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Excellence in Teaching Award Citation for Leonard Thompson

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University Award for Excellence in Teaching

Leonard Thompson, Professor of Religion

"Since you first took up residence in Main Hall, outfitted with the essential tools of your trade--one Bible, one pipe, and a thousand books of exegesis--you have demonstrated in deeds what we all recognize in maxim: that teaching and learning mutually reinforce and enrich one another and that they flourish best as community activities.

As a teacher you have with Job-like patience led students into difficult texts, encouraging them on the way to probe the details of context, syntax, and word; and you have led them out again, demanding in the process that they reassess the whole from new and challenging perspectives. Through it all you have recognized the potency of this process we call education, and you have been sensitive to and understanding of its impact on all dimensions of our students' lives.

As a learner you have crossed walks, disciplines, and intellectual swords in pursuit of new insights into the Bible. On your heuristic way, you have been seduced by structuralism, tantalized by transformations, and fascinated by frames; and you are now, it is rumored, beckoned to by borders. Who knows what lies beyond.

As they have joined you in your quest for knowledge, both your students and your colleagues have come to know well the Thompson manner: that quiet, gentle, but ultimately tough-minded way in which you hold an idea up to the light, turn it around, look at its every facet, and drive towards an informed judgment. Your students and your colleagues also know that your search for truth is cloaked with the redeeming virtues of tolerance, charity, and wit, albeit of a peculiarly Hoosier cast.

As a scholar of the Bible you have written innovatively for your peers, even as you have written imaginatively for your students; and you have brought to your writing the fruits of your teaching and learning even as you have brought to your classroom the fruits of your learning and writing. Yours is a justly earned reputation, indeed a reputation so strong that you dared to title a course 'Apocalypse Then and Now' and yet managed to escape reproof from the thundering horsemen of the faculty lounge and the faculty lunch table.

It is my pleasure to present to Leonard Thompson the 1981 Excellent Teacher Award."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1981