

*Obituary for Prof. Dr. Ekkehard W. Stegemann, Emeritus*

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel, Switzerland, mourns the loss of Professor Ekkehard W. Stegemann

Ekkehard W. Stegemann, born on November 8, 1945 in Barkhausen, East Westphalia, would sometimes refer to the fact that this day was exactly half a year after the end of the Second World War. This reference was no coincidence for him - his thinking and entire life were directed toward contributing to a renewal of theological, but also political thinking, which was demanded by the catastrophe and rupture of civilization caused by the Shoah.

After his school education, he studied theology at the Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel and at the University of Heidelberg. There he worked as a research assistant from 1971-1982, received his doctorate in New Testament in 1974 with a thesis on the Gospel of Mark, and qualified as a Professor (habilitated) in 1982. The topic of his habilitation thesis pointed ahead to the central themes of his entire further life in scholarship: *The One God and the One Humanity. Israel's election and the redemption of Jews and Gentiles according to the Epistle to the Romans*. He thus contributed to new perspectives in Pauline scholarship at an early stage. He understood Paul's relation to Judaism as constructive engagement. He thereby moved away from Paul's supposed fundamental criticism of the "religion of the law" that had characterized Christianity for centuries toward a fruitful dialogue oriented on the future.

In 1985, after a first position as a professor in Bayreuth, Ekkehard Stegemann accepted a call to the University of Basel, where he not only shaped the subject of New Testament Studies and Theology until his retirement in 2013, but also became one of the most highly visible personalities of the faculty and the university. In terms of research, Paul and especially the Epistle to the Romans remained a central topic of his work, which resulted also in several book publications. As a teacher and supervisor of academic theses, he trained two generations of New Testament scholars, not least those who today hold professorships at various European universities.

In addition, he devoted himself to Christian-Jewish dialogue, which was represented, among other things, in his role as chair of the Council of Christians and Jews (CJA) of the city and region of Basel, and in the Christian-Jewish Projects (CJP) he co-initiated. He did not shy away from public and media appearances and fought many battles, which usually revolved around questions of antisemitism or criticism of the State of Israel. For his commitment to science and the public, he was honored with the gold medal "For Distinguished Leadership and Service for Humanity" by the European branch of the globally active B'nai B'rith chapter.

Ekkehard Stegemann's most significant legacy from his time in Basel is probably the founding and establishment of the subject of Jewish Studies at the University of Basel. As early as in the 1980s, he established a regular lectureship in Jewish Studies and later worked toward the establishment of the Foundation for Jewish Studies at the University of Basel, which he chaired from its inception until his retirement, and which made possible the founding of today's Center for Jewish Studies in 1998.

After his retirement and the appointment of his successor to the chair of New Testament, Ekkehard Stegemann largely withdrew from public life and spent much time outside of Switzerland, in Italy and in Germany, where one of his sons lives. He also enthusiastically devoted himself to his role as grandfather. For some time now, a serious illness began to take its toll on him. He spent the last weeks of his life in the Jewish-Christian retirement and nursing home Holbeinhof, Basel, where he passed away on November 30.

We will cherish his memory with deep gratitude.

University of Basel, Faculty of Theology, Prof. Dr. Andreas Heuser, Dean

