

Professor Rolf P. Knierim and Mrs. Hildegard E. Knierim

Obituary

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I deeply regret to announce the passing of Professor Rolf P. Knierim (90) and Mrs. Hildegard E. Knierim, née Salm, (89) on September 29, 2018. Both died instantly in an automobile accident near Winslow, Arizona, while returning to Claremont from a brief vacation in New Mexico.

Professor Knierim was born in Pirmasens and Mrs. Knierim was born in Edenkoben, both in the Rhineland-Palatinate region in Germany near the French border. They met at the age of 5 or 6 in elementary school, and later faced the challenges of World War II. Professor Knierim was forced into military service at the age of 15, but later turned himself in to American MP's following the bombardment and capture of his home town. After the conclusion of the war, he continued his education at the *Humanitisches Gymnasium* in Pirmasens, the Methodist Seminary in Frankfurt am Main, and Heidelberg University.

The Knierims were married in 1955, and Professor Knierim was ordained as an Elder in the Methodist Church in 1957. Mrs. Knierim devoted herself to her family. She was well-known for her cheerful personality, her wonderful hospitality, and her own keen intellect. The Knierims are the parents of five children, Johannes, Eva, Eberhard, Barbara, and Gabriele Knierim, and they are grandparents of five grandchildren.

While at Heidelberg, Professor Knierim served as a pastor, hospital chaplain, assistant to Professors Claus Westermann and Gerhard von Rad, and Privatdozent. He was invited to write a

doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Professor von Rad, and he earned his Dr.

Theologiae in 1957 and his Habilitation in 1963. His monograph, *Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament* (Gütersloh: Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1967), is the published version of his Inaugural Dissertation and his Habilitationsschrift.

Professor Knierim was invited to serve as Visiting Professor at the School of Theology at Claremont (now Claremont School of Theology) in 1964-65. In 1966, he joined the faculty of the Claremont School of Theology as Professor of Old Testament and the faculty of Claremont Graduate School (now Claremont Graduate University) as Professor of Religion (later as Avery Professor of Religion). He developed the Ph.D. program in Hebrew Bible at the Claremont Graduate School and supervised well over thirty Ph.D. dissertations in the field.

Professor Knierim was an internationally-recognized authority in Form-Critical Methodology and Old Testament Theology. He was a demanding, precise, and enlightening scholar, who constantly reminded his students that our work begins with a close reading of the language, syntax, and formal features of the biblical text. His ground-breaking article, "Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Interpretation* 27 (1973) 435-468, marked the conclusion of classical form-critical scholarship and the beginning of a newer and more precise form of the method that he later labeled Conceptual Criticism. Upon reading this article in an undergraduate seminar at the University of Illinois led by Professor David Petersen, I decided to pursue Ph.D. work in the field under Professor Knierim's direction. Based upon his reconceptualization of the method, Professor Knierim together with the late Professor Gene M. Tucker, Emory University, founded the Forms of the Old Testament Literature commentary series (Eerdmans), which to date has produced nineteen volumes. Professor Knierim's monograph, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1-9* (FAT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), and his commentary on Numbers, co-authored with

the late George W. Coats, *Numbers* (FOTL 4; Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2005), illustrate his understanding of exegetical methodology. His volume, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Methods, and Cases* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1995), illustrates his approach to the field of Old Testament Theology.

Professor Knierim retired from the Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate University in 1994. He was honored with a Festschrift, *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* (ed., H. T. C. Sun, K. L. Eades, with J. M. Robinson and G. I. Möller; Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), to which Mrs. Knierim also contributed. A two-volume set of essays, *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspective* (ed., W. Kim, D. Ellens, M. Floyd, and M. A. Sweeney; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), republished a number of Professor Knierim's seminal essays together with studies by colleagues and former students.

Professor Rolf Knierim and Mrs. Hildegard Knierim had a major impact on the lives of their many friends, colleagues, students, and family members, and they will be missed by all.