and frightening warming. In the midst of all of this we at YDS continue to educate pastoral leaders who will bring good news to this troubled world. At the heart of that good news is the proclamation of the love of God, from which, as Paul assures us, nothing will separate us.

To study the Gospel and the ways it has been understood, to get to know the institutions that have proclaimed and fostered it, all of this has long been the task of Yale Divinity School and its partners in theological education, Berkeley Divinity School and the Institute of Sacred Music. But to carry out that mission, we need to take account of that wider world in which we find ourselves.

This year, several events and initiatives took place illustrating our commitment to learn from our traditions and to apply them creatively to the present. A conference in the spring, *Middle Passage Conversations*, organized by our new Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Emilie Townes, brought together a stellar collection of African American scholars and activists to reflect on the African American experience and its impact on religion.

Few tasks could be more important than addressing the fault line between the Christian and Islamic worlds. Our efforts to do so began with the Yale response in the fall of 2007 to the “Common Word” declaration by 138 Muslim scholars. That response started a process that culminated in a major international conference at Yale in July of 2008. Participants from around the Islamic world met with Christian scholars and pastors for a week of intense discussion. The Yale conference, under the leadership of Miroslav Volf and Joseph Cumming, was among the first of a series of such international conferences this year, including several that featured our colleagues and alumni.

The fall 2008 “Faith and Globalization” seminar team taught by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Miroslav Volf, and jointly sponsored by the School of Management,

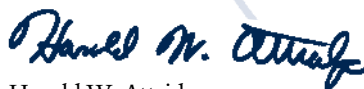
was another global dimension of our work. The seminar will form the basis for collaboration with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. More on the seminar is available on its website: faithandglobalization.yale.edu.

High-profile events such as these are important, but the work of preparing our students for service in an increasingly connected world continues at the curricular level as well, with exchange programs with overseas institutions, programs for visiting scholars, and travel seminars—this year to Brazil. As part of our efforts to be sensitive to the challenges and opportunities created by the spread of Christianity throughout the globe, we have begun a new initiative, under the leadership of Lamin Sanneh, on World Christianity. We have also started a new initiative on Religion and Politics, under the leadership of Harry Stout. You will soon be hearing more about both of these efforts.

The work of theological scholarship and education has grown in its complexity, but some things remain constant, among them the need to support our superb students. Due to the marvelous growth in Yale’s endowment in recent years and to the extraordinary generosity of our supporters, we have made significant progress in raising the level of scholarship assistance, which next year will reach to 90 percent of tuition revenue (up from 55 percent seven years ago). Maintaining and enhancing that level of aid further will be a challenge in difficult economic times, but the generosity of our alumni and friends that has made so much possible so quickly will carry us forward.

As always, I am personally grateful for your support and speak for all of the faculty and students of YDS in thanking you.

God Bless....



Harold W. Attridge
Dean of Yale Divinity School and
Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament

