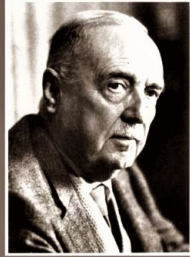


The Overlooked Legacy of Rudolf Bultmann:  
The Quest for the Essence of Christianity



David W. Congdon, author of two books about Bultmann, takes a fresh look at Bultmann, focusing on an aspect of Bultmann's work that has been largely unappreciated: his contribution to the modern quest for the essence of Christianity. Bultmann's unique approach to this quest offers insight and inspiration for those looking for a credible and critical understanding of religious faith today.

March 9, 2022  
7:30-9:00 PM EST



A Westar Zoom Event



# Five things to know about Rudolf Bultmann

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1

Demythologizing is the act of replacing supernatural categories for interpreting the New Testament and replacing them with contemporary philosophical categories. Bultmann is the central figure of demythologizing the Bible for the modern world. His emphasis on the need to demythologize the New Testament led to the development of the “new hermeneutic” by his students Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs.

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2

He was a pioneer in form criticism which begins by identifying a text's genre or literary form such as parables, proverbs, epistles, or love poems. His book, "History of the Synoptic Tradition," was published in 1921. It was the most thorough analysis of the short genres (forms) of the synoptic tradition (e.g., parables, aphorisms, healing narratives). Nothing as comprehensive has appeared since.

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3

He was a member of the Confessing Church, a body of Protestant churches that resisted Nazi efforts to co-opt the church and rejected Nazi policies directed at Jews. Hans Jonas (pioneer scholar on Gnosticism) and Hanna Arendt (political philosophy), both Jewish, studied with Bultmann in the 1920s.

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4

In Biblical criticism, Sitz im Leben (German: Setting in life) seeks to identify the context or setting in which a text, teaching or tradition was created. Bultmann identified ways gospel writers created narrative fiction for Jesus stories. He also said that the truth of the gospel was its kerygma – its proclamation – not its facticity.

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5

Bultmann brought new focus to "apothegms." As he used the term, apothegm refers to a unit consisting of both a saying of Jesus and its context. Bultmann's focus on apothegms influenced Westar's Jesus Seminar and its emphasis on aphorisms.

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