

Marquand Chapel  
Thursday, October 20, 2005

**Theopneumatology**  
Laura Sponseller

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, II Timothy 3:14-17

Hear, O Divinity School:  
the Lord our God has many –ologies;  
and you shall study these –ologies  
with all your intellect  
and with all your scholarship,  
and with all your might.  
And these words which I command you this day  
shall be upon your laptop

Christology  
ecclesiology  
eschatology  
hamartology  
soteriology  
pneumatology

And you shall weave them diligently  
into papers and dissertations  
while your children are at day care  
or you wait to have children  
or you wait until Christmas break to see your grandchildren.  
And you shall speak of these words  
while you sit in your study groups  
and when you walk in the stacks  
And you shall think upon these words  
when you sit down in the Day Missions room in daylight  
and when you rise in full dark  
at 10:45pm as the lights flick on and off, on and off.  
And you shall bind them in your neurons  
and they shall be pillars of your rational papers,  
and you shall write these with footnotes  
and they shall not be too late.

But woe to you  
if you put these words in your sermons.  
Woe to you if you clutch them too tightly, for too long.  
Yes, rest with them,  
wrestle with them, in articles, in section, in books,

maybe even books that you write, lectures you give,  
even delight in them,  
in the austere rigor of the words,  
but no need to clutch them too tightly  
for they are not meant to be all that we have.

As you are taught here, rebuked, corrected,  
and trained in righteousness,  
thoroughly equipped for every good work,  
remember also that  
all Scripture is God-breathed.

God-breathed.

*Theopneustos.*

Can you say it with me?

( )

God-breathed.

Listen for this breath, this

*Ruach*

the wind from God that sweeps over the face of the waters  
when darkness covers the face of the deep

Listen for the breath

*Neshema*

The breath that brings dust into life

The breath that is not pinned down in long words

not even in very long ones

The breath which is only imperfectly contained within the hard edges  
of any -ology

(Listen for) the breath that moves in the spaces between words  
and in the music behind them.

And with your breath  
speak sometimes of living water

of long journeys

your footfalls on dusty roads

bread at table

blood dripping on the stones

a cross silhouetted on the sky.

There's labored, painful breathing here,

each word an open wound

a breath that is the last.

But not the last.

Breathe the fragrance of the empty tomb.

Imagine these things.

Feel them.

Stand in the locked house with the disciples

next to the risen Christ  
as he breathes on them, on you,  
and says to them, to you,  
“Receive the Holy Spirit.”

*Pneuma.*

Receive the holy breath.

Listen.

Come outside sometimes,

play with children,

sit on the grass of the Quad—

feel the wind there, the sun on your face

sing at the Blessing of the Animals

with Violet the gray rabbit

hippity-hopping on the altar

dogs sniffing around, tongues lolling.

Speak of these things, too.

And love the Lord your God

with all your heart,

and with all your soul,

and with all your might.

And these words shall be upon your heart. Amen.