

Obituary for Prof. Paul John Achtemeier
1927–2013

Paul John Achtemeier, Herbert Worth and Annie H. Jackson Professor of Biblical Interpretation Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, died in his home after a long illness on Monday, 28 January 2013. He was eighty-five years old.

Dr. Achtemeier (“Bud” to his friends) was born in 1927 in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was an honors graduate of Elmhurst College (A.B.) and of Union Theological Seminary in New York (B.D.), from which he also received his doctorate (Th.D.). He also studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, Heidelberg University (Germany), and the University of Basel (Switzerland).

Before coming to Richmond to teach at Union Theological Seminary (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), Dr. Achtemeier taught at Elmhurst College, Lancaster Theological Seminary, the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies of the World Council of Churches, Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland. He was also Visiting Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He was the first Protestant elected President of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, and he served as Treasurer, Secretary, and President of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Achtemeier was an internationally recognized scholar, having published eighteen books and over sixty scholarly journal articles. In addition, he was editor of a number of book series, most notably the New Testament Editor for the series *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*; he was General Editor of the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (the 1985 prize-winning edition) and the later revised edition (1996), in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature. Additionally, Dr. Achtemeier lectured and preached throughout North America and abroad at educational institutions, churches, scriptural institutes, and a wide variety of conferences for scholars, clergy, and lay people, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

Dr. Achtemeier was a beloved professor for generations of students and a loyal colleague and friend to other professors at institutions where he taught. He was generous in sharing with the needy and greeted with joy and openness all who crossed his path.

Dr. Achtemeier was preceded in death in 2002 by his first wife, Dr. Elizabeth Rice Achtemeier, to whom he was married for over fifty years. He is survived by his second wife, Dr. Sandra M. Levy; a son, Dr. P. Mark Achtemeier, and his wife, Dr. Katherine Achtemeier, of Dubuque, Iowa; a daughter, Marie A. Finch, and her husband, Paul Finch, of Norfolk, Virginia; five grandchildren; two stepsons and their families; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held Wednesday, 6 February, at historic St. John’s Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Paul J. Achtemeier Award for New Testament Scholarship. Dr. Achtemeier established this award to stimulate the finest and most penetrating work in New Testament studies. Donations may be made on the Society of Biblical Literature website at <https://www.sbl-site.org/membership/donatenow.aspx> or by mail to: Society of Biblical Literature, c/o Achtemeier Award, 825 Houston Mill Road, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30329.