

# **Yale's Brevard Childs, biblical scholar, dies: Achieved Yale's highest academic rank**

News in the [July 24, 2007](#) issue

Brevard S. Childs, 83, an influential Old Testament scholar who was known for his work in biblical theology and taught at Yale Divinity School for 41 years, died June 23 in New Haven, Connecticut. He died of complications from injuries sustained in a fall at his home.

While at Yale from 1958 to 1999, Childs shaped several generations of students. One measure of his talents in the classroom was Yale's decision in 1992 to name him a Sterling professor, the highest academic rank awarded by the university.

Childs continued writing after retirement, publishing in 2004 *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*. Shortly before his death, Childs completed a manuscript analyzing Paul's letters; the book is set for publication this winter. At least eight of his books were published in three languages.

"His major contribution to the field was his insistence on the importance of the canonical shape and location of all the biblical books," said Yale Divinity School dean Harold Attridge. "Taking this perspective enabled him to recover the ways in which scripture has been read as a larger whole, with an integral witness to the God of Israel and of Jesus Christ."

Born in South Carolina, Childs moved as a child to New York City, and served in the military during World War II. He earned degrees at the University of Michigan, later a B.D. at Princeton Theological Seminary and, in 1955, a Th.D. at the University of Basel. There he met his wife, Ann, in a seminar led by Karl Barth. Throughout Childs's career, the Swiss theologian remained one of his major influences.