

## WALTER JOSEPH HARRELSON

Biblical scholar, teacher, translator, builder of bridges among religious denominations, and distinguished academic administrator, Walter Harrelson has, like the Old Testament prophets he knows so well, been a clarion voice for the understanding of religion in the modern world. His career was crowned in 1990 with the publication of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible: he served as a member of the Translation Committee from 1976 and as its Vice Chair from 1979. He recently co-authored an account of this work in a book called The Making of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

A native of Winnabow, North Carolina, he served in the United States Navy from 1941 to 1945 and then completed his B.A. degree at this University in 1947. He went on to receive his Doctor of Theology degree at Union Theological Seminary. He arrived at the University of Chicago in 1955 as Dean of the School of Divinity, an office he held for five years. In 1960, he moved to Vanderbilt University as Professor of Old Testament, going on to serve as Dean of the Divinity School from 1967 to 1975 and Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible from 1975 until his retirement in 1990. Today he is Director of the Lilly Ministry Project at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

On leave from Vanderbilt, he became Rector of the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Jerusalem from 1977 to 1978 and then a member of its Advisory Council from 1980 to 1984. He has been a member of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation since 1991 and has worked with special interest on manuscript sources long hidden in Ethiopian monasteries.

His published scholarship represents an equally wide range of interests. Among his distinguished works are From Fertility Cult to Worship (1969), The Ten Commandments and Human Rights (1980), and, co-authored with Rabbi Randall M. Falk, Jews and Christians: A Troubled Family (1990). Since 1991, he has been Associate Editor of the forthcoming Mercer Bible Commentary.

Walter Harrelson is one of the organizers of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and a member of its Church Relations Committee.

In the Preface to a festschrift prepared in his honor in 1989, the editors cite a quality underlying his work that "no one who knows him can have missed . . . his resolute call . . . for the disbanding of oppressive structures of whatever kind." For a distinguished career dedicated to overcoming such structures by casting a lamp of understanding upon ancient religious texts and channeling that light toward modern interfaith dialogue, this University is pleased to confer this honorary Doctor of Letters upon Walter Harrelson.