

# DOCUMENTATION ON THE HANS KÜNG AFFAIR

## SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

### DECLARATION ON SOME MAJOR POINTS ON THE THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF PROFESSOR HANS KÜNG

(*L'Osservatore Romano*, January 7 1980, p. 5)

The Church of Christ has received from God the mandate to keep and to safeguard the deposit of faith so that all the faithful, under the guidance of the Sacred Magisterium through which Christ himself exercises his role as teacher in the Church, may cling without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints, may penetrate it more deeply by accurate insights, and may apply it more thoroughly to life.<sup>1</sup>

In order to fulfill the important task entrusted to itself alone<sup>2</sup> the Magisterium of the Church avails itself of the work of theologians, especially those who in the Church have received from the authorities the task of teaching and who therefore have been designated in a certain way as teachers of the truth. In their research the theologians, like scholars in other fields, enjoy a legitimate scientific liberty, though within the limits of the method of sacred theology. Thus, while working in their own way, they seek to attain the same specific end as the Magisterium itself, namely, "to preserve, to penetrate ever more deeply, to explain, to teach, to defend the sacred deposit of revelation; and in this way to illumine the life of the Church and of the human race with the light of divine truth."<sup>3</sup>

It is necessary, therefore, that theological research and teaching should always be illumined with fidelity to the Magisterium since no one may rightly act as a theologian except in close union with the mission of teaching truth which is incumbent on the Church

---

1) Cf. Conc. Vatic. I, Const. dogm. *Dei Filius*, cap. IV "De fide et ratione": DS 3018; Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

2) Cf. Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Dei Verbum*, n. 10.

3) Paulus VI, *Allocut. and Congress. Internat. de Theologia Conc. Vatic. II*, 1 Oct. 1966; AAS 58 (1966), p. 891.

itself.<sup>4</sup> When such fidelity is absent, harm is done to all the faithful who, since they are bound to profess the faith which they have received from God through the Church, have a sacred right to receive the word of God uncontaminated, and so they expect that vigilant care should be exercised to keep the threat of error far from them.<sup>5</sup>

If it should happen, therefore, that a teacher of sacred doctrine chooses and disseminates as the norm of truth his own judgment and not the thought of the Church, and if he continues in his conviction, despite the use of all charitable means in his regard, then honesty itself demands that the Church should publicly call attention to his conduct and should state that he can no longer teach with the authority of the mission which he received from her.<sup>6</sup>

This canonical mission is in fact a testimony to a reciprocal trust: first, trust on the part of the competent authority that the theologian will conduct himself as a Catholic theologian in the work of his research and teaching; secondly, trust on the part of the theologian himself in the Church and in her integral teaching, since it is by her mandate that he carries out his task.

Since some of the writings — spread throughout many countries — and the teaching of Professor Hans Küng, a priest, are a cause of disturbance in the minds of the faithful, the Bishops of Germany and this Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, acting in common accord, have several times counselled and warned him in order to persuade him to carry on his theological work in full communion with the authentic Magisterium of the Church.

In this spirit the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in order to fulfill its role of promoting and safeguarding the doctrine of faith and morals in the universal Church,<sup>7</sup> issued a public document on 15 February 1975, declaring that some opinions of Professor Hans Küng were opposed in different degrees to the doctrine of the Church which must be held by all the faithful.

4) Cf. Ioannes Paulus II, Cost. apost. *Sapientia Christiana*, art. 70; Encycl. *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 19; AAS 71 (1979) pp. 493, 308.

5) Cf. Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11 and 25; Paulus VI Adhort. apost. *Quinque iam anni*; AAS 63 (1971) p. 99f.

6) Cf. *Sapientia Christiana*, tit. III, art. 27, par. 1: AAS 71 (1979), p. 483.

7) Cf. *Motu proprio Integrae Servandae*, n. 1, 3 and 4: AAS 57 (1965) p. 954.

Among these opinions it noted especially, as of greater importance, those which pertain to the dogma of faith about infallibility in the Church, to the task of authentically interpreting the unique sacred deposit of the word of God which has been entrusted only to the living Magisterium of the Church, and finally to the valid consecration of the Eucharist.

At the same time this Sacred Congregation warned Professor Küng that he should not continue to teach such opinions, expecting in the meantime that he would bring his opinions into harmony with the doctrine of the authentic Magisterium.<sup>8</sup>

However, up to the present time he has in no way changed his opinion on the matters called to his attention.

This fact is particularly evident in the matter of the opinion which at least puts in doubt the dogma of infallibility in the Church or reduces it to a certain fundamental indefectibility of the Church in truth, with the possibility of error in doctrinal statements which the Magisterium of the Church teaches must be held definitively. On this point Hans Küng has in no way sought to conform to the doctrine of the Magisterium. Instead he has recently proposed his view again more explicitly (namely, in his writings, *Kirche-Gehalten in der Wahrheit?* — Benziger Verlag, 1979, and *Zum Geleit*, an introduction to the work of A.B. Hasler entitled *Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde* — Piper Verlag, 1979), even though this Sacred Congregation had affirmed that such an opinion contradicts the doctrine defined by Vatican Council I and confirmed by Vatican Council II.

Moreover, the consequences of this opinion, especially a contempt for the Magisterium of the Church, may be found in other works published by him, undoubtedly with serious harm to some essential points of Catholic faith (e.g., those teachings which pertain to the consubstantiality of Christ with his Father, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary), since the meaning ascribed to these doctrines is different from that which the Church has understood and now understands.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the aforesaid document of 1975 refrained at the time from further action regarding the above mentioned opinions of Professor Küng, presum-

---

8) Cf. AAS 67 (1975) pp. 203-204.

ing that he himself would abandon them. But since this presumption no longer exists, this Sacred Congregation by reason of its duty is constrained to declare that Professor Hans Küng, in his writings, has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and therefore he can no longer be considered a Catholic theologian nor function as such in a teaching role.

At an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II approved this Declaration decided upon at an Ordinary Meeting of this Sacred Congregation, and ordered its publication.

In Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on 15 December 1979.

**FRANJO CARDINAL SEPER**  
Prefect

**FR. JÉRÔME HAMER, O.P.**  
Titular Archbishop of Lorium  
Secretary



## **REGARDING THE DECLARATION ON ERRORS OF PROFESSOR HANS KUNG**

The Declaration dated 15 December 1979 and published today, is connected with another one that preceded it: the Declaration of 15 February 1975 (cf. AAS 67 (1975), pp. 203-204). The latter, in its turn, had a precedent in another Document of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of 24 June 1973 (cf. AAS 65 (1973) pp. 396-408) which, though setting out in the first place to clarify some fundamental truths discussed in the last few years, is in a sense the first public stand of the same Sacred Congregation with regard to Hans Küng, in whom it had been interested for many years already.

A glance, even a rapid one, at the events that followed one another in this by no means short span of time, can offer a useful key to the understanding of the Declaration now promulgated.

### **I. The Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of 24 June 1973**

1. In substance, the Catholic doctrine on the Church is recalled in this Declaration, for the purpose of defending it from serious errors spreading here and there.

In particular it reaffirms the points concerning the various aspects of infallibility in the Church, an immediate premise of our faith: for it is only believing in it that we believe in divine Revelation as the Church teaches it to us in Christ's name.

This faith in infallibility in the Church cannot be reduced, therefore, to the admission of a certain indefectibility or permanence in truth, which cannot be expressed in clearly determined enunciations. It is, on the contrary, these enunciations that determine the subject of faith; they are, therefore, also the certain and immutable norm both for faith itself and for theological science, which has the task of studying its content and perfecting its expression.

As regards, moreover, the authority competent to make enunciations of faith understood in this way, or dogmatic definitions, it lies only with the whole episcopal College and its head the Roman Pontiff: not as substitutes of theologians, but by reason of the

divine mandate of interpreting truly and guarding faithfully the one sacred deposit of the Word of God (cf. II Vat. Council, *Verbum*, n. 10; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25).

The verticality that exists by the will of Christ in his Church on the doctrinal plane has a correlative on the sacramental plane, and it is expressed in the peculiarity of the ministerial priesthood: that is, the priesthood which has its origins in the sacrament of Holy Orders, and which therefore qualifies only those who have received this sacrament to carry out some sacramental acts, first and foremost the celebration of Holy Eucharist. This celebration is therefore precluded for any other member of the faithful not only by ecclesiastical regulation, but also by dogmatic exigency, by virtue of which the ministerial priesthood differs essentially, and not just in degree, from the priesthood common to all the baptized (cf. II Vat. Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10).

2. The errors denounced in the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* were to be found also, and mainly, in two works by Hans Küng: *Die Kirche* (Herder 1967), regarding which the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had notified serious reservations to the author; and *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* (Benzinger 1970), where it is affirmed that the Church does, indeed, remain fundamentally in truth, but that the latter does not assume concrete expression in infallible definitions, and, in fact, does not lend itself to definitions which, instead of determining it, may repress or distort it.

In 1971 the German Episcopal Conference (as well as the Italian and French ones) rightly saw in this thesis a tampering with the very concept of Catholic faith, which, by its very nature, includes unmistakable and clear affirmations and negations, without which it would be impossible for the Church to remain in the truth of Jesus Christ.

It was not by chance that at the moment of the publication of *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, on 5 July 1973, it was officially communicated that, among the theologians who falsify faith in infallibility in the Church, and therefore her understanding of herself and her mission, Hans Küng was particularly included; he was therefore requested to give his assent to the Declaration itself, in order that the proceedings in progress with regard to him might be considered concluded. At the same time the same communication was sent to him personally by letter.

But all the ways suitable for the due clarification turned out to be impracticable. And in the case of such serious problems it

would certainly not have sufficed to spread a veil of silence over them, while waiting for an unlikely alignment of Hans Küng with the doctrine of the authentic Magisterium of the Church. Silence in this case, would have been abdication before a duty to the whole believing community.

## **II. The Declaration on two works of Hans Küng on 15 February 1975**

1. In order, therefore, that no doubts should remain on some opinions of fundamental points of Catholic faith, a Declaration became necessary with the explicit mention of the two works mentioned, on the Church and on infallibility: precisely the Declaration of 15 February 1975.

Among the errors which are opposed, in differing degrees, to Catholic doctrine, three are expressly mentioned, as being more important: Namely, the negation of infallibility, such as to exclude any possibility of error in the judgments passed definitively by the Magisterium of the Church; the negation of the specific and exclusive function of the same Magisterium to interpret truly the revealed deposit; the recognized competence, in extraordinary cases of merc baptized persons to celebrate the Eucharist thus implying that the sacrament of Holy Orders does not confer any specific power in this connection; and therefore that the ordained priesthood remains, on this view, essentially a "lay" priesthood.

Even on that account, however, all hope was not abandoned that Hans Küng, as he himself, moreover, had not excluded, might arrive at a harmonization of his own opinions with the doctrine of the true Magisterium of the Church. Therefore, he was warned at that time, on the mandate of Pope Paul VI, not to continue to teach them. And he was also reminded that he had received the office of teaching in harmony with the doctrine of the Church, and not, rather opinions that demolished or question it.

The Declaration of the Sacred Congregation was followed, on 17 February 1975, by the Declaration of the German Episcopal Conference (to which also the bishops of Switzerland and Austria adhered), which said, among other things, that in the theology of Küng the binding, determinate and permanent character of the decisions of the Magisterium of the Church is not guaranteed. And an appeal was made to him to re-examine his theological method and his problematic doctrinal positions.

2. In spite of that pontifical admonition, and in spite of the appeals of the Bishops of the country that gives him hospitality as professor at Tubingen University, Hans Küng did not show any intention of changing his mind.

An emblematic example is his imposing volume *Christ sein* (Piper Verlag 1974), which he presents as a little "summa" of Christian faith. The German Episcopal Conference had directed its concerned attention to it in the Declaration of 17 February 1975. In the meantime the volume continued to be diffused unchanged, and to be translated into various languages. The same Episcopal Conference returned to it specially with an appropriate and articulated Declaration on 14 November 1977, pointing out its radical danger in the fact that the very foundation of faith, Jesus Christ, is subverted (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11): since He is considered just as God's representative, and not also as the eternal Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, who, having become man in time, assumed human nature in his personal unity.

This radical Christological reduction compromises in an irreversible way also the dogma of the Holy Trinity as it has always been professed by the Church: one God in three equal and distinct Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If Christ, in fact, is deprived of the uniqueness of his eternal generation from the Father, then also God's fatherhood is no longer an eternal reality within divine life, but only the external projection of his love for men who, by means of the sanctifying power called the Holy Spirit, receive the capacity of becoming his sons following the example of Jesus, the son *par excellence*, but ontologically none other than a man like them.

And, still because of that Christological reduction, what becomes of Our Lady, whom faith and Catholic piety venerate just as the "Virgin"? Once removed from the article of the Creed, in which we profess faith in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God who, owing to the Holy Spirit, became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, her virginal maternity becomes just a legend emerging in the margin of the New Testament.

The substratum and the structure of another volume of Hans Küng *Existiert Gott?* (Piper Verlag 1958) is not dissimilar. It was intended to be a deeper study and clarification of the preceding one.

Intentions apart, the result does not rectify, but confirms. The problems of God, Christ, and the Trinity are dealt with there in



a functional perspective, and not also in their specific reality. The slightest hope of a solution fully in conformity with the faith of the Church is, therefore, wiped out at the outset.

Just one example, with regard to Christology: it is not enough to say that Jesus is God's unequalled representative or even the Son of God, if these features are not based on the divinity of Christ, understood as consubstantiality with the Father, as a result of which He is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made".

These words of the **Creed** express the central core of faith common to all Christians: Catholics, Orthodox, and members of the Reformed Churches. In the Declaration of 14 Nov. 1977, the German Episcopal Conference rightly saw in the safeguarding of this common heritage the foundation of the ecumenical dialogue, in which all Churches and ecclesial Communities are happily engaged today. Without it, the way to the unity of all believers in Christ would not be in continuity with the origin of Christianity.

3. More recently, in support and verification of his fundamental choices, Hans Küng has dedicated two writings to the question of infallibility in the Church.

They are **Kirche-gehalten in der Wahrheit?** (Benzinger 1979) and **Zum Geleit** to the work of the priest A.B. Hasler **Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde** (Piper Verlag 1979).

The main idea that the two writings have in common is that infallibility in the Church, as inherent in the definitive decisions of the Magisterium, does not exist, has never existed, and is not necessary; and no one will ever be able to prove it, just as it not possible to prove a special assistance of the Holy Spirit for the Magisterium itself.

There exists only infallibility "in belief", or indefectibility, in the sense that the People of God, owing to God's pure grace, is always able to find the way to truth, that is, the right way to follow Christ, to be faithful to Him.

But this fundamental permanence in truth is not carried out through and in the definitions of the Magisterium of the Church, but in spite of these definition, since none of them is infallible in itself and therefore not subject to reform; first and foremost the dogmatic definition of the infallibility of magisterium of the Roman Pontiff created by the First Vatican Council. On the contrary, it should be said that this definition which took place owing to a

trick of Pius IX's, is a dogma that is better suited to the system of the Curia than to the Catholic Church. Today it would not be defined. A public opinion poll would show that only a minority of Catholics still believe in it, and the word "infallibility" itself is now disappearing from theological vocabulary.

And Hans Küng asks himself, how then, could anyone venture to call "non-Catholic" one who thinks in this way?

### III. The Declaration of 15 December 1979

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith could certainly have intervened even before, in the sense in which it passes judgment now: that is, by declaring that Hans Küng cannot be considered a Catholic theologian. It wanted to wait, however, because, as it said in the 1975 Declaration, there remained a marginal possibility that he might give up the opinions mentioned above.

For this purpose, in the spirit of collegiality and subsidiarity of Vatican Council II which presides over its action (cf. *Motu Proprio Integrae Servandae*), the Sacred Congregation, in agreement with the Bishops most directly concerned, did its utmost to persuade Hans Küng to revise his positions.

But the facts briefly outlined here show that every attempt had failed, and that also that presumption had now vanished.

Therefore a definitive decision could not be postponed any further.

It was expected by healthy public opinion which could rightly wonder how a theologian could continue to teach on behalf of the Church, though systematically contesting her doctrine. Once the relationship of mutual trust, between the theologian and the Church and between the Church and the theologian, which is included in the mission given and accepted, has disappeared, to declare that he can no longer teach by virtue of this mission becomes an exigency of mere honesty. In this way it cannot but be realized that a theology which does not meet the primary requisite of the theological method, that is, joint faithfulness to the Magisterium and to the People of God as a whole, has no right of citizenship in the Church. Are not the highest intellects of Christianity such because they abided by his twofold faithfulness, teaching in the Church nothing but what they had learned in her? (cf. St. Augustine, *Contra Julian*, II, 10, 34: PL 44, 698).

A definitive decision was awaited above all by the faithful; who, as they have the duty to profess publicly the faith received from God through the Church, so they have the right to due vigilance with regard to divinely revealed truth on the part of leader in the Church, so that errors which distort or obscure it in various ways may be kept at bay (cf. II Vat. Council *Lumen Gentium* nos. 11, 25). They have the right to peace and joy in faith (cf. Rom. 15:13). But how could they have peace and joy if faith were not for them a certainty, but a question without answer, or with answers that were always changeable and therefore replaceable with others, endlessly?

This is the context, doctrinal and pastoral at the same time, in which this Declaration is set.

With it the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith merely notes a fact now matured in all its aspects, and indicates its consequences.

1. Hans Küng, in spite of the unmistakable pronouncement of the Declaration of 15 February 1975, has explicitly reaffirmed once again the opinion that at least questions (but it is already a negation of) the dogma of faith of infallibility in the Church or reduces it to some fundamental permanence in truth, reconcilable with errors in the definitive judgments of the Magisterium.

This opinion contradicts the definition of Vatican Council I: it is divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff, when he defines that a doctrine concerning faith or morals must be held by the whole Church, has the same infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed to endow the teaching Church, that is, the whole episcopal College, in the accomplishment of the magisterial office itself (cf. *Pastor Aeternus*, chap. IV: DS 3074). Everyone can see the consequences of the rejection of this definition as regards the permanence of the Catholic faith in the fullness of truth and in the very unity of the Church (cf. I Vat. Council, Gasser report: Mansi 52, 1227 B).

Furthermore, Hans Küng radically changes not a few other essential points of Catholic faith, attributing to them a meaning different from the one that the Church understood and understands (cf. I Vat. Council *Dei Filius*, "de fide et ratione" can. 3: DS 3043). Mention is made for the sake of example of the doctrine concerning the divinity of Christ and his Virgin Mother Mary, to be set in the context referred to before (cf. II, 2).



2. Consequently, Hans Küng in his writings has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and not just from one or other truth of faith itself, since its whole theological thought is involved. The dogmas, in fact, constitute together an organic unity, and are an objective though inadequate, expression of the organic unity of divine Revelation. The revealed deposit does not permit either selections of content or gradation in the obedience of faith. There exists, it is true, a hierarchy of the dogmas of the Church (cf. II Vat. Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 11), in the sense that some are based on others as the principal ones and the illuminated by them; all however, must be equally believed as divinely revealed.

Hans Küng's writings include inspiring and fascinating pages, but they cannot heal the fractures made within the edifice of faith.

Therefore Hans Küng cannot be considered a Catholic theologian; or can he carry out a teaching role in the Catholic Church.

3. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with this Declaration, did not intend to reply to Hans Küng's challenge that no one would venture to declare a non-Catholic anyone who is opposed to fundamental and qualifying points of the faith professed by the Catholic Church. It merely wished to end a period of waiting that was already too long.

As on their side the Bishops, who by virtue of the apostolic succession are placed in defense of the Gospel (cf. Phil. 1:16), so the Sacred Congregation, which derives from the Successor of Peter the office of promoting and safeguarding the doctrine about faith and morals in the universal Church, has carried out a duty of justice and ecclesial charity.

This was a duty imposed by faithfulness to the pastoral testament of St. Paul who orders us to guard "what has been entrusted" to us (cf. I Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14), in order that the disciples of Christ may not be deceived by anyone with beguiling arguments and that all, by means of faith, may be guarded by the power of God (cf. Col. 2:4; 1 Pt. 1:5).



# **DECLARATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE**

*(L'Osservatore Romano, January 14, 1980, p. 18)*

1. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a declaration of 15 December 1979, noted that Professor Hans Küng, in his writings, has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and therefore can no longer be considered a Catholic theologian or exercise, as such, his task as a teacher.

Consequently, the competent diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Georg Moser, has revoked with immediate effect the "Nihil obstat" granted to Prof. Hans Küng 19 years ago on the occasion of his call to Tübingen University. After having tried for nearly ten years to arrive at a clarification with regard to some fundamental theological issues questioned by Prof. Hans Küng, the inevitable consequences have thus been taken. The German Episcopal Conference expresses its regret that it has been necessary to reach this painful decision. It shares unreservedly the decision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the measures consequently taken by Bishop Moser. As a result of the way the matter had developed as a whole, there was no other way out.

2. The main reason for this decision is seen by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Prof. Küng's opinion with regard to infallibility in the Church.

All Christian Churches and ecclesial communities teach that the Church of Jesus Christ is indestructible, because she is founded on the inviolable power and on the firm reliability of the Word of God. Even if it is always in need of new reflection and never fully complete until the conclusion of history, the faith of the Church involves, however, a binding "yes" and on univocal "no". Otherwise it is not possible for the Church to remain in the truth of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church is convinced that on the Church as a whole and, in a special and specific way, on Authority (Episcopate, Council, Pope, in her, is conferred the gift of the Spirit of guarding and interpreting correctly, by virtue of her own truth, the Word of God revealed once and for all. The permanence of the Church in truth is connected, therefore, with some enunciations of faith, whose obligatory nature exists in differing degrees. Formu-

lations which serve to interpret the testimony as understood by Holy Scripture and which are pronounced by the Church, and whose obligatory nature is really definitive, are called "dogmas" in the strict sense. Vatican Council I (1870) declared as a dogma the infallibility of the Pope in his doctrinal teaching and at the same time described the conditions for such an authoritative pronouncement on the basis of the Tradition of the Church. Vatican Council II confirmed and completed this doctrine.

Prof. Hans Küng in his Book *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage (Infallible? A Question)*, Zurich 1970, and in other writings of his, has reduced this doctrine in the sense of maintaining a fundamental permanence of the Church in truth, which, however, is, according to him reconcilable with actual errors in decisions of faith taken by the Church irrevocably. The Church, therefore, remains in truth, according to this view, "in spite of all the errors that are always possible". The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sees in this opinion a lessening of the Church's gift of infallibility and a violation or a radical obscuring of the 1870 dogma. Prof. Küng has recently spoken even of a "revision of the decisions of Vatican I".

The dogma of infallibility in the Church may seem at first sight a marginal phenomenon in the whole of faith; actually, fundamental problems are concentrated in it, such as, for example, the knowledge of truth and the interpretation of revelation, its verbal form and its tradition, the certainty of faith and the validity of the power of Authority in the Church. In this field which serves for true knowledge of divine revelation, the manifestation of errors harms faith itself.

The theological method practised by Prof. Küng with its dangerous limitations that have been pointed out several times, has as a consequence a break with the theological tradition of faith and doctrine on essential points. This is revealed above all in Küng's affirmations about the Person of Jesus Christ. In the central Christological question, whether Jesus Christ is really the son of God, that is, whether He is of the degree and level of the being of God without diminution. Küng, in spite of all his attempts at clarification, avoids a decided confession, formulated with binding words. Since ancient times Christians have professed: "we believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all time: God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father" (as in the great profession of faith of Nicaea, 325). This implies consequences for our salvation: if God Himself did not give him-

self in Jesus Christ for men, then the central point of Christian revelation falls. All the enunciations, even those on the "human" being, or humanity of Jesus, are really important for Christian faith only if they are connected deep down with the fact that Jesus Christ is truly God.

Prof. Küng gives the assurance in general that he wishes to preserve and give new value to the contents of Christological dogmas, but actually he obscures and reduces their univocal enunciations. When fundamental points concerning the mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ lack clarity, the heart not only of Catholic faith but of Christian faith in general is threatened. It is no mere chance, therefore, that Prof. Küng presents in an insufficient way also the doctrine on the divine Trinity, the Church, the Sacraments and Mary.

These deficiencies have contributed to a distressing confusion in faith. The faithful on the other hand, are entitled to a full and univocal presentation of the inalienable truths of faith. The authority of the Magisterium and of pastoral government in the Church must see to this.

3. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith admonished Prof. Küng about his conception of the Church as early as 1967, after the publication of his book *Die Kirche* (The Church). Freiburg im B., 1967. On 30 April 1968 the Congregation communicated to Prof. Küng that it had examined his book "Die Kirche". At the same time the Congregation invited Prof. Küng to a conversation. Although the latter declared he was, in general, willing, this conversation did not take place in spite of repeated invitations. After the publication of the book *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* (Infallible? A Question), 1970, the Congregation started doctrinal proceedings with regard to some opinions expressed in that book and asked Prof. Küng to answer the questions transmitted to him by the Congregation. The voluminous exchange of letters did not lead to an answer that satisfied the Congregation. Consequently, the Congregation for the Faith, by reason of its task of protecting and promoting faith in the whole Church, published on 6 July 1973 the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", in which the doctrine of the Tübingen Professor was rejected. With reference to the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", the Congregation communicated to Prof. Küng in writing that the possibility of a conversation about the two doctrinal proceedings remained open. If Prof. Küng had recognized the doctrine contained in the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", the proceedings in progress with regard to the two books would have been closed. In spite of the mediation of Cardinal Dopfner, the conversation proposed by Rome to clarify the matter did not take place.



After Prof. Küng in a letter of 4 September 1974 had assured the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that he wished to take advantage of the "time for reflection" granted to him, not excluding the possibility that he might subsequently "conform" his doctrine to that of the Magisterium, the Congregation, in a declaration of 15 February 1975, addressed "on the mandate of Paul VI for the present the admonition not to sustain such doctrines any longer". The doctrinal proceedings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith were "declared closed for the present with regard to this matter".

In a collateral declaration of 17 February 1975, the German Episcopal Conference reminded Prof. Küng of the principles for the fundamental understanding of Catholic theology, which were not taken sufficiently into account in some of his theological works. This applied above all to the doctrine on the Person of Jesus Christ contained in Küng's book *Christ sein*. In the meantime also the correspondence on the matter was published. The promise subsequently made by Küng to clarify the contested themes in his more recent work *Existiert Gott? (Does God exist?)* Munich 1978, was again not kept.

In spite of the admonition of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 15 February 1975, Prof. Küng, in the spring of 1979, not only repeated his opinions about infallibility in the Church, but presented them again in an even more emphatic way (cf. *Kirchegehalten in der Wahrheit? (The Church — preserved in truth?)* Theologische Meditationen 51, Zurich 1979; "Der neue Stand der Unfehlbarkeitsdebatte" ("The new state of the debate on infallibility"), a preface to A.B. Hasler's book. *Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde. Macht und Ohnmacht eines Dogmas*, Munich 1979, XIII-XXXVII). The Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith, in its decision on 15 December 1979, refers to this flagrant violation of the conditions imposed for the temporary suspension of the doctrinal proceedings in February 1975.

4. The decision that has been taken can be understood only in the light of this period, almost a decade, of discussion and controversy. The representatives of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Presidents of the German Episcopal Conference, first and foremost Cardinal Julius Döpfner and Herman Volk, and the competent Bishop of Rottenburg Most Rev. Georg



Moser in many letters of different character, in personal talks and in numerous initiatives, have tried to reach a clarification of the situation that had come about. In that they have always recognized theological discussion as having an important role. Prof. Küng did not accept the invitations to a conversation expressed for years by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, nor did he answer the questions put to him by the German Episcopal Conference. The temporary suspension of the doctrinal proceedings and the "admonition" of 1975, for which no provision is made from the juridical and procedural point of view, constituted a means to do as much as possible to meet him halfway and an attempt to settle conflicts in a new way.

Prof. Küng did not avail himself of this possibility. With unprecedented inflexibility and with unusual incorrigibility — this holds good in spite of contrary declarations on his part that he is willing to dialogue — he did not let himself be induced either by the vast theological discussion or by initiatives on the part of the Magisterium to integrate, modify or correct his doctrines. Also his attacks, sometimes excessive, against the discipline and order of the Church, must be set in this same context.

5. For these reasons the decision taken by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith became inevitable. The German Episcopal Conference regrets that so many attempts for another solution have failed. In the last few years the ecclesiastical Authority has often been reproached with tolerating within the Church dissenting doctrines of this kind while proceeding, on the other hand, against Archbishop Lefebvre, for example, and his followers. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the German Episcopal Conference, as well as the Bishop of Rottenburg, have left no doubt that they will not lose sight of their task of protecting the faith of the Church. Members of the Church, on their side, are entitled to have faithful preaching and certainty in faith (not to be confused with false confidence!), also made possible through the magisterial authority of the Church and thereby, also through infallibility by means of the Spirit of God. To commit oneself to this conviction means maintaining the identity of the Catholic Church. This identity is, moreover, the premise for a real ecumenical dialogue and for the accomplishment of the Church's tasks in society.

The German Episcopal Conference requests the faithful of the Catholic Church, other Christians and all men interested in the

life of the Church to see and judge the decision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith keeping in mind this background. The events have been made known for years and as such can be checked. The Authority of the Church will not let itself be deterred by this disappointing matter from seeking also in the future, if it is a question of arriving at a clarification on controversial theological opinions, a solution on the basis of a sincere dialogue .

6. Prof. Küng is not for this reason excluded from the Church and remains a priest. But as a result of the revocation of the "Nihil obstat", he loses the mandate of teaching Catholic theology on behalf of the Church and as a teacher recognized by the Church.

Cologne-Bonn, 18 December 1979.

JOSEPH CARD. HOFFNER  
President  
of the German Episcopal Conference

## STATEMENT BY HANS KUNG

*(Doctrine and Life, February, 1980, pp. 115-116)*

I am deeply ashamed of my church. Even in the 20th century it is conducting secret inquisitorial proceedings. Many people are scandalized that a Church which appeals to Jesus Christ and which has now begun to defend human rights, defames and discredits its own theologians with such methods.

In my recent book, now under attack, concerning the problem of infallibility, I did nothing but repeat my old and as yet unanswered question, and at the same time I asked the Pope to call together a commission of internationally respected experts which could clear up this matter.

The Objections to **On Being A Christian** and my stand on other dogmas have not been the object of Roman proceedings. Finally, in my most recent book, **Does God Exist?** I tried to clarify certain Christian issues, and my clarifications have not yet been the object of Church criticism.

But obviously all of this has been nothing but a pretext for silencing a rather irksome critic. And while the Dutch Cardinal (Jan) Willebrands of Utrecht, defended his theologian, (Father) Edward Schillebeeckx, by personally intervening with the Pope on his behalf, certain German cardinals and bishops collaborated with the Roman Inquisition in order to destroy the credibility of one of their own theologians in a surprise pre-Christmas attack.

After the Pope had finally, after 350 years, conceded that the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had committed



## 312 BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

a fundamental error in the case of Galileo, now that same inquisitorial authority has resumed the same inhumane policies not only against me, but also against numerous other theologians.

But I plan to continue as a Catholic theologian, in the Catholic Church, to be an advocate for numerous Catholics, and I know that I have behind me countless theologians, pastors, religion teachers and lay people in our Church. At the same time, I shall fight in my own Church until this disciplinary measure is formally revoked, just as Pope John XXIII revoked the condemnation of such prominent theologians as (Pierre) Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac and others. I am certain that the struggle of so many people for a more Christian Church will finally succeed.



## **HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE COMMUNIQUE DECEMBER 30, 1979**

*(L'Osservatore Romano, January 14, 1980, p. 19)*

1. The Declaration issued on 15 December 1979 by the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith about some points of the theological doctrine of Prof. Hans Küng, had been made inevitable in order to protect, as is necessary, the right of the faithful to receive in its entirety the truth taught by the Church, after all the efforts of the Holy See, the German Episcopal Conference and the diocesan Bishop, to induce Prof. Küng to renounce his own erroneous positions, had proved to be in vain.

2. Prof. Küng having expressed in a talk with the diocesan Bishop, Mons. Moser, his readiness to clarify his opinions, the same Bishop endeavoured once more with great patience and understanding to help Prof. Küng to solve his problem. Learning of a "stand" (Stellungnahme) drawn up by Prof. Küng after this contact with Bishop Moser, the Holy Father decided to invite the German Cardinals, Bishop Moser and the Metropolitan of Freiburg in Breisgau, Mons. Saier, to a special consultation, in the presence of the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Cardinal Prefect and the Secretary of the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Following upon a thorough evaluation of Prof. Küng's most recent affirmations, all the participants in the consultation reached the conclusion that, unfortunately, they do not constitute a sufficient basis to be able to modify what was decided in the Declaration of 15 December.

3. In view, of this situation, Prof. Küng plainly cannot continue to carry out the role of a theologian, teaching by the mandate of the Church. And the competent Ordinary is bound to draw from that the canonical and concordatory consequences.

4. For years the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had been making efforts to clarify with Prof. Küng the ideas circulated by him, without meeting with the corresponding readiness

on his part. The consultation that took place on 28 December is another proof that both the Apostolic See and the German Episcopate continue to treat the problem of Prof. Küng with the best will.

The decision taken, most regretfully, after so many efforts previously made is dictated exclusively by a sense of serious pastoral responsibility.

It does not mean in any way — as was already stressed in the Declaration of 15 December — a restriction of the rightful and necessary freedom of theological research.

The decision does not change at all the position of the Church in the commitment for the unity of Christians, according to the principles expressed in the declaration of the Second Vatican Council *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

5. Although the "stand" (Stellungnahme) of Prof. Küng cannot constitute a sufficient basis to change the decision contained in the Declaration of the S. Congregation of the Faith on 15 December, the Apostolic See and the German Episcopate do not cease to cherish the hope that Prof. Küng — who has expressed more than once his desire to continue to be a Catholic theologian — will after thorough reflection take up a position that will make it possible to restore the faculty of teaching by the mandate of the Church.

The Holy See and the German Episcopate will continue to commend this problem to God in prayer and ask all men of goodwill to do likewise.



## HANS KÜNG REPLIES

*(Doctrine and Life, February, 1980, pp. 117-118)*

The results of the negotiations in Rome have caused me deep sorrow and are beyond my comprehension. The Pope has condemned a man whom he has not heard. The Roman maxim, "Audiatur et altera pars" (The other side should also be heard), seems to have no validity in Rome. Although I wrote to the Pope several times and recently asked the bishop of Rottenburg to arrange an audience for me, the Pope did not deem it necessary to talk personally to a Catholic theologian who has tried for a quarter of a century to serve his Church loyally. All means of ecclesiastical power are being employed to silence an irksome critic. Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council are forgotten. Rome obviously cannot tolerate "correctio Fraterna," loyal criticism, fraternal co-operation, inquiries undertaken in the spirit of solidarity. Human rights and Christian love are preached to the outside world, but internally, in spite of all the fine words, they are ignored.

The Roman attack came as a total surprise to me and, on top of that, at Christmas time. Due to the Roman strategy of negotiations, I was always the object and never a partner in the proceedings. Nevertheless, I did everything which I, in good conscience, could do in this extremely difficult situation. I spoke with Bishop Moser, I prepared a statement for the Pope.

It was all in vain. I was not heard. Nor were the many appeals of Christians from all over the world heard. Also left unheard were the vehement protests of numerous theologians, pastors and lay people from the various denominations.

Even the admonition of the World Council of Churches was not heeded. The Roman authorities and German bishops have failed to appreciate that this conflict is not just an issue of Hans Küng, but also of that Church which is in the process of gambling away all of its chances for renewal. It is not just an issue of a single theologian, but also of all of those, be they known or unknown, who have been and will be censured by church authorities. It is

not just an issue of individual believers, but also of the unity of the entire Church and the credibility of Church leadership. It is not just a question of the infallibility of the Church. It is not just a question of an inner Catholic conflict, but also of the success of ecumenism.

I asked myself, if I am no longer supposed to be Catholic, how many of our theologians, pastors and lay people will be able to call themselves Catholic?

In spite of all of this, I do not consider this Roman verdict as a defeat, but rather as a challenge to our Church to clarify the basis of Catholic theology and preaching, a task which is long overdue. If I had made a dishonest compromise, I might still have my "missio canonica" today and even a brief period of peace and quiet. But this would have been no service to the Church, and I would have lost my Christian identity and my moral credibility.

I will continue to pursue my central concern, which is to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ intelligible to contemporary people. I will do this as decisively as in the past.



*On May 15, 1980, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the German Episcopal Conference on the Hans Küng affair. The BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO will publish the letter in the next issue.*



# **SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO EPISCOPIIS**

## **SORSOGONENSIS**

### **Administrationis Apostolicae**

## **D E C R E T U M**

Ad consulendum regimini vacantis dioecesis Sorsogonensis, Summus Pontifex **JOANNES PAULUS**, Divina Providentia PP. II, praesenti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Decreto nominat et constituit Administratorem Apostolicum ad nutum Sanctae Sedis memoratae Ecclesiae, usque dum aliter provideatur, Exc. m. P.D. **Concordium Sarte**, Episcopum titularem Thunusudensem, eique iura et facultates tribuit quae Episcopis residentialibus, ad normam sacrorum canonum, competunt.

Contrariis quibusvis minime obstantibus.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, die 19 Ianuarii 1980.

✠ **S. CARD. BAGGIO**  
Praef.

✠ **FR. LUCAS MOREIRA NEVES, O.P.**  
Archiepiscopus tit. Feraditan, Maior  
A Secretis