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# RUDOLF BULTMANN AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF GOD-TALK

Houston Craighead

Rudolf Bultmann is best known for his program of demythologizing the New Testament. Most of the discussion about Bultmann's thought has raged around this central issue. However, his demythologizing program itself presupposes a number of other notions. One fundamental concept that has not been treated overly extensively is that of Bultmann's God.

Since this theologian contends that the New Testament kerygma is a proclamation of God's act in human existence, it is appropriate and needful that the question be put as to just what Bultmann means by the word "God." Who or what is it that acts? Bultmann himself has made this a difficult question to answer, since he says that it is not possible to talk about God.<sup>1</sup> If it is not possible to talk about God, how can one proclaim that God acts in human existence? The purpose of this paper is to understand what Bultmann means by "God" and how he can say both that God acts and also that it is impossible to talk of God.

Though Bultmann has made remarks concerning God in numerous places, it is in his two essays, "The Crisis in Belief,"<sup>2</sup> and "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?"<sup>3</sup> and his little book, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*<sup>4</sup> that we find his most seminal remarks. These references will serve as the focus, though not the entire framework, of our analysis.

In "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" Bultmann says some exceedingly puzzling things. For example: "If 'speaking of God' is understood as 'speaking about God' then such speaking has no meaning whatsoever, for its subject, God, is lost in the very moment it takes place."<sup>5</sup> And: "We cannot talk about our existence since we cannot talk about God. And we cannot talk about God since we cannot talk about our existence."<sup>6</sup>

Bultmann reinforces these claims in *Jesus Christ and Mythology*. There he tells us that we can talk about God but that when we do so we at the same time talk about ourselves. "The question of God and the question of myself are identical."<sup>7</sup> We would be able to speak only negatively of God if "to speak of God did not also mean to speak of our personal existence."<sup>8</sup> Further, "In other words, to speak of God acting involves the events of personal existence."<sup>9</sup> And, "It is therefore clear that if a man will speak of God, he must evidently speak of himself."<sup>10</sup> And again, "We thus find ourselves in the same astonishing predicament in relation to our



existence as in relation to God. We cannot talk about either.”<sup>11</sup>

This last quote and the one at the end of the preceding paragraph would seem to pull us up short, for they tell us that we can talk of neither God nor ourselves! Now, granted that these quotes are all taken out of context and that in context they may well not be so severe, still the *prima facie* impression one gets from reading Bultmann is, at the very least, that his concept of God is quite puzzling.

That Bultmann’s concept of God is problematic has been pointed out by several critics. Schubert Ogden has seen Bultmann as speaking contradictorily: “He has even asserted self-contradictorily that to speak ‘about’ God is meaningless and has drawn the conclusion that ‘if one wants to speak of God, it is clear he must speak of himself.’”<sup>12</sup> John Macquarrie has accused Bultmann of lacking an ontology and speaking only anthropologically of God.<sup>13</sup> And Robert C. Roberts says Bultmann’s God “...is equivalent to man’s finitude insofar as man submits himself to it as he encounters the event of Christian preaching.”<sup>14</sup>

My procedure here will be in three parts. I shall first attempt to give a brief explication of Bultmann’s concept of God. Then I shall set forth the principal concern of three of his critics in this regard and examine whether Bultmann can handle their criticisms adequately. Lastly, I shall give a final assessment of Bultmann’s view of God.

## I

The puzzling statements Bultmann makes and the basic problems his critics find with his concept of God can, I believe, be understood as stemming directly from the fact that Bultmann is an existentialist. I know that the word “existentialist” means many things to many people, but here I mean by it that Bultmann is principally and first of all concerned not with theories or with facts about “how things are in themselves” but, rather, with “how things are for me (in particular) or man (in general).” As a result, Bultmann is willing to speak of God only so far as God is a lived reality for man. If God is spoken of otherwise, we are not speaking of God as the “object” of faith, or religion, but as some idea in a metaphysical system. This is born out clearly in Bultmann’s essay, “The Crisis in Belief.”

In this essay Bultmann points out that for faith the question is not about “God” but, rather, about whatever it is that continually drives man to frustration and despair. Here Bultmann analyses man as being driven by care toward various things. Man is said to care for his physical needs for the morrow, to long for the true and beautiful, to desire love and acceptance, to thirst for some final knowledge, and to be driven by a sense of duty.<sup>15</sup> At the end of each of these claims Bultmann says that it is God which finally frustrates man’s care, desire, thirst, etc. It is God which drives man to the existential brink and leaves him unable to be fulfilled in any of these ways by anything in this world.<sup>16</sup>

That is, as I read him, by the word "God" Bultmann means that man is finally frustrated and unfulfilled in his deepest strivings and that this is due to some power over which man has no control. Man comes to the question of God, then, not by, e.g., speculation about the source of the world, but by living his life. For it seems self-evident to Bultmann that man is not just frustrated but that man is frustrated by a power which is over-against him and drives him to despair. "God is the enigmatic power beyond time, yet master of the temporal, beyond being, yet working in it."<sup>17</sup> But man comes to this realization by actually living. One meets this power at the bottom of his own despair. It is at this point, and only at this point, for Bultmann that man raises the question of God—and the question is: is this power just "the enigma" or "fate," or is it my "Father?" Regardless of how one answers this question, until he has asked this question he has not asked about God.<sup>18</sup>

The preceding background, now, should provide a way of understanding some of the, seemingly, strange things Bultmann says in "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" In this essay Bultmann makes his controversial claim that it is not possible to speak about God. But, puzzling though this may sound at first, Bultmann goes on to show how this makes perfectly good sense—given what he means by "God." He says that to speak "about" something requires that one be separate from it, be able to take up some objective stance with regard to it.<sup>19</sup> Thus, we can speak about trees, desks, pens, etc. But, as we saw in "The Crisis of Belief," for Bultmann God is not some object which we can distance ourselves from but is, rather, the "object" which is as close to us as we are to ourselves and which we come to know only at the depth of our own frustration and despair. This is why Bultmann can now say "Whenever one tries to speak about God (i.e., of God as some object one stands apart from) he no longer speaks of God (i.e., of the existential reality one meets at the depth of his own despair and frustration)."<sup>20</sup>

Bultmann is very clear here that he is not reducing the meaning of "God" to that of some subjective phenomenon that has its sole reality in the experience of man. Rather, God is "the wholly other." But it is not meaningful to speak of God as this wholly other unless its meaning is understood "only in relation to the primary statement that God is the reality that determines our existence,"<sup>21</sup> i.e., my relation to this "other" must be understood as existential. That is, though God is certainly not identical with myself or my limits (God is wholly other), I cannot meaningfully (from an existential or religious stance) speak of God without there being the translation of that statement back into an actually lived reality (God is that which determines my existence).

It seems that part of what Bultmann is driving at here is that one's relation to God is always that of "I-Thou," never "I-It" (to borrow Martin Buber's terminology). For example, in I-Thou relationship with one's beloved he may say to her, "I love you." But if asked to describe her, to say something "about" her, he immediately begins to speak of an abstraction, a construct generalized from lived experiences:

“She is intelligent, passionate, sensitive, bookish, beautiful, a bit shy, etc.” That is, she has those qualities. But this is not *her*. The lived person is not a set of qualities. She is, finally, an unsayable subject one meets in relationship and to whom one says, perhaps, nothing or, perhaps, everything. Of course this analogy breaks down because God is not a particular thou “alongside” other thous but is the ultimate Thou every person encounters at the depth of his own existence, the power which determines one’s existence. Whereas one could have lived his entire life without ever having met this particular woman, and most people will never meet her, for Bultmann God is present at the depth level of every person’s experience.

Does this “power” have existence separate from me? Is it not really just subjective? There seem to be two answers. (1) So far as I know (can be certain) this reality has no existence apart from my own encounter with it, but I encounter it as having its own reality. That is, the experience of meeting this power at the depth of my experience is an experience of a reality that is experienced as having independent reality. But my concern with it is concern with it as it impinges on my own lived experience, not as it is in itself. (2) Faith claims this reality to be ultimate “friend.” But faith has empty hands, cannot prove either the independent reality of this power (i.e., cannot prove that it is anything more than the mere fact that I am finite) or that this power is my ultimate friend.

It is here that Bultmann can make use of his claim that speaking of God’s acting is not mythological but analogical. In *Jesus Christ and Mythology* Bultmann explains that when he speaks of God as acting in human existence he is not speaking of some empirical event which can be observed between events and said to cause them. That is, to say God acts in human existence is not like saying, e.g., that a rock fell on one’s head (acted in human existence) and caused one to suffer a skull fracture. To speak of God in that way, as an empirical datum, would be mythological.<sup>22</sup> Rather, God acts “within” events, and no one can notice this empirically. One can only (through the “eyes of faith”) interpret events as containing God’s action.

On the one hand, this does go beyond science, but it does not contradict science.<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is analogous to my speaking of myself, as conscious interiority, acting within and manifesting myself through empirical events. For “my own personal life is no more visible and capable of proof than is God as acting.”<sup>24</sup> That is, unless one takes an extreme view of science wherein all of reality is viewed as in principle physical and/or observable (i.e., makes the scientific method into a physicalistic metaphysic, scientism), there is no more contradiction between science and Bultmann’s view of God’s acting than between science and our ordinary view that we, as non-empirical centers of consciousness, act in and manifest ourselves through empirical events. That empirical events are manifestations of non-empirical centers of consciousness is a basic way we interpret our existence. In fact, Bultmann is here very close to the view John Hick takes of faith.<sup>25</sup>

Hick speaks of religious faith as an overall way of apprehending the world. To give us an idea of what this means he points out other levels of interpretation. One level is that of the independent reality of what we call "physical objects." Idealism is not empirically falsifiable; we just interpret our experience as realists. The realist interpretation may be incorrect, but it is just made by us. Also, we interpret some objects (human bodies) to be animated by non-empirical centers of consciousness like ourselves. Again, this may be wrong, and it is not empirically falsifiable. But it is an interpretation. This interpretation is presupposed by ethics. We interpret ourselves as having certain moral obligations which we cannot show empirically to be the case. But such interpretation does assume the reality of other centers of consciousness. Finally, we may assume our entire existence to be the creation and manifestation of a loving God. This interpretation (eyes of faith) opens to us the possibility of seeing God act within human existence—just as the "other minds" interpretation opens the possibility of interpreting other minds as acting in one's existence. In any case, one has empty hands in that he cannot offer empirical proof or disproof of the correctness of his interpretation.

In sum, then, we may make the following claims about Bultmann's concept of God:

(1) Whatever God may be in him/her/itself, our existential concern, our concern as religious beings, is with whatever it is that drives us to despair and unfulfillment at the deepest level of our lives. This "whatever," this "enigmatic power," is what "God" means. The Christian claim is that this power is ultimate friend.

(2) Because this is what the word "God" means, I cannot speak of God without speaking of myself; for it is only at my own existential depth that the word "God" has religious meaning for me. Hence, I cannot speak "about" God—i. e. I cannot speak of God as if God were some object of experience that I exist separately from or that I might know about quite apart from my own existential concern. For example, to speak of God as creator is actually a personal confession that I understand myself as a creature which owes its existence to God.<sup>26</sup>

(3) We can meaningfully and non-mythologically speak of God as acting because to do so is (a) to speak of an act within my own existential depth and not some separate occurrence, and (b) to speak not of some empirical event but, rather, of something analogous to what we mean when we say a personal center of consciousness, a self, acts. This goes beyond but does not conflict with science.

## II

Robert C. Roberts is critical of Bultmann's denial that God is an object. That denial, Roberts believes, leads to a subtle type of atheism in which God becomes no more than man's submission to his own finitude as he encounters Christian preaching.<sup>27</sup> However, Roberts stops short of calling Bultmann an atheist. He believes

that Bultmann's seeming atheism here is due to a "conceptual confusion" on the word "object."<sup>28</sup>

There are, says Roberts, two relevant senses of the word "object" here: (1) the "formal" sense in which anything at all that can be talked about is an object. In this sense we do not treat something in any particular way but only in some way. To treat God in this way is "only to have something to do with him," but nothing in particular.<sup>29</sup>(2) The "non-formal" sense indicates not only something about the object but also how it is being treated. "Here the word is used, roughly, to distinguish things which are persons (and thus ought to be treated as persons) from things which are not persons."<sup>30</sup> What Bultmann is doing, says Roberts, is using this sense of "object", for it is only in this sense that to treat something as an object is to put it at one's disposal (as the boy who treats his girl friend as an object relegates her to the status of his other possessions—car, shotgun, hound, etc.)<sup>31</sup>

If Bultmann were really consistent in his claim that God cannot be an object in any sense, says Roberts, then he could not even say we encounter God; but Bultmann does want to say that.<sup>32</sup> So, Bultmann is obviously using the formal meaning, for encountering God does not treat God as a non-personal object (but it does treat him as an object in the formal sense). Yet, at the same time, Bultmann wants to deny that God is an object even in the formal sense, for he denies that God is a being, and "the concept of a being is surely unambiguously formal."<sup>33</sup> That is, to say something is a being is only to say that it is but not to specify anything particular about it. "To be a being is to be something that can become an object in the formal sense; to be something rather than anything or nothing."<sup>34</sup>

Along these same lines, says Roberts, Bultmann seems to think that to say something exists is somehow to make a claim about what that thing is. Hence, to say God exists in some way demeans God. But this is erroneous, for existence tells us only that something is and nothing about what it is. "To say that God exists is not in any way to demean him. ... It is perfectly reasonable to say that God exists and that flies exist; for one has not thereby in any way assimilated the 'whatness' of God to flies."<sup>35</sup>

Bultmann's real defense against subjectivism, says Roberts, is to appeal to the intentional structure of consciousness. On this view, man's experience of God is objective, because all experience is objective, i.e., is experience of something which is distinguishable from the subject which experiences it. But this only establishes God as "objective" in the same way any experience, even that of an hallucination, is objective, not as really independent. "God is independent (for Bultmann) only because faith requires him to be so."<sup>36</sup>

In reply to Roberts, I think we might first point out that his distinction between the formal and non-formal meaning of "object" is helpful if his point is just that Bultmann is not an atheist. Bultmann does have faith in God's reality independent of man. In fact, Bultmann himself indicates this by using the word "object" in

quotes.<sup>37</sup>

In Roberts' formal sense, then, Bultmann can say God is an object, but it is when such a notion is combined with the notion of a "being" which "exists" that the difficulty begins. For Bultmann such terms connote (if they do not denote) a particular entity which is contained within the whole of reality, an entity (or object or being) with which one may or may not have to do. In that sense, Bultmann *does* think that to say something exists or is an object is to make a claim about its whatness. It is to say that it is one of the many entities in reality: some are great, some are not, but none is present at the depth of all human experience.

This is where the difficulty lies in trying to understand Bultmann. He clearly is not an atheist, but he doesn't want to say anything about God, because he understands all saying "about" as establishing a non-existential relation between oneself and that about which one speaks. He understands saying "about" as thinking of the other under some set of categories, even if they are such broad categories as thing, object, entity, being, existence. The categories still circumscribe the reality of that about which one speaks, and by doing so they break off the existential, lived relationship one experiences with that which we call "God."

Roberts' other charge—that for Bultmann God is only man's response to his own finitude, that Bultmann's only defense against subjectivism is an appeal to the intentional structure of consciousness—this charge shows that Roberts fails to see (or, perhaps more correctly, just does not agree with) Bultmann's understanding of faith as radically existential, as having "empty hands." On Bultmann's view of faith, one does not have some independent knowledge of (or even belief in) God's reality and then decide to trust God. Rather, one knows God as independent reality and as trustworthy only through the "eyes of faith." This does not mean, as Roberts thinks it does, that God is independent only because faith requires him to be so. Rather it means that we can never have any certainty about God's independent existence or love. Faith trusts. Faith says "nevertheless" and "in spite of."<sup>38</sup> Who says, finally, that the eyes of faith are veridical? One says so himself! There can be no outside authority for anyone on this. Roberts seems to want Bultmann to say that we, somehow, can know of or believe in God's reality apart from the depth affirmation made in faith. Roberts is clearly understanding human existence in general, and Christian faith in particular, from a very different perspective than Bultmann is.

#### SCHUBERT OGDEN

Schubert Ogden's claim is that in order to make the crucial distinction between analogy and myth Bultmann needs an ontology of God. The analogy/myth distinction is crucial, says Ogden, because it is Bultmann's primary reply to the criticism that his theology is, finally, a subjectivism.<sup>39</sup>

If all talk of God is mythological then once we have demythologized all talk of God we talk only of ourselves. But Bultmann says no. Some talk of God is not mythical and not just talk of ourselves but analogical talk of God. Analogical talk of God speaks of God not as object of scientific inquiry, not as empirical object, but as eminent existence. In such speaking, when of man, man is objectified as subject, transcending conceptualization of his personal existence. Likewise can God be so spoken of.<sup>40</sup>

Ogden's point, though, is that when asked to speak of God in this way Bultmann, in fact, fails to take advantage of the myth/analogy distinction he has himself made.<sup>41</sup> Bultmann grants that one cannot speak of man in the concrete moments of lived existence; hence Bultmann's claim that I cannot speak of myself. But Bultmann says we can speak of man in terms of the general categories of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. These "existentials" (as Heidegger calls them) characterize not the lived moments of any individual's particular life but the general structure of the life of all men. In the same way, what Bultmann needs is a characterization of God, not in the concrete moments of man's meeting God, but in the general structure of the divine life.

Such a general structure, says Ogden, is provided by the work of Charles Hartshorne. In fact, Ogden claims that one of Hartshorne's chief accomplishments is that of conceiving a concept of God compatible with Bultmann's thought.<sup>42</sup> By using Hartshorne's distinction between God's concrete and general poles (the dipolar God), Bultmann could speak of God's general or abstract mode. Thus, Bultmann could speak of the eternal nature of God that is present in all of God's concrete states.

Is Ogden correct? Could Bultmann make use of Hartshorne's dipolar, process God? I suspect not. At the moment one did so he would not, for Bultmann, be speaking of God but of a metaphysical theory. However ingenious Hartshorne's concept of God may be (and I do think it is ingenious!), it presupposes a general metaphysical structure which is, finally, beyond God. Time, as is well known, is the primary category for Hartshorne, and his God is within time. For Bultmann, such a characterization of God would have to be speculation—and certainly not existential. (Hartshorne himself admits that he has never been able to solve Kant's first antinomy.) The general ontology of man can be done because we are men. And even if we do have an internal relationship with God (as Ogden and Hartshorne say we do, and as Bultmann seems to imply), it does not follow from this that we can speak of God's general structure. Rather we can only speak of God as we are determined by him and thus only as we speak of ourselves. Though Ogden sees potential for a great compatibility between Bultmann's existentialism and Hartshorne's process philosophy, I do not see this. All of Bultmann's talk is directed toward lived reality, toward man's concrete meeting with the power that drives him to despair and man's decision at that point as to how he will live before

this power. Process philosophy offers a theory about the abstract nature of that power. For Bultmann this is, as he says, sinful.<sup>43</sup>

### JOHN MACQUARRIE

John Macquarrie has written extensively on Bultmann. He has, in fact, devoted the larger part of two books to an analysis of Bultmann's thought,<sup>44</sup> not to mention various articles in other books and philosophical and theological journals. However, the great bulk of these writings are about Bultmann's program of demythologizing. His most direct consideration of Bultmann's concept of God is found in his article, "Bultmann's Understanding of God."<sup>45</sup> In this article Macquarrie summarizes Bultmann's view of God as he finds it to have occurred over the years in various writings. Macquarrie concludes that Bultmann's view of God remains unchanged.

Though he finds some strengths in this understanding of God, Macquarrie is mostly critical. Such a view as Bultmann's is said to be "too situational"<sup>46</sup> and not ontological.<sup>47</sup> In the first regard, Bultmann's God is said to be known only in discrete moments and only to the individual. This is said to allow for no real presence of God in between times and no growth through a deepening awareness of God. This de-emphasizes all "mystical contemplation" and "sacramental incorporation."<sup>48</sup> In the second regard Macquarrie says that Bultmann really ends with his own version of a negative theology. Ontology, thinks Macquarrie, is absolutely essential to a real theology. Bultmann, he says, "in this respect lags far behind Tillich."<sup>49</sup> "Anyone who makes claims about what is real or unreal, about what is ultimate and less than ultimate, about what is or is not, has got into ontology, whether he likes it or not."<sup>50</sup>

This criticism sounds very much like that of Ogden (though Ogden and Macquarrie disagree on other matters with regard to Bultmann). There is a difference though. Whereas Ogden tries to show (unsuccessfully, I have argued) that there is a concept of God quite compatible with and, in fact, almost tailor-made for what Bultmann is trying to do (that of Charles Hartshorne), Macquarrie urges an ontology of being, not process. Such theological adaptation of an ontology of being is found worked out in Macquarrie's own major work, *Principles of Christian Theology*.<sup>51</sup> In any case, the main point here is clear: Bultmann does not have an ontology beyond an existential account of human existence. He makes it clear that we can neither speak about nor know of the ontological nature of God himself. For Macquarrie, such a position is inadequate. Theology for him requires ontology (as it does for Tillich).

What we must say to Macquarrie should already be apparent from what we have said in reply to Roberts and Ogden. Bultmann is not doing ontology. He is not even doing theology in the systematic sense. Bultmann concentrates on the existential

encounter with the final reality of personal existence. What we can know of that reality is only what we can know in that encounter. We must decide whether to trust that reality as friend. We cannot know whether that reality is more than a subjective phenomenon. We cannot know whether it is any more than just fate or an enigma. We decide, in the moment of encounter, without outside authority, to trust that reality, to view it with the "eyes of faith." We decide to view all of our experience in such a way, in the "faith" way. This does not give one any guarantees whatsoever. One is wholly open to the future, whatever it may bring. Were one to have prior knowledge of the "nature" or "being" (or "abstract mode") of God, the future would, to that extent, not be open. God would be limited in the way he could give our future to us, and the kind of future we may have to face would be somewhat defined.

Such a view, for Bultmann, is inconsistent with the Christian understanding of existence and with the Christian understanding of the final reality. So, although it might be more comfortable to pretend to ourselves that we can (and even do) have some knowledge of God apart from the existential encounter with him, we, in fact, do not (and cannot) have such knowledge. This is what openness to the future is all about. Or at least that is how Bultmann would best, I believe, respond to Macquarrie.

### III

It seems to me that the sort of thing Bultmann is saying about our meeting God is perhaps clarified by an analysis given by Gordon Kaufman.<sup>52</sup> Kaufman is trying to describe the kind of human experiences in which God-talk arises and in his account closely parallels the view expressed by Bultmann in the latter's "The Crisis in Belief." Kaufman contends that the basic experience is that of discovering oneself as limited.

One knows himself, says Kaufman, to be limited in four primary ways: (1) external, physical limitation by bodies outside oneself; (2) the organic limit of one's own powers from within; (3) the external, personal limits of the wills of other selves; (4) the normative limits of the true/false, good/bad, right/wrong, beautiful/ugly.

If one experiences such limits (and we all do) then one may begin to use God-talk if four other conditions are fulfilled. (1) One needs enough reflective ability to move beyond the particular instances of limit to the general notion of limit or finitude. (2) One must have the vivid awareness that it is *I* who am limited, along with the intense emotions which are part of the "experience of finitude." (3) One then must ask *what* it is that so confines and limits him. (4) One may then conceive the ultimate Limit in terms of one (or some combination) of the four types of finite limit.

Kaufman himself thinks the model of “agent” (the external, personal limit of the will of other selves) to be the most adequate. However, Kaufman is quite clear that this model, as well as any other, is but a construct that we conceive.<sup>53</sup> All such constructs are what he calls “God as available” and never “God as referent” (God as he is in himself). God in himself is simply *not* knowable and certainly not able to be spoken of. It is, finally, the decision of the individual person to conceive the final Limit both as something more than just a series of particular limitations and as being of such and such a nature.

Thus, Kaufman seems, at least in this,<sup>54</sup> to agree with Bultmann that one cannot speak about God himself, only about a construct—and the construct, of course, is never to be taken as truly God.

In the end, then, we must conclude that, although he phrases it in a sometimes puzzling way, Bultmann’s understanding of God is quite clear. The strange statements he makes turn out to be consistent with his overall position and with what I have called his “existentialism.” There are, in my judgment, neither inconsistencies nor serious inadequacies in Bultmann’s position at this point.

Is Bultmann’s view consistent with the Christian view? That is not a question I intend to take up here. I fear, in fact, that it cannot be answered. It cannot be answered because there does not seem to be any universally agreed upon definition of what the “Christian view” of God is. And, though Bultmann certainly considers himself a Christian (though some others may not...), it does not seem to me to be an overly important question. The real questions, it seems to me, are these: What do I encounter in the existential depth of my own lived experience? At the bottom of my own frustration and despair, what do I find? And, whatever I do find, how do I choose to live before it?

*Winthrop College*

## NOTES

1. Rudolf Bultmann, “What Does It Mean to Speak of God?” in *Faith and Understanding* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 53-65. Hereinafter referred to as “Speak.”

2. Rudolf Bultmann, “The Crisis in Belief,” in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 1-21. Hereinafter referred to as “Crisis.”

3. See note 1 above.

4. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958). Hereinafter referred to as “JXM.”

5. Speak, p. 53.

6. Speak, p. 60.

7. JXM, p. 53.

8. JXM, p. 66.
9. JXM, p. 68.
10. Speak, p. 55.
11. Speak, p. 58.
12. Schubert Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 149.
13. John Macquarrie, "Bultmann's Understanding of God," in *Thinking About God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 187-189. Hereinafter referred to as "Macquarrie."
14. Robert C. Roberts, *Rudolf Bultmann's Theology: A Critical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans's Press, 1976), p. 250. Hereinafter referred to as "Roberts."
15. Crisis, p. 2.
16. Crisis, p. 3.
17. Crisis, p. 3.
18. Crisis, p. 3.
19. Speak, p. 53.
20. Speak, p. 53.
21. Speak, pp. 56-57.
22. JXM, p. 61.
23. JXM, p. 65.
24. JXM, p. 65.
25. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1974). See esp. Ch. 5, "The Nature of Faith," pp. 95-119.
26. JXM, p. 63.
27. Roberts, p. 250.
28. Roberts, p. 251.
29. Roberts, p. 252.
30. Roberts, p. 252.
31. Roberts, p. 251.
32. Roberts, p. 252.
33. Roberts, p. 253.
34. Roberts, p. 253.
35. Roberts, p. 254.
36. Roberts, p. 257.
37. Schubert Ogden, "Bultmann's Demythologizing and Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism," in *Process and Divinity*, William Freeman and Eugene Reese (eds.), (Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1964), pp. 493-513. Hereinafter referred to as "Ogden."
38. Crisis, p. 3.
39. Ogden, p. 499.
40. Ogden, p. 500.
41. Ogden, p. 505.
42. Ogden, p. 506.
43. Speak, p. 55.
44. John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965) and *The Scope of Demythologizing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).
45. Macquarrie, pp. 179-180. See note 13 above.
46. Macquarrie, p. 187.

47. Macquarrie, p. 188.
48. Macquarrie, p. 188.
49. *The Scope of Demythologizing*, p. 205.
50. Macquarrie, p. 189.
51. John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966). See esp. Ch. 5, "Being and God," pp. 94-110.
52. See his *God the Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 41-71.
53. See *God the Problem*, pp. 82-115.
54. Kaufman is much concerned to develop a construct of God as "available." See his latest book, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God* (New York: Westminster, 1982). Bultmann does not share this concern but, rather, centers on how one responds to and lives before the final reality, not on how one intellectually constructs it. Further, Kaufman seems to suggest that what God "really" is is a kind of teleological tendency in the universe toward humanistic values. See especially *The Theological Imagination*, pp. 49-50. Such a notion is totally foreign to Bultmann. Bultmann and Kaufman agree that speaking "about" always uses a construct—e.g., Hartshorne says God is the unsurpassable (except by himself) being whose necessary mode is such and such and whose concrete mode is thus and so. Bultmann, however, allows for a speaking *to*—e.g., "I believe, help my unbelief," or "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Kaufman, so far as I know, says little or nothing about the latter "language game" and much about the former. Bultmann does not speak about God but may, in existential encounter, say "my Father."