

Augustana, Divinity School of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria

Feminist Theology, Prof. Dr. Renate Jost (born 1955 in Darmstadt, Germany)

I. Studies and Career

- 1974-76 Bethel University: Protestant Theology, including an archeological dig at Tel Masos in Israel
- 1976-78 University of Göttingen
- 1978-80 Marburg University (first theological degree in the German system, corresponding to U.S. Master of Divinity). Participation in conferences on Jewish-Christian Dialogue, co-founder of a women's group in theology, organizer of the first independent seminar on feminist theology together with Prof. Dr. Hannelore Erhart on the topic of "Witches"
- 1981-82 Union Theological University in New York City: studies in feminist theology with Beverly Harrison and Phyllis Trible; City University of New York: studies of social sciences with Joan Kelly and study trip to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.
- 1982-84 Vicar in Offenbach; second theological degree. 12/9/84 Ordination as pastor.
- 1984-88 Pastor in Frankfurt/Main; also Lecturer in feminist theology and since 1986 member of the European Society of Women in Theological Research. Women pastor exchange with USA; project in Nicaragua; study trip to India.
- 1989-93 Research Assistant of Prof. Willy Schottroff and Lecturer in Old Testament at Frankfurt University .
- July 1994 Doctor of Theology degree (corresponding in the US to a Ph.D. In theology) Dissertation topic: "Women, Men and the Queen of Heaven". Exegetical Studies on Jeremiah 7:17-18 and 44:15-25.
- 1993-97 Director of the Anna-Paulsen House, a Women's Studies and Formation Center of the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD) while also teaching OT at Frankfurt University.
- 1997-2003 Assistant professor for theological women's research and feminist theology at Augustana University in Neuendettelsau; many lectures at other institutions.
- July 2003 Post-doctoral degree as professor in order to teach at a German university: Thesis topic: Out of the Wilderness: Gender, Sexuality and Power within the Anthropology of the Book of Judges.
- Since 2003 Professor at Augustana University for theological women's research and for feminist theology;
- 2008-10: President of the University.
- 2009 Founder of the International Institute for Feminist Research in Theology and Religion, at Augustana University in Neuendettelsau.
- Fall 2013 Visiting Scholar at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge/ MA.
- Winter 2014 'Research and teaching at Faculte Libre de Theologie Protestante a Montpellier, France.

II. International Cooperation

My international cooperation takes place

- through cooperation with the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion (JFSR),
- through the European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR),
- through the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL),
- through the International Institute for Feminist Research in Theology and Religion
- at Augustana University.

III. Why I am a Feminist Theologian

I studied theology for various reasons: my engagement in the church, i.e. in congregations and in "Third World Groups"; my search for a workable spirituality; my delight in biblical stories, especially in the First Testament (formerly called Old Testament); my curiosity in other worlds and methods of thinking. During my years of study at various universities I learned to appreciate the freedom acquired through critical thinking as well as the rich variety of theological traditions and the great diversity of ways of living and working. Thanks to the feminist movement I became motivated to integrate into my scholarly work not only my own experiences but also those of other women and men, often very different from my own. Thanks to my year at UTS in New York and because of multiple encounters during my travels and study trips I was able to visualize feminist theology within a world-wide ecumenical dimension. My professional development required a constant alternation between practical church work and theoretical studies and is helping me to relate both areas critically to one another.

On the basis of these experiences I am trying to accompany and encourage my students to develop their own theological life, a life which relates the love for the Christian tradition with the passion for critical thinking. Thereby it can open up new horizons and is connecting us to a life-affirming spirituality. It represents a theological existence which takes seriously on one hand one's own experiences as a woman or man and on the other hand those of women and men coming from different social, cultural and religious contexts. Such a theological life may bear fruit by forging a connection between theoretical theological knowledge and church practice.

IV. My Concept of Teaching

Being competent in gender studies has now become a basic requirement in all areas of church and societal affairs, but especially in regard to ecclesiastical leadership positions. Courses in feminist theology (at Augustana University) attempt to convey a basic knowledge of topics and questions in feminist theological research and theological gender studies as a preparation for German theological examinations and conditions for University entrance in the area of First Testament studies. Students should learn methods of reflection upon the main research problems and debates in feminist theology from an exegetical, historical and theological point of view. The personal and social importance of their topic should thereby be central.

V. My Main Areas of Research

- feminist social and cultural exegesis of the Hebrew Bible
- institutional integration of feminist exegesis and theology into all courses

- feminist spirituality
- studies in female expressions of the Christ child

VI. Publications (as of 12/2012)

a) Numerous books and essays in German [see German home page 1/8]

b) Essays and articles in English:

- The Institutionalization of Feminist Biblical Studies in Germany and Its International and Ecumenical Context, in: Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza (Editor), *Feminist Biblical Studies in the 20th Century* (about to be published).
- The impact of feminist biblical studies in religious communities and academia (about to be published).
- The secret of JFSR, in: *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Cambridge, MA 2005, p. 130-133.
- God of Love, God of Vengeance or Samson's Prayer for Vengeance, in: Athalya Brenner, (Editor), *Judges. A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)* Sheffield, 1999 p. 117-125 (translation from the German edition).
- The Daughters of Your People Prophecy, in: Athalya Brenner (Editor), *Prophets and Daniel. A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, Sheffield 2001, p. 70-76 (translation from the German edition).
- Ezekiel: Male Prophecy with Female Imagery, in: Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Editors), *Feminist Biblical Interpretation. A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the books of the Bible and Related Literature*, Cambridge 2012, p.345-360.