

Bible scholar-translator Bruce Metzger dies: Was general editor for the NRSV

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Bruce Metzger, a preeminent New Testament translator and textual critic, died February 13 at his Princeton, New Jersey, home at age 93.

The professor emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he taught for 46 years, was termed the “greatest American scholar” in his field in the 20th century by Iain Torrance, president of the seminary.

Metzger was a member of the Revised Standard Version translation team that drew heavy criticisms from theological conservatives when the RSV was published in the post-World War II years. In contrast to the King James Version, the RSV drew on an older and wider range of manuscripts and avoided antiquated English.

“I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say the RSV would not have happened had it not been for Bruce Metzger,” said Bob Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches. The council holds the copyrights for the RSV and the New RSV, published in 1990. Metzger was general editor for the NRSV, which also upset traditionalists for its use of inclusive gender language.

Metzger himself, however, was admired for his careful work, irenic approach and modesty. An ordained Presbyterian minister, he was honored in international circles and helped to improve the biblical Apocrypha translations used by Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches.