Gerd Lüdemann: A Declaration of Solidarity

Gerd Lüdemann, Professor of the History and Literature of Early Christianity in the University of Göttingen, has received word from the Federal Constitutional Court in Germany that his appeal against an earlier ruling excluding him from the teaching of New Testament in the University's Faculty of Theology has been rejected.

The basis for the Court's ruling hinges on the fact that Professor Lüdemann was "reassigned" to a position outside the Faculty offering essentially the same teaching and research opportunities as his previous position. In addition, the Court decided that the confessional teaching of theology is a unique responsibility of the Theology Faculty and that its interest in retaining a distinctive identity outweighed Professor Lüdemann's claim that the reassignment impinged on his academic ("scientific") freedom.

One can imagine no other area of serious study in the modern university where such a rule should be permitted to stand, or be used as the basis of a legal judgment. This case throws into bold relief the problematical nature of the association between Christian theology and scholarship as it is still protected by law primarily in Germany and to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom, Austria, and Switzerland.

Rooted in the political compromises of the Reformation, the structure of European theological education should become a matter of concern and a priority for reform by the educational commission of the European Union. It is an untenable position that institutions of higher learning, devoted as they are to the cultivation of knowledge through the use of established scientific methodologies, can fulfill their mission as long as particular faculties are immune from equivalent standards of rigorous inquiry, or where academic freedom is limited by confessional ideology and protected from scrutiny by tradition.

The undersigned fellows of the *Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion* wish to express their solidarity with Professor Gerd Lüdemann for his courageous stance in this matter, and hope that his case will bring about a process of examination and reform in those places where religious ideology can be used to thwart the higher ends to which universities are dedicated.

The Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion

http://www.centerforinquiry.net/cser/about
http://www.jesus-project.com/news.htm

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Amherst, N.Y. USA
February 24, 2009