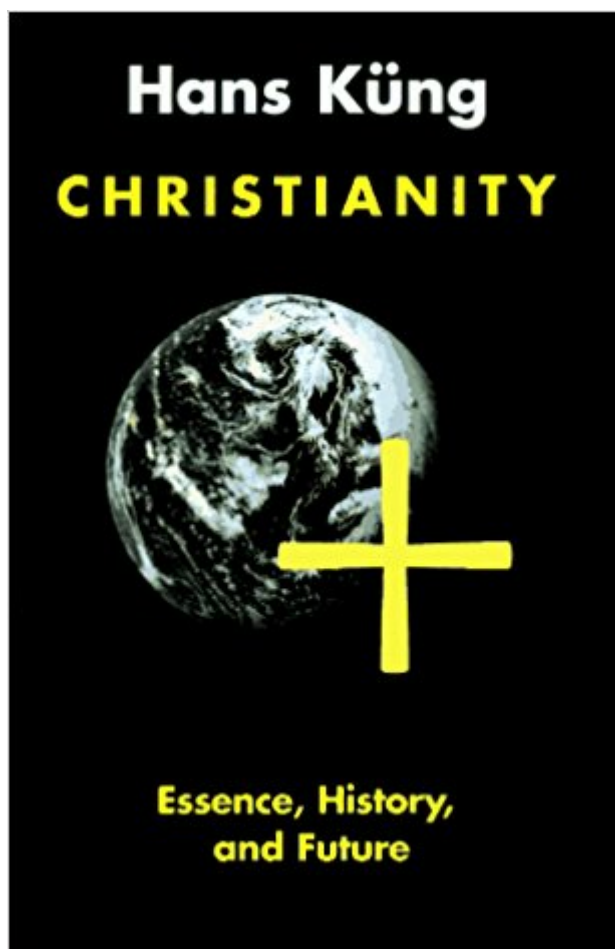


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Christianity: Essence, History, Future



Synopsis

"A big book on a big subject by the biggest name in contemporary theology ... Anyone ... interested in Christianity would find Kung's latest masterpiece a permanent enrichment of the mind."

•Church Times "Kung is brilliant and exciting." •Christian Century "A dazzling display of scholarship." •Library Journal "The best yet from one of the world's premier teachers ... Breathtaking in scope and analytical power. Excellent layout, helpful graphics ... A "must" for every serious library." •Choice "Mammoth and important." •Kirkus Reviews>

Book Information

Paperback: 968 pages

Publisher: Continuum (August 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0826408842

ISBN-13: 978-0826408846

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.8 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 3 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #652,145 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism > Theology #10768 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects #13037 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology

Customer Reviews

The second volume in the Religious Situation of Our Time series initiated with Kung's Judaism (1991) constitutes this massive "paradigm analysis" of Christianity. It is tempting to refer to both the volume and the series as "magisterial," though Kung's rocky relationship with the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church gives that adjective a decidedly ironic twist. The book is further evidence of Kung's already well established place in a tradition of German systematizers whose systems, though driven by laudably global motivations, have had ambiguous global consequences. This book continues Kung's application of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm analysis--developed as a way to think about the structure of scientific revolutions--to religion. It is not so much a "history" as an examination of five "constellations" of Christianity (the Jewish Christian apocalyptic, Hellenistic Byzantine, Roman Catholic, Reformation Protestant, and Enlightenment modern paradigms) that constitute a still-present past of Christianity. This is an

important contribution to the understanding of Christianity's present fragmentation and also to ecumenical conversation to the extent that it resists the temptation to think of later paradigms as rendering earlier paradigms obsolete; that all five paradigms coexist in Kung's analysis is a reminder that ecumenical conversation has to reckon with translation and (sometimes) untranslatability. Steve Schroeder --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A big book on a big subject by the biggest name in contemporary theology ... Anyone ... interested in Christianity would find Kung's latest masterpiece a permanent enrichment of the mind." *Church Times* "The best yet from one of the world's premier teachers ... Breathtaking in scope and analytical power. Excellent layout, helpful graphics ... A "must" for every serious library." *Choice*

An excellent theological book.

This is an excellent book. The author does an excellent job in describing the essence of Christianity, placing the reader in the actual history of Christianity, and also placing the reader in a position to look at the future of Christianity. The book is well written.

To those that are looking for truth, this is a must read. As an ex-Christian missionary this work helped me crystallize my conflict with the concept that God is angry with man and we need a Messiah to bridge the divide, and the concept of what God creates by definition is not defective. I especially benefited from better understanding the influence of Hellenism in Christianity. If you have a faith that you are comfortable with you may want to pass by this book. If you are searching, this book has more questions for you.

I received all Hans Kung books in good condition, I have started to read them. Thank you.

It is refreshing to read Kung, who in his earlier days was the gadfly; that constantly irritated Cardinal Ratzinger the current Pope.

Kung is a derivative theologian, not a specialist in early Christianity. He either lied, or he was simply ignorant by claiming that the earliest Christians did not believe Jesus to be God. I recommend two

books by Larry Hurtado: "How on earth did Jesus become a god?" And "Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity." These books demonstrate that the earliest Christians believed in the deity of Christ.

Someone once said that a book is to a man as a beacon is to a ship. And the need for a beacon is nowhere greater than along the rocky shores of Christianity. Though by no means the last word on the subject, Hans K ng's new book, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future* gives the mature Christian a valuable guide for navigating the difficult business of being a Christian.

Translated from the German by John Bowden, *Christianity* is the second in K ng's yet to be completed trilogy, "The Religious Situation of Our Time." What is clear from the start of this book is the depth of analysis with which K ng writes. The Roman Catholic Church in particular is subjected to an acid bath of erudite criticism. But this is K ng's purpose: to call for reform and point to ecumenicity through a critical understanding and synthesis of the whole of Christianity.

Readers may disagree with K ng on certain issues, but they will be delighted with the scholarship K ng employs in his ambitious project. The stylistic merits of the book also deserve honorable mention. An engaging and well organized style is important for such a large book (797 pages of text, 114 pages of notes), and K ng delivers, withstanding some bumps in the translation. The book is not a history of Christianity, but a paradigm analysis of the religion itself. Two thousand years of Christianity are organized around six paradigms, with a paradigm understood as "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so forth shared by the members of a given community." This fascinating survey is prefaced by two short chapters on the essence of Christianity. The reader is immersed in sober re-evaluation of Christianity throughout the book, which is entirely profitable. But the inquiry has a tone of detachment, as if K ng has given us a political and historical analysis. The joy and confidence of Christian experience is sidelined. Encouragement is not easily found in these pages. We must never forget that Christianity is not simply another world religion alongside of Judaism and Islam; it is Truth. Yet if we desire to be serious about our religion, and thirst for insight and understanding, then this is definitely the best book I've seen on the topic of Christianity

Here is a book by the noted German Ecumenist Hans Kung. You can tell Kung is an Ecumenist, even if you've never heard of him, for this book is punctuated by "Questions for the Future" and parallels between, and for, different faiths. Kung's kind of ecumenism is not between denominations but between religions. In this book those faiths are primarily the Christian, the Jewish and the

Islamic. Kung, so it seems, wants something approaching complete world religious tolerance. An interesting message in these days of terror. Let us not accuse Kung of superficiality. This is no short book and the scholarship within is no mere trifle. The book demands, indeed, requires, a serious cast of mind. The ecumenism it wears so obviously will be found a challenge by some (for it asks us to recognise others) but it should not be allowed to put the reader off track. For the book repays serious study. What is paid out are questions. This book is a book of few answers. The wise reader, however, will recognise that answers are "ten a penny" and that questions are more fundamental. Kung's paradigm approach to the incarnation of Christianity throughout history is interesting but always a matter of debate. His approach in many respects could be said to be chickening out. After all, it is basically marking arbitrary lines off on a linear view of history. However, for all that Kung has chosen this obvious way of reviewing Christianity he has done it well. There is detail and debate in Kung's discussions. Read, think, and question. That is how this book should be approached.

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