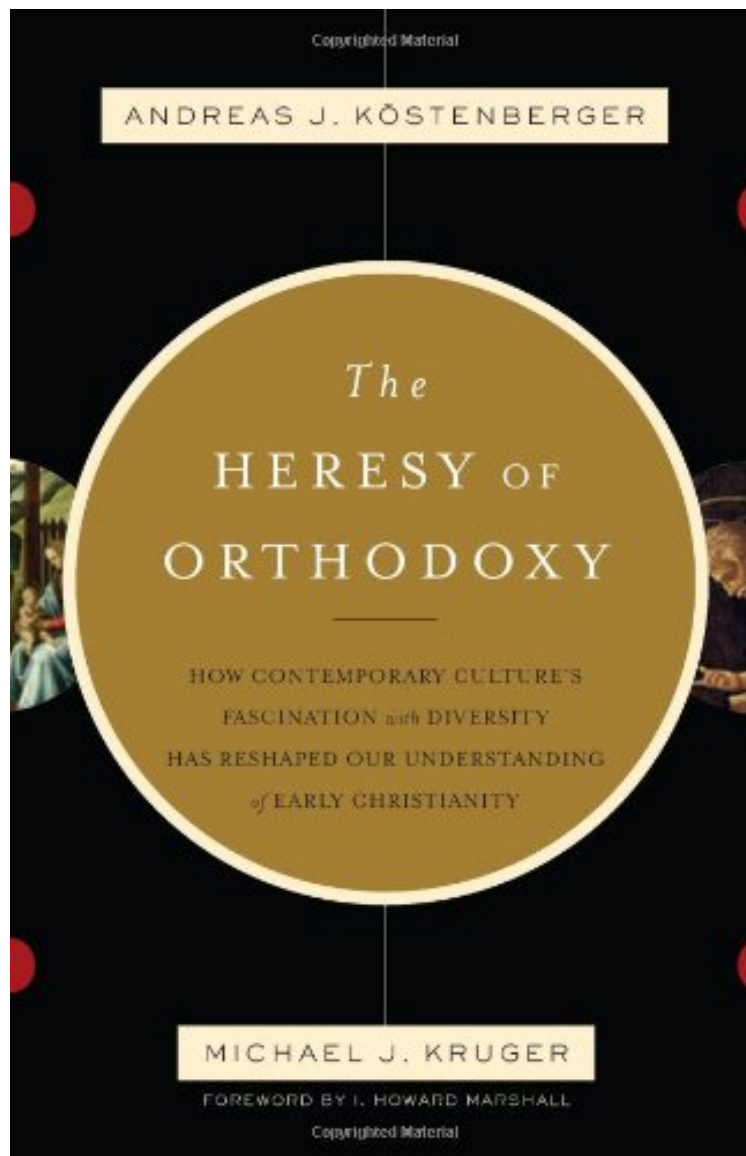


[Library ebook] The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity

The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity

Andreas J. Kstenberger, Michael J. Kruger
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Andreas J. Kstenberger, Michael J. Kruger : The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity before purchasing it in order

to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A scholarly presentation of the true origin of Christian orthodoxy and the New Testament canon. By DoctorG An excellent treatment of the facts that dispute the erroneous attempts by Bart Ehrman and other modern scholars to denigrate the New Testament and Christian teaching based upon it. Using a number of different approaches based on the actual history of early Christians and authors of Scripture, Kostenberger shows that, although diversity existed, orthodox teaching clearly was evident in the early first century, and the collection of books regarded as Scripture by Christians of that time was rather clear cut. Whereas Ehrman et. al. try to claim that the New Testament was canonized by the Catholic church in the fourth century, Kostenberger demonstrates that the majority of the canon was clearly established before the end of the second century. Only perhaps 3 or 4 books of the final canon were questionable at the early date. In addition, this book demonstrates why some relatively newer writings, such as the Gospel of Thomas, which Ehrman tries to use to demonstrate diversity, never were regarded as Scripture by the early church fathers and why this was so. This book is highly recommended for those wishing to know the facts relating to the establishment of orthodox Christian teaching and the Scripture supporting that theology. The bibliography is extensive, a treasure trove of reference material for this area of study.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Decisive Answer to Baur's Thesis By DantheMan While the majority of the objections to Christianity are objections to its morality and "exclusive claims"--there is an intellectual minority that seeks to undermine the Biblical authenticity on a more textual, historical basis. We need to be prepared to answer both. Growing up in the church, I was taught relatively nothing about the transmission process of the Biblical texts or even how certain New Testament books were eventually canonized. But it is no longer enough to just know 2 Timothy 3:16 anymore. It is no longer enough to believe the Bible is true, "for the Bible tells me so;" we need to know why we believe 2 Timothy 3:16 to be Scripture in the first place. C. S. Lewis once said, Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. We need to be aware of the good philosophy of how we got the Bible and why we believe it to be authentic, because of the modern assaults on it today. The Baur thesis is something that has been fuming in the intellectual community for the last century. It is the idea that heresy preceded orthodoxy. That in fact, early on, there was a diversity of views on Christ and, practically as many "versions of Christianity as there were Christians". What happened amongst the multiplicity of factions was that over time a "proto-orthodox" sect emerged, took central control in Rome, and selected a "canon" of books to support its views. It was this sect, now mainstream, which eventually forced the dissenters to comply. This thesis, now promoted by Bart Ehrman, is a threat in the most dangerous sense. If heresy preceded orthodoxy than it appears that "traditional orthodox Christianity" as we know is only a later development several hundred years after Jesus, and therefore not true. In fact, due to the early diversity in beliefs and the faulty transmission process--there is no way to know what was true in the first place. If Biblical Christianity is nothing more than a late development, it is a false narrative; and if a false narrative, it is nothing to be believed or followed by us today. This is what the intellectual community by and large adheres to. And *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* dismantles it both thoroughly and decisively. Kruger and Kostenberger show that the Biblical texts as we have it were not some later development, but were in fact the earliest books after the life of Christ--testified to by the early church fathers. "The very books eventually affirmed by early Christians are those which the majority of modern scholars would agree derive from the apostolic time period; and those books rejected by early Christians are the ones the majority of modern scholars agree are late and secondary." Quotes from early church Fathers further show just how early the leadership recognized the writings of Paul, Peter, and the synoptic gospels to be Scripture--and how central these new texts were to the early church. Furthermore there were not as many "versions" of Christianity as Baur claims, for Gnosticism and Marcionism, and other heresies did not arise until further in the second century. As to transmission issues, the thousands and thousands of variants that Ehrman champions, this is quite actually a good problem to have. Why? Well, because of the overwhelming wealth of manuscripts we possess, there are going to be more variants, more differences between the hand written copies--which is an exponentially greater situation than having only one or two copies and few variants. "Would the lack of textual variants then be regarded as positive evidence for the New Testament's reliable transmission?" Kruger and Kostenberger answer the question themselves: "We suspect not. The objection would then be that we have too few manuscripts. It is a losing affair either way." At the end of his book *Misquoting Jesus*, Ehrman reveals the core theological premise behind his thinking: If God really wanted people to have his actual words, surely he would have miraculously preserved those words, just as he miraculously inspired those words in the first place. This underlying theological belief assumes that if God was really trying to communicate His Word, there would be NO scribal variants at all. Of course this begs the question, How does Ehrman know what God would surely do if He indeed inspired the New Testament? It is this devotion to either perfection or nothing which completely undermines his untenably skeptical position. In conclusion it seems that Ehrman and intellectuals of his ilk are not actually unbiased scholars who are honestly looking to shed light on the truth of the New Testament. They too have a devotion to a creed, to diversity at all costs. To no one exclusive claim being right, for that would mean others would be wrong: "No matter how overwhelming the historical evidence may

be, we can never say another group is wrong if that group is 'sincere' and 'passionate' in their belief that they are right. Put differently, the sheer existence of disagreement among early Christians requires that we declare no one view to be right." It is this full embrace of a post-modern framework which disallows for any truly "orthodox" position to be found, no matter what the evidence may be. The Heresy of Orthodoxy is a remarkable work that answers the modern philosophies quite convincingly. "The question is simply whether the manuscript tradition as a whole is reliable enough to transmit the essential message of the New Testament. As we have seen above, the manuscript tradition is more than adequate. It is so very close to the originals that there is no material difference between what, say, Paul or John wrote and what we possess today." 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. It is encouraging to know there are orthodox scholars fighting the good fight against those who promote heresies under the guise of scholarship. By C. Cavalli. Not being a theologian, nor seminary-trained, I found this book to be very clear, readable, and understandable. The evidence and arguments presented against the Bauer thesis were forthright and honest, and more than anything else, a death blow to the "evidence" of many modern scholars who still support Bauer. It is encouraging to know there are orthodox scholars fighting the good fight against those who promote heresies under the guise of scholarship. I believe this is a "must-read" for every Christian, especially for every student who will be confronted by people like Bart Ehrman in college/university settings. I also believe it should be used in Sunday School classes to educate and equip the Body of Christ for war against the onslaught of heretical teachings that are deceptively promoted as truth and scholarly revelation in the Church world. Despite the old saying, ignorance is not bliss. It can be lethal.

Beginning with Walter Bauer in 1934, the denial of clear orthodoxy in early Christianity has shaped and largely defined modern New Testament criticism, recently given new life through the work of spokesmen like Bart Ehrman. Spreading from academia into mainstream media, the suggestion that diversity of doctrine in the early church led to many competing orthodoxies is indicative of today's postmodern relativism. Authors Kstenberger and Kruger engage Ehrman and others in this polemic against a dogged adherence to popular ideals of diversity. Kstenberger and Kruger's accessible and careful scholarship not only counters the "Bauer Thesis" using its own terms, but also engages overlooked evidence from the New Testament. Their conclusions are drawn from analysis of the evidence of unity in the New Testament, the formation and closing of the canon, and the methodology and integrity of the recording and distribution of religious texts within the early church.

"In the beginning was Diversity. And the Diversity was with God, and the Diversity was God. Without Diversity was nothing made that was made. And it came to pass that nasty old 'orthodox' people narrowed down diversity and finally squeezed it out, dismissing it as heresy. But in the fullness of time (which is of course our time), Diversity rose up and smote orthodoxy hip and thigh. Now, praise be, the only heresy is orthodoxy. As widely and as unthinkingly accepted as this reconstruction is, it is historical nonsense: the emperor has no clothes. I am grateful to Andreas Kstenberger and Michael Kruger for patiently, carefully, and politely exposing this shameful nakedness for what it is." D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; cofounder, The Gospel Coalition "The Heresy of Orthodoxy will help many to make sense of what is happening in early Christian studies today. It explains, critiques, and provides an alternative to, the so-called 'Bauer Thesis,' an approach which undergirds a large segment of scholarship on early Christianity. The 'doctrine' that Christianity before the fourth century was but a seething mass of diverse and competing factions, with no theological center which could claim historical continuity with Jesus and his apostles, has become the new 'orthodoxy' for many. The authors of this book do more than expose the faults of this doctrine, they point the way to a better foundation for early Christian studies, focusing on the cornerstone issues of the canon and the text of the New Testament. Chapter 8, which demonstrates how one scholar's highly-publicized twist on New Testament textual criticism only tightens the tourniquet on his own views, is alone worth the price of the book. Kstenberger and Kruger have done the Christian reading public a real service." Charles E. Hill, Professor of New Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary "The Bauer thesis, taken up in many university circles and popularized by Bart Ehrman and through TV specials, has long needed a thorough examination. The Heresy of Orthodoxy is that work. Whether looking at Bauer's thesis of diversity, at contemporary use made of the theory to argue for the early origin of Gnosticism, at the process that led to the canon, or what our manuscript evidence is, this study shows that Bauer's theory, though long embraced, is full of problems that need to be faced. What emerges from this study is an appreciation that some times new theories are not better than what they seek to replace, despite the hype that often comes from being the new kid on the block. It is high time this kid be exposed as lacking the substance of a genuinely mature view. This book does that well, and also gives a fresh take on what the alternative is that has much better historical roots." Darrell L. Bock, Executive Director of Cultural Engagement, Howard G. Hendricks Center, and Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary "This is an admirably lucid and highly convincing rebuttal of the thesis that the earliest form of Christianity in many places was what would later be judged as 'heresy' and that earliest Christianity was so diverse that it should not be considered as a single movement a thesis first presented by Walter Bauer but most recently advocated by Bart Ehrman. As Kstenberger and Kruger show with such clarity and compelling force, this still highly influential thesis simply does not stand up to

scrutiny. By looking at a whole range of evidence early Christian communities in different regions in the Roman Empire, the New Testament documents themselves, the emergence and boundaries of the canon and its connection to covenant, and the evidence for Christian scribes and the reliable transmission of the text of the New Testament they show step by step that another view of early Christianity is much more in keeping with the evidence. That is, that there is a unified doctrinal core in the New Testament, as well as a degree of legitimate diversity, and that the sense of orthodoxy among New Testament writers is widespread and pervasive. They also unmask the way contemporary culture has been mesmerized by diversity and the impact this has had on some readers of the New Testament. In this astute and highly readable book a tour de force Kstenberger and Kruger have done us all a great service. It is essential reading for all who want to understand the New Testament and recent controversies that have arisen in New Testament Studies." Paul Trebilco, Professor of New Testament Studies, Department of Theology and Religion, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

"Kstenberger and Kruger have written a book which not only introduces the reader to the problematic Bauer thesis and its contemporary resurgence, but which, layer by layer, demonstrates its failure to account reliably for the history of communities, texts, and ideas which flourished in the era of early Christianity. In their arguments, the authors demonstrate their competence in the world of New Testament studies. But, additionally, they weave throughout the book insights into how fallacies within contemporary culture provide fuel for a thesis which long ago should have been buried. Believers will find in these pages inspiration to 'contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.'" D. Jeffrey Bingham, Department Chair and Professor of Theological Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

"In recent times, certain media darlings have been telling us that earliest Christianity knew nothing of the 'narrowness' of orthodox belief. Now the authors of *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* have provided a scholarly yet highly accessible rebuttal, showing that what is actually 'narrow' here is the historical evidence on which this old thesis is based. In a culture which wants to recreate early Christianity after its own stultifying image, this book adds a much-needed breath of balance and sanity." Nicholas Perrin, Dean, Wheaton College Graduate School

"Kstenberger and Kruger have produced a volume that is oozing with common sense and is backed up with solid research and documentation. This work is a comprehensive critique of the Bauer-Ehrman thesis that the earliest form of Christianity was pluralistic, that there were multiple Christianities, and that heresy was prior to orthodoxy. Respectful yet without pulling any punches, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* at every turn makes a convincing case that the Bauer-Ehrman thesis is dead wrong. All those who have surrendered to the siren song of postmodern relativism and tolerance, any who are flirting with it, and everyone concerned about what this seismic sociological-epistemological shift is doing to the Christian faith should read this book." Daniel B. Wallace, Senior Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

About the Author Andreas J. Kstenberger (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is the senior research professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He is a prolific author, distinguished evangelical scholar, and editor of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. He is the founder of Biblical Foundations, a ministry devoted to restoring the biblical foundations of the home and the church. Kstenberger and his wife have four children. Michael J. Kruger (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is the president and Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. Kruger is ordained in the Presbyterian Church in America and also serves as the pastor of teaching at Uptown PCA in Charlotte. He blogs regularly at MichaelJKruger.com and tweets at @michaeljkruger.