

ORTHODOXY AND HERESY IN HANS KÜNG: AN ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF HIS CRITERIA AND NORMS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH AND ERROR

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This investigation deals with the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy in the thought of the Swiss theologian Hans Küng.

Starting with NT times, chap. 1 sketches the broad outlines of the development of Christian orthodoxy and, by implication, of the heresy which opposed it. The most relevant elements constituting the structure of the orthodoxy-heresy antithesis are identified, described, and analyzed. Attention is thus focused on the traditional and modern principles, criteria, norms, and theological issues which have interplayed in the church's efforts to understand the Christian message correctly.

Chap. 2 shows that the pastoral concerns which constitute Küng's theological starting point originated during the years of his priestly formation in Rome. These concerns are his interest in contributing to ecumenical understanding among all Christian traditions and his preoccupation for proclaiming the gospel in terms both intelligible and relevant to modern humankind. Some important shifts in the development of his theology and hermeneutical principles are described as well.

Chap. 3 endeavors to describe and analyze Küng's understanding of the principles, criteria, and norms of classical orthodoxy. It presents the manner in which he stresses the normativity of the original deposit of faith over against the subapostolic traditions and magisterial pronouncements of the church. His concept of heresy as a selection from the totality of revelation is addressed at the end of the chapter.

Chap. 4 deals with the modern criteria and norms of orthodoxy. Küng's dynamic, dialectical, and historical concept of truth as such is described and analyzed. In this context, his views on the fallibility of human propositions are also addressed. His theory of the changes of paradigm in theology is briefly enunciated. This theory explains how the revolutionary changes in the basic assumptions and in the worldview of one paradigm originate a crisis which entails the replacement of the old paradigm by the new, thus rendering past orthodoxies obsolete.

This study ends, in chap. 5, with a critical appraisal of Küng's model of orthodoxy-heresy. It is concluded that his decisive norm of Christian truth is the modern scientific-historicist horizon of understanding. As for the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Küng claims is his ultimate criterion and norm of Christian truth, it is considered, rather, as the center of the theologian's personal faith. Finally, some of the contributions of Küng to the understanding of orthodoxy-heresy are mentioned, as well as the inner tensions of his model.