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Honorary Degree Award Citation for Leonard Thompson

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Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

Leonard L. Thompson, Professor of Religious Studies

"Leonard Thompson, your research on Biblical literature has changed the way the academy examines the scriptures, for you have taken the testaments as a single literature, with a profound unified meaning, rather than as discreet works to be parsed and dissected. Indeed, it has been the integration of knowledge that has marked your distinguished scholarly accomplishments and your highly successful teaching. You have connected ancient texts to their worlds in your own work, and you have connected the scholarly disciplines to one another as a teacher and as a leader of curricular examination at Lawrence.

In a time when reason and intelligence were more common than they are today on the public airwaves, you even brought your wise explanations of the relationship of biblical literary studies to contemporary civic life to a much larger audience in a regular radio program. Never didactic, you have educated your students first of all as thinkers, as citizens who can contemplate issues in a context broader than their personal experience, and who can therefore live considerate lives. But you have also helped them to understand that real contemplation requires discipline. Your courses have been organized so subtly and artfully that students may not know that lesson is being taught until years beyond graduation, when they come to appreciate the education in structured thought they had from you. It has left them truly open-minded thinkers, the best examples of liberal education.

You have been a tireless and productive scholar whose teaching has constantly been informed by your own research. You have made the Bible and related subjects vibrantly alive, even for students who thought there was nothing more to learn about them. And with wry Hoosier wit--at least I'm told it is wit--you served your college and your colleagues with a dedication in a decanal role as well. In all settings and situations, you have embodied a rare blend of intellect and imagination, of rigor and innovation whose impact upon this institution will endure.

By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, its privileges, and its obligations."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1995