

Obituary: Erhard S. Gerstenberger (1932–2023)

Professor emeritus Dr. Dr. Erhard S. Gerstenberger died on April 15, 2023, at the age of 90. He taught Old Testament from 1985 to 1997 at Philipps-Universität Marburg and served as Dean of the department of Protestant Theology from 1993 to 1994. At Marburg, we honor him as an influential biblical scholar, whose work has been translated into many languages, and as a dedicated teacher who inspired many generations of students and scholars.

Born on June 20, 1932 in Rheinhausen, Gerstenberger grew up in a miner's family. After the war he found his way to the church and studied Protestant theology at the universities of Marburg, Tübingen, Bonn and at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal. In 1959, a fellowship from the World Council of Churches brought him to Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT, where he did research and taught until 1964. He received his PhD from the University of Bonn in 1961 (*Wesen und Herkunft des 'apodiktischen' Rechts*, WMANT 20, 1965). From 1965 to 1975 he worked as a parish minister in Essen-Frohnhausen, interrupted in the years 1969 to 1970, when he finished his habilitation in Heidelberg with a study on *Bitritual und Klagegedes des Einzelnen im Alten Testament* (WMANT 51, 1980) in 1970. From 1975 to 1981 he taught Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological College in São Leopoldo (Brazil). In 1981, he became full professor at Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, and in 1985 at Philipps-Universität Marburg, where he taught until his retirement in 1997. Far from retiring, Gerstenberger continued his studies begun at Yale and received his second doctorate, in ancient Near Eastern studies, at Marburg in 2014 with a thesis on Sumerian hymn literature (ORA 28, 2018).

The multiple paradigm shifts of his eventful life on three continents, in academia and in the congregation, had a lasting impact on Gerstenberger's theology: he connected his interpretation of the world of the Bible with the world of its readers and their specific contexts. He was committed to Latin American liberation theology and one of the first male allies of emerging feminist theology in Germany, fervently promoting female scholars in academia. After his retirement, he co-initiated a liberation-theology reading circle at the department with students of several generations. For decades, Gerstenberger gave lectures at congregations, parish conventions and academies, and, on the way to the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, to numerous U.S. colleges and universities.

Gerstenberger's English publications include commentaries on *Psalms* (2 vols. FOTL, Eerdmans 1988, 2001) and *Leviticus* (OTL, Westminster John Knox, 1996; German 1993) as well as the monographs *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Fortress and T&T Clark, 2002; German 2002) and *Israel in the Persian Period* (Brill, 2012; German 2005).

Erhard Gerstenberger is survived by two sons and a daughter. His wife, Rita, to whom he was married for over 50 years, predeceased her husband by 15 days.

Condolences may be sent to kondolenz.erhard.gerstenberger@gmail.com

A funeral service for Rita and Erhard Gerstenberger will be held on Saturday, April 29, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. in the chapel at the Old Cemetery in Giessen.

For his tremendous scholarship and warm friendship, Erhard Gerstenberger will long be remembered by our community, and greatly missed.