



Press Release

Theologian Hans Küng dies aged 93

The University of Tübingen mourns world renowned Professor of ecumenical theology and critic of the Roman Catholic Church

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Tübingen, 07.04.2021

The University of Tübingen is mourning Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hans Küng. He passed away on April 6, at the age of 93, at his home here in Tübingen.

“The University of Tübingen has lost a productive researcher, an extremely creative scholar and an outstanding theologian,” said University President, Professor Bernd Engler. “The institutions Küng founded at our university – the Institute of Ecumenical and Interreligious Research and the Global Ethic Institute – are of lasting significance and have thus profoundly shaped the university. With his globally recognized commitment to church reform and to dialogue between religions, he has contributed significantly to the international reputation of the University of Tübingen.”

Küng was born in 1928 in Sursee, Switzerland (Canton Lucerne). He studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and earned his doctorate at the Institut Catholique in Paris. He was ordained as a priest in 1954. In 1960, Küng was appointed full professor of fundamental theology at the University of Tübingen’s Faculty of Catholic Theology. Three years later, he also became director of the Institute of Ecumenical Research, which he founded.

Küng repeatedly voiced criticism of the Pope and the Catholic Church. In 1979, the Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart responded to pressure from Pope John Paul II and the German Bishops' Conference by withdrawing Küng's church teaching license. To enable Küng to continue teaching at the University of Tübingen, the state government and the University agreed a compromise. Küng’s Institute for Ecumenical Research was removed from the Faculty of Catholic Theology and placed directly under the supervision of the University Senate - a unique model in the history of the University of Tübingen.

In 1980, together with his friend, the philosopher Walter Jens, Küng founded the Studium Generale at the University of Tübingen. Every

semester since then, academic topics have been presented in series of lectures in ways that make them accessible to the general public. The events have many loyal followers in the Tübingen area.

As a pioneer of interreligious dialogue, and for his commitment to ethics of humanity that transcends cultures and religions, a "global ethic," Hans Küng was recognized in all the world religions. Under his leadership, the "Parliament of the World's Religions" adopted the Declaration on a Global Ethic in 1993, and in 1995 the Global Ethic Foundation was founded in Tübingen, of which Küng was president until 2013. With the help of his outstanding contacts, Küng invited high-ranking global ethics speakers to Tübingen, including the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the German President Horst Köhler, Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.

In 2012, the Global Ethic Foundation established the Global Ethic Institute as an affiliated institute of the University of Tübingen with significant funding from the Karl Schlecht Foundation. The institute conducts research on questions of globalization ethics, business ethics and intercultural learning. At the same time, it organizes courses on ethical issues, especially in the fields of economics and religion.

Küng received numerous honors and awards for his research and commitment, including the Theodor Heuss Prize in 1998, the Göttingen Peace Prize in 2002, and the Knight Commander's Cross in 2003.

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