

Frank Ritchel Ames: Memorial

Frank Ritchel Ames died at home the morning of 23 August 2015, wife Laurie Canada Ames close at his side. Prior to his battle with the cancer that ultimately took him from us, Frank served in a variety of academic roles and contributed significantly not only to biblical studies research and education but also to librarianship, university administration, and medical ethics. As impressive as his academic résumé is, it pales in comparison to the magnificence of the man, to the personal warmth, unassuming brilliance, and self-giving service that Frank displayed on a daily basis to family, friends, students, and colleagues both near and far.

Frank was born 14 April 1955 in Denver, Colorado. In May 1977 he graduated with his first earned degree, a B.B.S in Pastoral Studies from Western Bible College of Morrison, Colorado. Shortly thereafter he entered the M.Div. program at Denver Seminary, which he completed in 1980. Little more than a year later he had earned a second masters, an M.A. in Librarianship and Information Management from the University of Denver.

Instead of immediately entering a doctoral program, Frank temporarily set aside his own educational interests in order to focus on the education of others. Beginning as Librarian and Instructor, Frank spent the next twenty-plus years in various capacities as his alma mater Western Bible College grew and developed into what is now Colorado Christian University. As Director of the Library, Professor of Biblical Studies, Assistant Academic Dean, and Dean, Frank played a critical role in the evolution and expansion of the entire institution.

In spite of his many responsibilities, Frank remained committed to his own educational advancement. So it was that Frank entered the joint doctoral program at the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, which in August 1998 granted him a Ph.D. in Religious and Theological Studies. His dissertation, “Women and War in the Hebrew Bible,” was a prelude to the particular field of study in which Frank would make his most important contributions.

First, however, Frank’s career took a brief detour to Atlanta, to the offices of the Society of Biblical Literature. As SBL’s Director of Programs and Initiatives (2003–2004), Frank assisted Executive Director Kent Harold Richards during a particularly formative period in SBL’s history. Since Frank apparently did not have enough to do, he also served as Acting Editorial Director for a time. In June 2004 Frank and Laurie returned home to Denver, where Frank resumed his duties at Colorado Christian University. Four years later Frank left CCU for Rocky Vista University, where he—not surprisingly—served in multiple capacities, including Professor and Chair of Medical Informatics, Director of Library Services at the Health Sciences Library, and Coordinator of the RVU Ethics Curriculum.

Frank’s talents and interests were wide-ranging, but over the last decade of his life he focused his efforts particularly on the study of war in the Hebrew Bible. The topic might seem peculiar for an avowed pacifist such as Frank, but it reveals the breadth of his intellectual curiosity and the depth of his desire to understand even those with whom he sharply disagreed.

The fruits of Frank's labors can be seen across the SBL Annual Meeting program and the SBL Press lineup. A member of the Warfare in Ancient Israel program unit since 2004, Frank served as Chair of the Section in 2013–2014 and as Co-Chair in 2015. Frank contributed to and coedited four collections of papers presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, including *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (with Brad E. Kelle, 2008); *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (with Brad E. Kelle and Jacob L. Wright, 2011); *Warfare, Ritual, and Symbol in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (with Brad E. Kelle and Jacob L. Wright, 2014); and *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration* (with Mark A. Leuchter, Mark J. Boda, and John Ahn, 2015). Frank also coedited, with Charles William Miller, *Foster Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Kent Harold Richards* (2010).

Recently Frank had started work on a monograph tentatively titled *War in Ancient Israel: Making Sense of the Rhetoric and Realities of Ancient Israelite Warfare*; sadly, he was not granted time enough to complete it. In addition to essays in the books he coedited, Frank authored articles for, among others, *Dictionary of Old Testament: Prophets* (2012), *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (2011), *The Medical Library Association's Master Guide to Authoritative Information Resources in the Health Sciences* (2011), *Women in the Biblical World* (2010), *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (2003), and *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (1997). As expected, the conference papers that he presented most recently range widely, from "Mixed Motives: Justifications of War in the Hebrew Bible" to "Ethical Collection Development," from "The Prevalence and Interpretation of Blindness in Ancient Israel" to "Global Medical Ethics: A Human-Rights Perspective," from "Ancient Israelite Warfare and the Stained Body" to "The Politics of Information and the New Role of Libraries and Librarians."

Always self-effacing, Frank would be embarrassed to have his enduring accomplishments and endearing traits memorialized for all the SBL world to see. A dedicated form and literary critic, he would remind us that a work's genre tells readers not only what to expect but also what not to believe. A memorial piece such as this, I can imagine him saying, should be read with a healthy dose of skepticism and suspicion. I respectfully disagree. Anyone who knew Frank Ritchel Ames, whether family, friend, student, or colleague, knows that he was precisely the magnificently warm, brilliant, and dedicated person that this memorial piece portrays. We are all considerably richer for having known Frank, and we are all the poorer that he was taken from us too soon.

Bob Buller
Director of SBL Press
Society of Biblical Literature