



# Myth & Christianity: An Inquiry Into The Possibility Of Religion Without Myth

*Karl Jaspers, Rudolf Bultmann*

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Two of the most brilliant German thinkers of the twentieth century were Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann. Jaspers, the philosopher, and Bultmann, the theologian, were both influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and the rise of the existentialist movement. Late in their careers they interacted on the subject of Bultmann's attempt to divest Christianity of its mythical components and make sense of it in more modern terms. This work is a compilation of articles by Jaspers and Bultmann that formed a running debate originally published in various scholarly journals. The first half of the book is Jaspers' lengthy and critical analysis of Bultmann's interpretation of Christianity, in which Jaspers essentially rejects the premise that Christianity or any other religion can or should be understood without its mythical framework. Jaspers charges that Bultmann has radically misunderstood the nature of myth and that myth is an irreplaceable form of symbolic communication. In the second part, Bultmann defends his approach, suggesting that Jaspers has not really understood his intent or meaning. Contemporary people today, schooled in the scientific tradition, are likely to reject the biblical texts because of their miraculous claims and supernatural content. Bultmann insists that the scholarly, scientific study of the Bible is a legitimate way to reveal its true message, apart from all the supernatural trappings. Finally, in response, Jaspers accepts some of Bultmann's clarifications but takes him to task on the subject of 'justification by faith', which he feels Bultmann defines too narrowly and too exclusively. This stimulating work by two penetrating minds will give anyone interested in perennial philosophical and theological questions much to ponder.

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