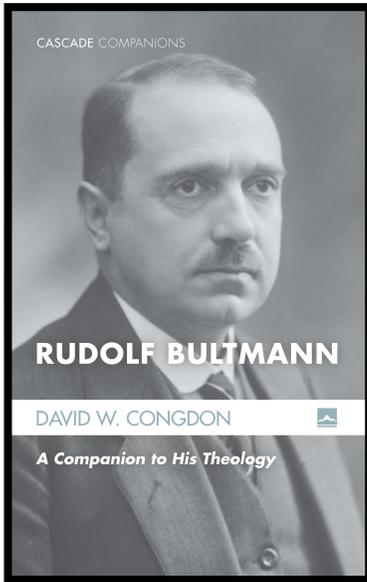


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## New Title from David W. Congdon

*Rudolf Bultmann*  
*A Companion to His Theology*



Rudolf Bultmann is one of the most widely known but least read theologians of the twentieth century. He is famous as the one who “demythologized” the New Testament, but very few understand what he meant by this or how his hermeneutical program connects to the other areas of his theological project. Bultmann presents a challenge to readers because of the way his ideas are worked out over time primarily through short, occasional writings. In this introduction to his theology—the first of its kind in over twenty years—David W. Congdon guides readers through ten central themes in Bultmann’s theology, ranging from eschatology and dialectic to freedom and advent. By gaining an understanding of these themes, students of Bultmann will have the necessary tools to understand and profit from his writings. The result is not only an accessible guide for those encountering Bultmann for the first time but also a cohesive, systematic presentation of his thought for those wondering how his work might speak to our current context.

**David W. Congdon** is associate editor at IVP Academic. He is the author of *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann’s Dialectical Theology* (2015).

*Rudolf Bultmann*  
*A Companion to His Theology*  
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# Interview with David W. Congdon

## **Is there really anything new to say about Bultmann?**

Yes, there is. While a lot was written about him in the last half of the twentieth century, those texts were almost entirely focused around very narrow issues related to the question of myth and demythologizing. Not only were those issues frequently misunderstood, but the other dimensions of Bultmann's thought were ignored. Today there is a new interest in his writings thanks to the currently ongoing publication of letters and papers from his archive and the publication in 2009 of Konrad Hammann's biography. Perhaps now we have the necessary distance from the controversy to assess accurately and charitably his theology and hermeneutics.

## **What is one area of Bultmann's thought that is often overlooked?**

One of the chapters of my book ("Freedom") explores the issue of humanism. Bultmann was actively involved in the denazification process in the German academy during the months immediately following the end of the Second World War. One of the main issues he confronted was the Nazi denigration of the classical humanist or Hellenistic tradition. But it was not as easy as simply recovering its value, since many others blamed this very tradition for leading to Nazism! Bultmann ends up walking a fine line, both praising humanism and differentiating it from Christianity, which offers an important word of critique.

## **What is a common critique of Bultmann that you seek to overturn?**

Where to begin! Perhaps the most widespread assumption is that Bultmann conforms Christian theology to the dictates of modern existentialist philosophy. I argue throughout that Bultmann is first and foremost a biblical exegete, and the fundamental moves in his program are all based on his wrestling with the biblical text. He is secondarily a theologian in the Lutheran tradition. He recognizes that taking "justification by faith alone" seriously has implications for our theological method. It is only at a tertiary level that Bultmann takes up contemporary philosophical ideas, and even then he only does so in a carefully circumscribed manner. Any notion that Bultmann subordinates the New Testament to Heideggerian thought should be banished once and for all!

## Praise for Rudolf Bultmann

“With great clarity and insight, focusing on themes which lie at the very heart of Bultmann’s theological project and placing him in conversation with recent and contemporary trends, David W. Congdon has written the best short introduction to Bultmann’s thought. The point is not to ‘return’ to the great New Testament scholar and theologian—but neither should we bypass him.”

—**Christophe Chalamet**, University of Geneva

“Who better than David Congdon to take us into the work of Christianity’s greatest interpreter of Scripture in the modern period? With an expert’s grasp of the entire architecture of Rudolf Bultmann’s thought, Congdon leads the reader through its conceptual entry points. Here is a reliable primer, likely a classic, to guide both beginning students and well-schooled theologians away from the misconceptions, even myths, so often bedeviling treatments of Bultmann.”

—**James F. Kay**, Princeton Theological Seminary

“In these pages, Bultmann stands before us as a difficult but compelling figure, a Christian thinker who took the eschatological vision of the New Testament as his charter and pursued its course with extraordinary tenacity and fearlessness. Congdon sets Bultmann’s thought into critical discussion with contemporary theology, posing sharp challenges to our current preferences for *ressourcement* and the rule of faith. And he saves the best till last. The book ends with a superb meditation on Bultmann’s Christmas sermons—a glimpse of Bultmann at his most attractive, or most seductive, depending on where you stand.”

—**Benjamin Myers**, Charles Sturt University

“David Congdon’s lucid and innovative treatment of Rudolf Bultmann is an excellent contribution to scholarship. Those eager to understand, appreciate, and, most importantly, *learn* from one of the most important (and, alas, most misunderstood) ‘greats’ of twentieth-century European theology have, in this book, an indispensable resource.”

—**Paul Dafydd Jones**, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia

“Being master of a subject matter as demanding as Rudolf Bultmann’s theology and a master communicator, capable of introducing that subject-matter to beginning students in a manner both interesting and arresting (!) is rare. David Congdon has that rare combination of skills. This is a wonderful guide to Bultmann’s thought. Indeed, it is hard to imagine one more perfectly executed. It is a companion worthy of the thought of one of the real giants of twentieth century theology.”

—**Bruce McCormack**, Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary

## Three Reasons to Read Rudolf Bultmann

1. First English-language introduction to Bultmann in over twenty years.
2. Shows the interconnection of Bultmann's thought, which brings together New Testament studies, systematic theology, modern philosophy, and historical research.
3. Draws on a wide range of Bultmann's writings, including newly published sources from his archive.

